

# RETAIL/MERCHANDISING

What can I do with this degree?

## AREAS

## EMPLOYERS

## STRATEGIES

### BUYING/PURCHASING

Department stores  
Specialty stores (e.g., clothing, home furnishings,  
jewelry, books, etc.)  
Discount stores/mass merchants  
Grocery stores

Develop analytical and problem-solving skills to analyze industry trends and sales data.  
Develop organizational skills to oversee the daily operation of a department or store (e.g., inventory monitoring).  
Develop excellent interpersonal skills to work with and motivate sales force.  
Develop strong written and oral communication skills for report writing and interacting with vendors.  
Be prepared to travel frequently in order to visit various markets and search for new merchandise.  
Gain experience working under pressure.  
Develop a competitive drive with the understanding that a buyer's goal is to always beat the sales and profit record of the last year.  
Gain as much sales and retail experience as possible.  
Be prepared to begin as a buyer trainee.  
Be aware that mergers and acquisitions have reduced the number of opportunities in this field.

### MANAGEMENT/ADMINISTRATION

Corporate Management  
Regional Management  
Store Management  
Store Assistant Management  
Store Department Management

Department stores  
Specialty stores  
Discount stores/mass merchants  
Grocery stores  
Dealerships (e.g., automobile, boat, etc.)

Be prepared to start at the bottom. Most management training programs start associates on the sales floor.  
Be willing to relocate to take advantage of promotion opportunities.  
Develop excellent interpersonal skills to assist customers, handle complaints, and manage employees.  
Develop excellent organizational skills to handle the daily operation of a store or a department.  
Learn and perfect persuasive sales techniques.  
Gain experience working on commission.  
Be aware of the abundant number of opportunities in this field.

## AREAS

## EMPLOYERS

## STRATEGIES

### **SALES**

Industrial Sales  
Consumer Product Sales  
Financial Services Sales  
Services Sales  
Advertising Sales

Profit and non-profit organizations  
Product and service organizations  
Manufacturers  
Financial companies  
Insurance companies  
Print and electronic media  
Retail stores

Obtain a part-time or internship sales position to gain experience. These positions are often stepping stones to higher-level positions.  
Develop excellent interpersonal skills and a strong commitment to customer satisfaction.  
Develop problem-solving skills to handle customer or client inquiries and complaints.  
Gain as much knowledge as possible about the product or service being sold.  
Cultivate a competitive drive to reach sales quotas and break sales records.  
Proven leadership abilities are desirable.  
Must be highly motivated and well organized.

### **VISUAL MERCHANDISING**

Department stores  
Specialty stores

Develop proficiency for working with matters of taste and aesthetics (e.g., color, lighting, fashion, etc.).  
Consider supplementing program with coursework in interior design, art, fashion design, or interior decorating.  
Develop mechanical aptitude to build props or to adjust lighting for displays.  
Be aware that positions in this area are limited.  
Many managers or product representatives are responsible for creating store display designs.

### **NON-STORE RETAILING**

E-Commerce  
Catalog:  
Sales  
Management  
Fulfillment/Distribution  
Production  
Direct Marketing

Retailers in internet sales (e.g., Target.com)  
Retailers with mail-order specialties (e.g., Spiegel, JC Penney)  
Advertising agencies  
Magazine, book, and record companies  
TV retailing networks  
Internet marketers

Supplement program with courses in marketing, advertising, or communications.  
Obtain sales experience through a retail or telemarketing position.  
Develop strong computer skills.

## AREAS

## EMPLOYERS

## STRATEGIES

### **SMALL BUSINESS**

Ownership  
Independent Consulting

Self-employed  
Companies that utilize independent consultants  
(e.g., Mary Kay Cosmetics, Tupperware)

Develop an excellent knowledge of and belief in a particular product or service.  
Supplement program with courses in accounting, advertising, or computers.  
Obtain extensive sales and business experience by working for a company or retailer in a related product area before launching a small business.  
Build relationships with potential investors and customers.  
Join small business associations or Chamber of Commerce for networking opportunities.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Obtain retail experience through summer jobs, part-time jobs, or internships.
- Computer knowledge is crucial. Become familiar with technology related to internet sales, distribution, and inventory tracking.
- Join student branches of professional retailing associations. Read their publications and attend their meetings.
- Read the business section of newspapers and magazines to keep track of current trends in retail.
- Be prepared to work holidays and weekends, typically the busiest times for retailers.
- Contact stores or markets of interest. Inquire about management training programs.
- Most retailers promote from within the organization; therefore, management trainee programs or sales associate positions are a good way to begin.
- Supplement program with courses in marketing, accounting, communications, and computers.
- Be aware of the many transferable skills associated with this degree.
- For increased opportunity, determine alternative areas of business in which your skills, experiences, and interests might also apply.

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## RETAIL/MERCHANDISING

### Retail and Consumer Science Links:

[About the Retail Industry](#)

[Retail Jobs](#)

[National Retail Federation](#)

[Retail Fit](#)

[Purchasing Managers, Buyers, and Purchasing Agents from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

[Sales Worker Supervisors from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

[Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

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Prepared by the Career Planning staff of Career Services at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. (2005) UTK is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer