

# Retail Buyer

## JOB HUNT

### Retail Buyer

#### DESCRIPTION:

Retail buyers select, purchase and price the merchandise that's sold in stores. Those who work for large retailers often specialize in one type of merchandise, such as mens' clothing, furniture or cookware. To predict likely big sellers, you need to keep your eye on the competition, the latest trends, the economy, and what's selling now. You'll also attend trade shows and conferences. When dealing with vendors, those who sell goods to the store, you'll negotiate prices, work out shipment and payment terms. When the merchandise comes in, you'll need to make sure everything is perfect. Once it hits the floor, you'll need to keep track of how things are selling. When the time comes, you'll determine how much to markdown merchandise.

#### REQUIREMENTS:

A bachelor's degree in business will give you an edge. You'll need to have good people skills, as well as good judgment and fashion sense.

#### HOW TO GET STARTED:

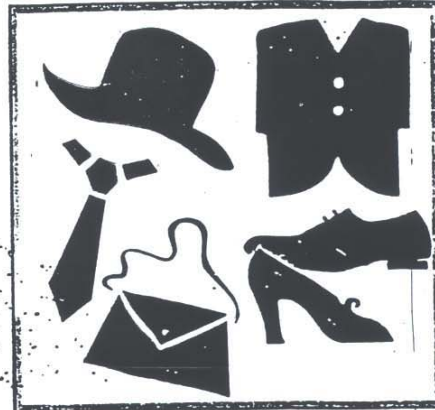
If you're in high school and college, you can start as a sales associate for a retail store, just to get experience working with merchandise and with customers. Big stores often train employees while others recruit and train college graduates.

#### OUTLOOK:

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, employment growth for buyers will be slower than average through the year 2005, thanks to retail mergers and acquisitions, which have consolidated jobs. Although competition is stiff, there are jobs out there for retail buyers, for instance Macy's East, the east coast regional division of Macy's, plans to bring in about 70 to 100 buyer recruits in 1997.

#### SALARY:

According to Macy's East, which has headquarters in Manhattan, an assistant buyer can



start out at about \$27,000 to \$30,000 a year. Salary, however, depends on geographic location, specialty, and the complexities of the job. Those with 10 years or more experience can earn about \$100,000 a year.

#### REALITY CHECK:

"It's hectic, high pressure and a lot of fun," says Christine Jobes, vice president of member services at the National Retail Federation in Washington D.C., and a former buyer. "You'll crunch numbers, watch sales and you might travel. It's a balancing process, when your merchandise comes in, you have to make sure the floor is ready. And you can have your share of problems, for instance, if the merchandise isn't in the store it needs to be in, you have to resolve that."

— Lisa Doll

Another source: Nordstrom, Seattle.