



## Is a Security Officer role the right one for me?

Security officers and managers ensure that buildings, outside areas, valuables and people are safe and secure.

Their work may involve:

- working in a reception area of an organisation, checking people in and out
- walking around a site, often at night, looking out for problems
- monitoring closed-circuit television (CCTV) screens in a control room
- dealing with emergencies
- writing incident reports.

Managers may arrange staff rotas and training and set budgets.

Security officers usually work shifts, often over a seven-day week. Overtime may be available. There are opportunities to work part time.

Some work inside in an office or reception area, but others work mainly outside. Officers generally wear a uniform and many wear protective clothing, such as a high-visibility jacket.

Security officers are usually paid by the hour, which is likely to be between £6 and £10. Salaries range from around £20,000 for a security officer to around £50,000 for a senior manager.

Security officers must be:

- responsible and honest
- polite and helpful, yet prepared to challenge people when necessary
- fit and healthy
- able to use their initiative and make quick decisions
- able to use surveillance systems, such as CCTV, security tags or scanners
- able to write reports
- interested in the security of people and organisations.

There are more than 150,000 licensed security officers, working on building sites, in businesses, shops and shopping centres, airports, sports and concert venues and other public spaces. Large organisations may employ their own security staff, but many officers work as contract staff for private security companies.

Security officers need an SIA security guard licence to work on a contract basis, as opposed to a direct employee of a business or organisation (in-house security). Other security roles, such as CCTV or cash and valuables in transit, require a separate licence.



## Is a Security Officer role the right one for me? cont...

Managers who don't provide direct services to the public still need a 'non-frontline' licence.

Applicants take a two-part training course and need to pass two exams, although people with previous experience and qualifications may be exempt. Before applying for a licence, an applicant needs one of these qualifications:

- BTEC Level 2 Award in security guarding

Applicants also need to be over 18 and pass identity and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. A criminal record does not necessarily mean a candidate will be refused a licence.

Some security organizations offer Apprenticeships.

Previous experience within the police, fire or prison services or armed forces is very useful.

Security officers and managers may attend courses or train on the job alongside experienced security officers. Some employers will pay for training. Promotion may be possible to supervisory or managerial roles. Security officers may also move into another aspect of the job or become self-employed.

### Case study

**Shadik Khan** is a security officer, based in Leeds. He works alone at night, ensuring the safety and security of the building or site he is responsible for.

#### **How would you outline your role?**

I look after the security of construction sites, retail stores and offices by carrying out patrols of the building or area and reporting anything suspicious.

#### **What are your main responsibilities?**

They tend to vary, depending on what sort of site I'm working on. At the moment, I'm working in a six-floor building where a number of companies have their offices. It's my responsibility to protect the site from unauthorized access, danger and damage.

I sit at the main reception desk by the entrance of the building until the last person leaves. I lock the outside gates and I also let the cleaners in and make sure they sign in. When the building is finally empty, I go to every floor and ensure everything is in order, locking any unlocked doors and setting any intruder alarms. The patrol takes around 30 minutes and I carry it out every hour. If I see anything suspicious that doesn't need immediate action, I inform



## Is a Security Officer role the right one for me? cont...

the control room of the security company I work for. But, if I find a situation that looks dangerous or immediately serious, I call 999 for the police or fire service. I have a log book for recording my routine and noting any incidents. This routine goes on until 6am, when I go back to the desk and let members of staff in until I'm relieved by the site manager.

### **What hours do you work?**

I do three night shifts on weekdays and two day shifts at the weekend. Night shifts start at 4.30pm and finish at 7.30am.

### **What is your working environment like?**

It all depends on the site where I'm working. At the moment, it's an office building and a very friendly environment.

### **Who do you work with?**

I work on my own as the site requires only one security officer per shift. On some sites, though, there may be other security officers too. Even though I'm on my own, I'm backed up by the control room staff, mobile security supervisor and a keyholder.

### **What skills or qualities do you need?**

The skills and qualities I need are good communication and the ability to tackle the problems and incidents I may face. I have to be able to act on my own initiative in conflict situations.

### **Why did you choose this type of work?**

I chose this type of job simply because I liked it. There is no hard work involved and I can do longer shifts to increase my pay.

### **Have you done any training?**

I hold a Security Industry Authority licence, so I've been trained as a security officer. Whenever I go to a new site, I will have between a day and three days alongside a trained officer there to prepare me for the new job.

### **Do you use any special tools or equipment?**

I have a pager, which I carry when I am on patrol. On some sites, I use a two-way radio to communicate with other security officers. In some cases, I use a metal detector to search people entering or leaving the site. Depending on the site, I might also wear a high-visibility jacket, hard hat and safety shoes, and use a torch, electronic key fob or swipe card.

### **What do you like/dislike about your job?**

I like the nature of the job and the people I work with, but I don't like being alone and bored at night.



## Is a Security Officer role the right one for me? cont...

### What are the main challenges?

Being alone and vulnerable, yet ready to tackle any incident or emergency.  
Keeping the site and myself safe is a challenge.

### How do you see your future?

I would hope to be promoted to a managerial post in the future.

### Shadik's route

- GCSEs.
- Variety of jobs before deciding to train for security.
- City & Guilds Level 2 Certificate for security guards.
- Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence.
- Started work as a security officer two years ago.

### Shadik's tips

- Anyone interested in working as a security officer needs to have an SIA licence. Experience is useful but not essential.
- When it comes to the work itself, though, experience is very important. You learn and gain confidence through facing and dealing with different situations.