



# RAIL INDUSTRY CAREERS

Information and resources for  
teachers and parents

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DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR STUDENT INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN A VARIED, SUSTAINABLE AND IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY?

## **LOOK NO FURTHER THAN RAIL!**

The rail industry is looking for the next generation of professionals to keep the country running. There are many billions of pounds being invested in rail over the next two decades – on projects like the TransPennine Route Upgrade, East West Rail and the electrification of the railways. This means that the demand for the next generation of engineers, data analysts, project managers, customer service assistants and more is at an all-time high.

Whether it's building state-of-the-art stations, designing more energy efficient trains, or finding innovative ways to keep people safe, there's a route into rail for everyone.

In this pack, you will find out everything you need to know about rail careers and how to help young people get started in the industry.

# WHAT IS THE RAIL INDUSTRY?

The rail industry encompasses all aspects of the transportation of goods and passengers by rail. It includes the construction, operation, maintenance and management of rail infrastructure such as tracks, stations and trains. The industry also involves services such as logistics and passenger services.

Rail has been a crucial mode of transportation for centuries, offering an efficient, reliable and environmentally friendly way to move people and goods over long distances. The rail industry plays a vital role in the UK economy – facilitating trade, commuting, tourism and industrial activities.

More than 1 billion rail passenger journeys are made in the UK every year. Rail supports 710,000 jobs and generates £43 billion annually for the economy – while contributing only 1.4% to the UK's carbon emissions (other forms of transport contribute a combined 25%). Rail freight alone contributes £2.45bn to the UK economy each year and reduces carbon emissions by 76% per tonne compared to road freight.





# WHY WORK IN RAIL?

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## **Billions in investment means rail needs thousands more professionals over the coming years**

Major projects, as well as modernising infrastructure, enhancing sustainability and the ongoing maintenance of the railway, translate to high demand for workers now and in the future.

## **Choose from a wide range of roles**

There are so many different types of careers in rail that go beyond the roles you might see using the railway day-to-day. Think project management, business, HR, marketing, IT and more.

## **Earn a higher-than-average wage**

The average wage in rail is £42,800 – 22% higher than the UK average wage.

## **Rail is a diverse and inclusive industry aiming to have a workforce that represents the passengers it serves**

## **Help build a sustainable future**

Moving people and freight around the country using the railways – rather than roads or planes – will play a crucial role in achieving net zero.

## **Be part of an exciting and innovative industry**

The railway is almost 200 years old – so it has a rich history of innovation and advancement. Developing and implementing new technologies is part of what we do every day.

## **Travel the country as part of your work**

With major rail projects being rolled out around the country and the ongoing maintenance of the railways, there is demand no matter where you are based.

# CAREERS FOR EVERYONE

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Rail is a truly open, diverse and inclusive environment, harnessing the skills and expertise of all our people and attracting the best talent to help us have a safe, accessible railway for everyone.



Rail is committed to proactively and positively impacting the communities it services, especially when it comes to employment. Local talent is vital to the work rail does – developing local skills is a necessity to ensure the railway keeps moving.

While there is still some way to go, the rail sector has seen the percentage of women employed in rail grow from 8% to 17% in the last 5 years.

Rail offers many opportunities for people with disabilities, both visible and invisible, and people who are neurodivergent – so it makes an ideal choice for so many people's careers.

# WHAT TYPES OF CAREERS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE INDUSTRY?

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There are so many different types of careers in rail. When we think about rail careers, our mind often goes to the people we see as a customer – ticket inspectors, drivers, or those fixing the tracks. But there is so much to the industry we don't see...

The [careers](#) page on Routes into Rail has information on the varied careers in rail – including driving, engineering, business, project management, marketing, data, IT, environment and more.



## WHAT ARE THE MOST IN-DEMAND ROLES IN RAIL?

Big investment in new projects – like HS2, the TransPennine Route Upgrade, Northern Powerhouse Rail and East West Rail – the transition to net zero, technological advances and an ageing population leading to high retirement levels means rail needs thousands more professionals in the coming years.

NSAR's Rail workforce Survey 2023 shows that the industry will need more than 4,000 Engineers, more than 1,400 technicians and more than 700 Project Managers by 2030. Thousands of people are expected to retire from Train Driving and Customer Service roles, who will need to be replaced. Digital and green skills will be in high demand as well.

# MOST IN-DEMAND ROLES IN RAIL

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## **Engineer**

Civil, Electrical, Industrial, Mechanical, Robotics Engineer and more.

## **Engineering Technician**

Engineering Technicians help engineers test, install and maintain trains, tracks and other rail infrastructure.

## **Train Driver**

The importance of Train Drivers is not to be underestimated – without them, neither passengers nor freight would get to their destinations.

## **Project Manager**

Project Managers in rail plan and oversee the delivery of rail projects, from station upgrades to major new lines.

## **Customer Service**

Customer service assistants and supervisors help customers before, during and after their journeys, as well as undertaking station checks and responding to emergencies.

## **Signaller**

Signalling is basically a sophisticated traffic light system for the railway. Signallers keep track of a huge number of trains moving across the network and tell train drivers when it is safe to go.

## **Machine Operator**

An Operator drives big machinery on site or in a train yard – think cranes and excavators.



# HOW TO GET STARTED IN THE RAIL INDUSTRY

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There are many ways to get started in a rail career. Here are the four most common paths.



## ■ WORK EXPERIENCE

Does your family member or student want to try out a rail career before they decide, or gain some work experience for their CV? Rail offers lots of opportunities for young people to get a taste of what it is like to work in the industry. They could be shadowing engineers, guards, technicians, project managers, signallers or data analysts – to name a few!

Many work experience placements can result in an offer of employment or an apprenticeship place. Regardless, young people will gain a clearer understanding of the day-to-day tasks of different careers and what career paths interest them – as well as experience on their CV that stands out to future employers.

Read more about work experience and discover opportunities at <https://routesintorail.org/work-experience/>

## ■ APPRENTICESHIPS

One of the best ways to enter the rail sector is through an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to earn while learning and gain a recognised qualification on completion. There is a misconception that apprenticeships are only for physical work like construction, but apprenticeships are available for just about any field.

Apprentices are employed full-time (usually 30-40 hours per week) and their employer pays them wages. They work with experienced staff at their organisation to build skills and do about a day a week of study, with a training provider or university.

Read more about apprenticeships and discover opportunities at <https://routesintorail.org/apprenticeships/>

## ■ GRADUATE ROLES

Is your family member or student thinking about going to university? There are so many graduate schemes and roles they can apply for in the rail industry once they have completed their degree. Rail offers well-paid roles in a range of areas to recent graduates – engineering, accounting and finance, HR, IT and sustainability, among others.

Read more about graduate roles and discover opportunities at <https://routesintorail.org/graduates/>

## ■ ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS

Just want to get started in a career and skip the study? Rail has lots of entry-level roles on offer that young people can jump into without any prior experience. And with so many progression opportunities in rail, they can get started now and watch their career grow.

Customer service is a great place to start when looking for entry-level roles in rail. Work at a station, on a train, in an office, or provide help over the phone – there are so many options. Progress to become a team leader or station manager – or maybe after working with so many people in different roles, they will find another rail career to pursue!

Search vacancies at <https://routesintorail.org/vacancies/>



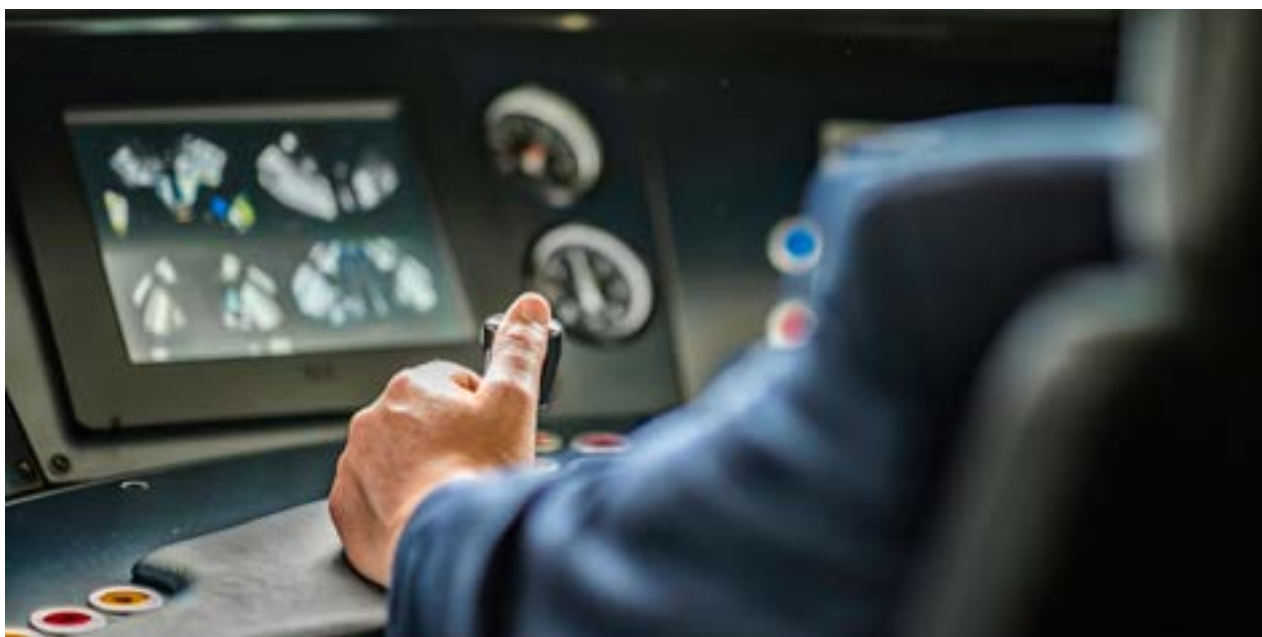
# CAREER PROGRESSION

New projects, technology and exciting innovations in rail create lots of variety and progression opportunities.

The rail industry encompasses a wide range of roles. This diversity offers lots of opportunities for specialisation and progression in any career path. As young people gain experience in the industry, they can specialise in specific areas and take on roles with increased responsibility. The variety of roles and transferability of rail skills also means they can change to another area of work if they want a new challenge.

Training and development are prioritised in the rail industry. Rail companies invest a lot in training and development programs to enhance the skills of their employees, so they can specialise, progress and stay up to date with the latest technologies.

There are also lots of opportunities to network and engage with professional associations in rail to open new doors and help build a successful career.



# RESOURCES

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## Tips for writing a stand-out CV and cover letter

As you know, a well-crafted CV and cover letter can open doors to many opportunities.

We have spoken to hiring managers from top rail companies and gathered their CV and cover letter tips – including general information about what to include in CVs and cover letters.

[Discover more](#)

## Interview tips

Read our interview tips from hiring managers working in rail. Learn how to help your family member or student prepare for an interview with a rail company, how they can showcase their best self during the interview and what to do afterwards.

[Discover more](#)

## Careers quiz

Encourage your family member or student to take our fun quiz to find out what type of rail career could work for them!

Whether it's building bridges and tunnels, driving trains, protecting the environment around the railways, or helping passengers, there's a route into rail for everyone.

[Discover more](#)

## Stories from real people working in rail

Read about real people working in rail, sharing how they started their careers and what they do day-to-day – from current apprentices and graduates to managers and senior engineers.

[Discover more](#)



# CONTACT US



Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about rail careers and pathways.



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