

CAREER OF THE WEEK: Shipping Agent

What does a shipping agent do?

Shipping agents act as the key link between ship owners, crew, cargo suppliers and port authorities. Their main job is to make sure that vessels arriving at or leaving a port have everything they need to run smoothly. This can include organising pilotage and tugs, arranging customs paperwork, booking berths, dealing with cargo loading and unloading, and even ensuring the crew have access to supplies and transport. In short, they are the problem-solvers of the port, keeping trade moving efficiently. It's a fast-paced role that often requires flexibility, strong communication skills, and the ability to handle pressure when unexpected challenges arise.



What can I expect to earn as a shipping agent?

Starting salaries for shipping agents in the UK are typically around £20,000–£25,000 a year, depending on the size of the port and the employer. With experience, this can rise to £30,000–£40,000, and senior shipping agents or port operations managers can earn £45,000 or more. Many roles also include overtime, shift allowances, or additional benefits due to the 24/7 nature of port operations.

What subjects should I study to become a shipping agent?

At school, subjects that build strong organisational, numerical and communication skills will be most helpful. English is important for clear correspondence, while mathematics helps with planning and logistics. Geography can give you insight into global trade and transport, while business studies or economics will help you understand supply chains and international markets. Foreign languages can also be an advantage, especially if you're dealing with international crews and clients.

How can I start my career as a shipping agent?

There are several entry routes into shipping agency work. Some people join straight from school as a trainee or junior shipping clerk and work their way up, gaining valuable experience on the job. Others take vocational qualifications such as a Level 3 Diploma in Shipping and Maritime Operations, or pursue a degree in logistics, maritime studies, or international trade. Professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers also offer training and certification that can boost your career prospects. Work experience in logistics, freight forwarding, or port operations is very useful and shows employers you understand the fast-moving nature of the industry.

If you enjoy problem-solving, don't mind irregular hours, and want to play a vital part in keeping world trade afloat, a career as a shipping agent could be an exciting choice.

To research local education and training opportunities that could lead to a career as a shipping agent, visit our partner website www.logonmoveon.co.uk

Other useful websites to find out more about a career as a shipping agent:

National Careers Service – Shipping Agent <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/import-export-clerk>

Maritime UK – Maritime Careers <https://www.maritimeuk.org/careers/>

Institute of Chartered Ship Brokers <https://www.ics.org.uk/>



You can find us at

