

Gaming Services Occupations

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Significant Points

- These occupations have no common minimum educational requirements; each casino establishes its own requirements for education, training, and experience.
- Workers need a license issued by a regulatory agency, such as a State casino control board or commission; licensure requires proof of residency in the State in which gaming workers are employed.
- Job prospects are best for those with a degree or certification in gaming or a hospitality-related field, previous training or experience in casino gaming, and strong interpersonal and customer service skills.

Nature of the Work

Legalized gambling in the United States today includes casino gaming, State lotteries, parimutuel wagering on contests such as horse or dog racing, and charitable gaming. Gaming, the playing of games of chance, is a multibillion-dollar industry that is responsible for the creation of a number of unique service occupations.

The majority of all gaming services workers are employed in casinos. Their duties and titles may vary from one establishment to another. Despite differences in job title and task, however, workers perform many of the same basic functions in all casinos. Some positions are associated with oversight and direction—supervision, surveillance, and investigation—while others involve working with the games or patrons themselves, performing such activities as tending slot machines, handling money, writing and running tickets, and dealing cards or running games.

Like nearly every business establishment, casinos have workers who direct and oversee day-to-day operations. *Gaming supervisors* oversee the gaming operations and personnel in an assigned area. They circulate among the tables and observe the operations to ensure that all of the stations and games are covered for each shift. It is not uncommon for gaming supervisors to explain and interpret the operating rules of the house to patrons who may have difficulty understanding the rules. Gaming supervisors also may plan and organize activities to create a friendly atmosphere for the guests staying in their hotels or in casino hotels. Periodically, they address and adjust complaints about service.

Some gaming occupations demand specially acquired skills—dealing blackjack, for example—that are unique to casino work. Others require skills common to most businesses, such as the ability to conduct financial transactions. In both capacities, the workers in these jobs interact directly with patrons in attending to slot machines, making change, cashing or selling tokens and coins, writing and running for other games, and dealing cards at table games. Part of their responsibility is to make those interactions enjoyable.

Slot key persons, also called slot attendants or slot technicians, coordinate and supervise the slot department and its workers. Their duties include verifying and handling payoff win-

nings to patrons, resetting slot machines after completing the payoff, and refilling machines with money. Slot key persons must be familiar with a variety of slot machines and be able to make minor repairs and adjustments to the machines as needed. If major repairs are required, slot key persons determine whether the slot machine should be removed from the floor. Working the floor as frontline personnel, they enforce safety rules and report hazards.

Gaming and sportsbook writers and runners assist in the operations of games such as bingo and keno, in addition to taking bets on sporting events. They scan tickets presented by patrons and calculate and distribute winnings. Some writers and runners operate the equipment that randomly selects the numbers. Others may announce numbers selected, pick up tickets from patrons, collect bets, or receive, verify, and record patrons' cash wagers.

Gaming dealers operate table games such as craps, blackjack, and roulette. Standing or sitting behind the table, dealers provide dice, dispense cards to players, or run the equipment. Some dealers also monitor the patrons for infractions of casino rules. Gaming dealers must be skilled in customer service and in executing their game. Dealers determine winners, calculate and pay winning bets, and collect losing bets. Because of the fast-paced work environment, most gaming dealers are competent in at least two games, usually blackjack and craps.

Working Conditions

The atmosphere in casinos is generally filled with fun and often considered glamorous. However, casino work can also be physically demanding. Most occupations require that workers stand for long periods; some require the lifting of heavy items. The "glamorous" atmosphere exposes casino workers to certain hazards, such as cigarette, cigar, and pipe smoke. Noise from slot machines, gaming tables, and talking workers and patrons may be distracting to some, although workers wear protective headgear in areas where loud machinery is used to count money.

Most casinos are open 24 hours a day, seven day a week and offer three staggered shifts.

Employment

Gaming services' occupations held 192,000 jobs in 2002. Employment by occupational specialty was distributed as follows:



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Gaming dealers	78,000
Gaming supervisors	39,000
Slot key persons	21,000
Gaming and sports book writers & runners	14,000
All other gaming service workers	40,000

Gaming services workers are found mainly in the traveler accommodation and gaming industries. Most are employed in commercial casinos, including land-based or riverboat casinos, in 11 States: Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, and South Dakota. The largest number works in land-based casinos in Nevada, and the second-largest group works in similar establishments in New Jersey. Mississippi, which boasts the greatest number of riverboat casinos in operation, employs the most workers in that venue. In addition, there are 23 States with Indian casinos. Legal lotteries are held in 40 States and the District of Columbia, and parimutuel wagering is legal in 41 States. Forty-seven States and the District of Columbia also allow charitable gaming.

For most workers, gaming licensure requires proof of residency in the State in which gaming workers are employed. But some gaming services workers do not limit themselves to one State or even one country, finding jobs on the small number of casinos located on luxury cruise liners that travel the world. These individuals live and work aboard the vessel.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

There usually are no minimum educational requirements for entry-level gaming jobs, although most employers prefer a high school diploma or GED. However, entry-level gaming services workers are required to have a license issued by a regulatory agency, such as a State casino control board or commission. Applicants for a license must provide photo identification, offer proof of residency in the State in which they anticipate working, and pay a fee. Age requirements vary by State. The licensing application process also includes a background investigation.

In addition to possessing a license, gaming services workers need superior customer service skills. Casino gaming workers provide entertainment and hospitality to patrons, and the quality of their service contributes to an establishment's success or failure. Therefore, gaming workers need good communication skills, an outgoing personality, and the ability to maintain their composure even when dealing with angry or demanding patrons. Personal integrity also is important, because workers handle large amounts of money.

Each casino establishes its own requirements for education, training, and experience. Almost all provide some in-house training in addition to requiring certification. The type and quantity of classes needed may vary.

Many institutions of higher learning give training toward certification in gaming, as well as offering an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree in a hospitality-related field such as hospitality management, hospitality administration, or hotel management. Some schools offer training in games, gaming supervision, slot attendant and slot repair technician work, slot department management, and surveillance and security.

Gaming services workers who manage money should have some experience handling cash or using calculators or computers. For such positions, most casinos administer a math test to assess an applicant's level of competency.

Most casino supervisory staff have an associate's or bachelor's degree. Supervisors who do not have a degree usually substi-

tute hands-on experience for formal education. Regardless of their educational background, most supervisors gain experience in other gaming occupations before moving into supervisory positions, because knowledge of games and casino operations is essential for these workers. Gaming supervisors must have leadership qualities and good communication skills to supervise employees effectively and to deal with patrons in a way that encourages return visits.

Slot key persons do not need to meet formal educational requirements to enter the occupation, but completion of slot attendant or slot technician training is helpful. As with most other gaming workers, slot key persons receive on-the-job training during the first several weeks of employment. Most slot key positions are entry level, so a desire to learn is important. Slot key persons need good communication skills and an ability to remain calm, even when dealing with angry or demanding patrons. Personal integrity also is important, because these workers handle large sums of money.

Gaming and sportsbook writers and runners must have at least a high school diploma or GED. Most of these workers receive on-the-job training. Because gaming and sportsbook writers and runners work closely with patrons, they need excellent customer service skills.

Nearly all gaming dealers are certified. Certification is available through 2- or 4-year programs in gaming or a hospitality-related field. Experienced dealers, who often are able to attract new or return business, have the best job prospects. Dealers with more experience are placed at the "high-roller" tables.

Advancement opportunities in casino gaming depend less on workers' previous casino duties and titles than on their ability and eagerness to learn new jobs. For example, an entry-level gaming worker eventually might advance to become a dealer or card room manager or to assume some other supervisory position.

Job Outlook

With demand for gaming showing no sign of waning, employment in gaming services occupations is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2012. Even during the recent downturn in the economy, profits at casinos have risen. With many States benefiting from casino gambling in the form of tax revenue or compacts with Indian tribes, additional States are rethinking their opposition to legalized gambling and will likely approve the building of more casinos and other gaming formats during the next decade. Job prospects in gaming services occupations will be best for those with a degree or certification in gaming or a hospitality-related field, previous casino gaming training or experience, and strong interpersonal and customer service skills. As a direct result of increasing demand for additional table games in gaming establishments, the most rapid growth is expected among gaming dealers. In addition to job openings arising from employment growth, opportunities will result from the need to replace workers transferring to other occupations or leaving the labor force.

The increase in gaming reflects growth in the population and in its disposable income, both of which are expected to continue. Also, more domestic and international competition for gaming patrons and higher expectations among gaming patrons for customer service should result in more jobs for gaming services workers. Job growth is expected in established gaming areas such as Las Vegas, Nevada, and Atlantic City, New Jersey, as well as in other States and areas that may legalize gaming in the coming years, including Indian tribal lands.

Earnings

Wage earnings for gaming services workers vary according to occupation, level of experience, training, location, and size of the gaming establishment. The following were median earnings for various gaming services occupations in 2002:

Gaming supervisors	\$39,290
Slot key persons	22,870
Gaming and sports book writers and runners	18,660
Gaming dealers	14,090

Related Occupations

Many other occupations provide hospitality and customer service. Some examples of related occupations are security guards and gaming surveillance officers, recreation and fitness workers, sales worker supervisors, cashiers, gaming change persons and booth cashiers, retail salespersons, gaming cage workers, and tellers.

Sources of Additional Information

For additional information on careers in gaming, visit your public library and your State gaming regulatory agency or casino control commission.

Information on careers in gaming also is available from:

- ▶ American Gaming Association, 555 13th St. NW., Suite 1010 East, Washington, DC 20004. Internet: <http://www.americangaming.org>