
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks

(O*NET 43-4081.00)

Significant Points

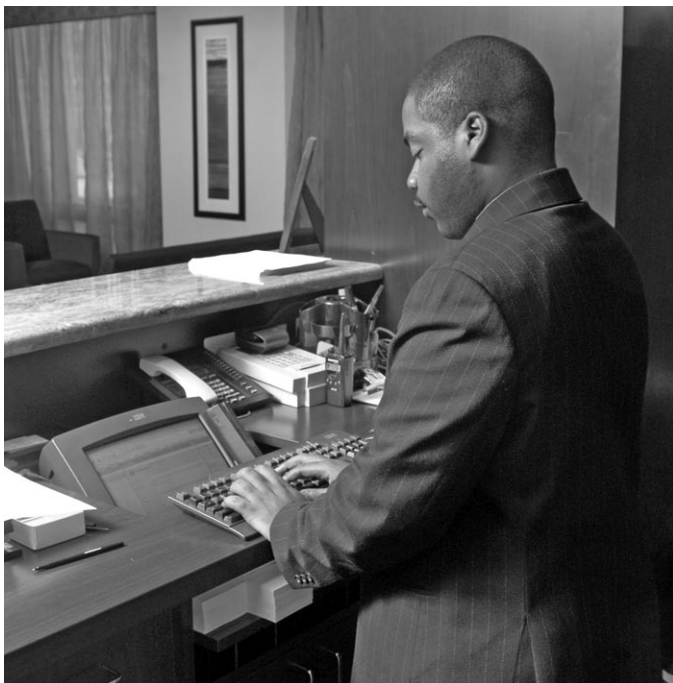
- Job opportunities should be good, because of industry growth and substantial replacement needs.
- Evening, weekend, and part-time work hours create the potential for flexible schedules.
- Professional appearance and personality are more important than formal academic training in getting a job.

Nature of the Work

Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks are always in the public eye and are usually the first line of customer service for a lodging property. Their attitude and behavior greatly influence the public's impressions of the establishment.

Front-desk clerks perform a variety of services for guests of hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments. Regardless of the type of accommodation, most desk clerks have similar responsibilities. They register arriving guests, assign rooms, and check out guests at the end of their stay. They also keep records of room assignments and other registration-related information on computers. When guests check out, desk clerks prepare and explain the charges and process payments.

Desk clerks answer questions about services, checkout times, the local community, or other matters of public interest. They report problems with guest rooms or public facilities to members of the housekeeping or maintenance staff. In larger hotels or in larger cities, desk clerks may refer queries about area attractions to a concierge and may direct more complicated questions to the appropriate manager.



Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks regularly use computers to store and retrieve guest reservation information.

In some smaller hotels and motels where smaller staffs are employed, clerks may take on a variety of additional responsibilities, such as bringing fresh linens to rooms, and they are often responsible for all front-office operations, information, and services. For example, they may perform the work of a book-keeper, advance reservation agent, cashier, laundry attendant, and telephone switchboard operator.

Work environment. Hotels are open around the clock, creating the need for night and weekend work. About half of all desk clerks work a 40-hour week. Nearly one in five work part-time. Others work full-time, but with varying schedules. Most clerks work in areas that are clean, well lit, and relatively quiet, although lobbies can become crowded and noisy when busy. Many hotels have stringent dress guidelines for desk clerks.

Desk clerks may experience particularly hectic times during check-in and check-out times or when convention guests or large groups arrive at once. Moreover, dealing with irate guests can be stressful. Computer failures can further complicate an already busy time and add to stress levels. Hotel desk clerks may be on their feet most of the time and may occasionally be asked to lift heavy guest luggage.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Employers look for clerks who are friendly and customer-service oriented, well groomed, and display maturity, self confidence, and good judgment.

Education and training. Most hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks receive orientation and training on the job. Orientation may include an explanation of the job duties and information about the establishment, such as the arrangement of guest rooms, availability of additional services, such as a business or fitness center, and location of guest services, such as ice and vending machines, restaurants, and nearby retail stores and attractions. New employees learn job tasks under the guidance of a supervisor or an experienced desk clerk. They often receive additional training on interpersonal or customer service skills and on how to use the computerized reservation, room assignment, and billing systems and equipment. Desk clerks often learn new procedures and company policies after their initial training ends. While postsecondary education is not usually required for this job, formal training in a hospitality management degree or certificate program may be an advantage for getting positions in larger or more upscale properties.

Other qualifications. Desk clerks, especially in high-volume and higher-end properties, should be quick-thinking, energetic, and able to work as a member of a team. Hotel managers typically look for these personal characteristics when hiring desk clerks, because personality traits are difficult to teach. A clear speaking voice and fluency in English are essential when talking with guests and using the telephone or public-address systems. Good spelling and computer literacy are also needed because most of the work involves a computer. In addition, speaking a foreign language fluently is increasingly helpful because of the growing international clientele of many properties.

Advancement. Large hotel and motel chains may offer better opportunities for advancement than small, independently owned establishments. Large chains have more extensive career ladder programs and may offer desk clerks an opportunity to participate in management training programs. Also, the Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Lodging Association offers home-study or group-study courses in lodging

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks.....	43-4081	219,000	257,000	38,000	17

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

management, which may help some desk clerks obtain promotions more rapidly.

Employment

Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks held about 219,000 jobs in 2006. Almost all were in hotels, motels, and other establishments in the accommodation industry.

Job Outlook

Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks will experience faster-than-average job growth through the 2006-16 decade because additional hotel properties continue to be built and more people are expected to travel for business and leisure. Good job opportunities are expected.

Employment change. Employment of hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks is expected to grow 17 percent between 2006 and 2016, which is faster than the average for all occupations. As more lodging establishments open and as people and companies have more money and travel more, occupancy rates will increase and create demand for desk clerks.

Employment of hotel and motel desk clerks should benefit from steady or increasing business and leisure travel. Shifts in preferences away from long vacations and toward long weekends and other, more frequent, shorter trips also should boost demand for these workers. While many lower budget and extended-stay establishments are being built to cater to families and the leisure traveler, many new luxury and resort accommodations also are opening to serve the upscale client. With the increased number of units requiring staff, employment opportunities for desk clerks should be good.

Growth of hotel, motel, and resort desk clerk jobs will be moderated somewhat by technology. Automated check-in and check-out procedures and on-line reservations networks free up staff time for other tasks and reduce the amount of time spent with each guest.

Job prospects. In addition to job growth, job opportunities for hotel and motel desk clerks are expected to be good because of the need to replace the many clerks who either transfer to other occupations that offer better pay and advancement opportunities or who leave the workforce altogether. Opportunities for those willing to work a variable schedule should continue to be plentiful.

Employment of desk clerks is sensitive to cyclical swings in the economy. During recessions, vacation and business travel

declines, and hotels and motels need fewer desk clerks. Similarly, employment is affected by special events, convention business, and seasonal fluctuations.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of hotel, motel and resort desk clerks were \$18,460 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$15,930 and \$22,220. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$13,690, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$27,030.

Earnings of hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks vary by worker characteristics, season, and geographic factors, such as whether the establishment is in a major metropolitan area or a resort community. Earnings also vary according to the size of the hotel and the level of service offered. For example, luxury hotels that offer guests more personal attention and a greater number of services typically have stricter and more demanding requirements for their desk staff and often provide higher earnings.

Related Occupations

Lodging managers, particularly at smaller hotels and lodging establishments, may perform some of the same duties as desk clerks. Other occupations that require workers to assist the public include counter and rental clerks, customer service representatives, receptionists and information clerks, and retail salespersons.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about the hotel and lodging industry and links to State lodging associations may be obtained from:

➤ American Hotel & Lodging Association, 1201 New York Ave., NW., #600 Washington, DC 20005.

Internet: <http://www.ahla.com>

Information on careers in the lodging industry, as well as information about professional development and training programs, may be obtained from:

➤ Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, 800 N. Magnolia Ave., Suite 1800, Orlando, FL 32803. Internet: <http://www.ei-ahla.org>