

JOB PROFILE: AIRLINE CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENT

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Airports never sleep! If you like to be in on the action and enjoy working with people, then the job of an Airline Customer Service Agent could be just the one for you! Airline Customer Service Agents are also known as Passenger Services Agents or Assistants.

Airline Customer Service Agents work at airports and are employed by an airline or a handling agent. Handling agents are contracted by an airline and usually manage services on behalf of a number of different airline operators. Your role will be to ensure that passengers and baggage board the correct aircraft. This will involve preparing and opening check-in desks in line with airline requirements, greeting passengers, dealing with passenger enquiries, checking tickets and passports, issuing seat numbers, boarding passes and luggage labels, asking security questions and preparing paper work for customs. You will also weigh passenger luggage and calculate any excess baggage charges.

Some passengers have special needs and requirements, for example the disabled, the elderly and unaccompanied children. It may be necessary to give extra help and assistance to these passengers,

which may involve escorting them to and from the aircraft.

Most Airline Customer Service Agents work at the check-in desk and also at the boarding/flight gate, where they will make passenger announcements and check boarding passes and passports.

TRAINING

Employers usually run their own structured training programmes, which last between four and eight weeks. Training covers basic procedures, familiarisation with the airport, security training, emergency and evacuation procedures, how to use the public address system and also a manual handling course, which specifically trains you in how to lift heavy items and push wheelchairs.

Work based training courses are also available in:

- NVQ Level 2 in Providing Aviation Operations on the Ground
- NVQ Level 3 in Co-ordinating Aviation Operations on the Ground
- SVQ equivalents are currently being developed

PERSONAL QUALITIES & SKILLS

- A pleasant, confident and helpful manner
- Enjoy working with the public
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills
- Ability to deal with difficult situations tactfully and diplomatically
- Flexible – able to respond quickly to changing priorities and work unsociable hours
- Confident with IT
- A good team player
- Smart appearance

ENTRY

Entry requirements can vary between airlines and airport handling agents:

- Most employers prefer applicants with 3-5 GCSEs (A-C)/S grades (1-3) or equivalent including English Language and Mathematics
- Ability to converse in a foreign language is desirable
- Experience of working in travel and tourism is an advantage
- Ideally you need to live near the airport or have your own transport

FURTHER INFORMATION

For the latest information and advice visit the *GoSkills* website:

www.goskills.org

PROGRESSION & SALARY

This is a popular area of work and there are lots of opportunities for promotion to a supervisory or managerial position. Some Customer Service Agents move on to work as Cabin Crew.

As a guide salaries usually start at £10,000-£13,000 a year. Experienced Customer Service Agents can earn £14,000 to £20,000 a year.