
Barbers, Cosmetologists, and Other Personal Appearance Workers

Significant Points

- Employment is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations.
- A State license is required for barbers, cosmetologists, and most other personal appearance workers, although qualifications vary by State.
- About 44 percent of workers are self employed; many also work flexible schedules.

Nature of the Work

Barbers and cosmetologists focus on providing hair care services to enhance the appearance of customers. Other personal appearance workers, such as manicurists and pedicurists, shampooers, and skin care specialists, provide specialized beauty services that help clients look and feel their best.

Barbers cut, trim, shampoo, and style hair mostly for male clients. They also may fit hairpieces and offer scalp treatments and facial shaving. In many States, barbers are licensed to color, bleach, and highlight hair, and to offer permanent-wave services. Barbers also may provide skin care and nail treatments.

Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists offer a wide range of beauty services, such as shampooing, cutting, coloring, and styling of hair. They may advise clients on how to care for their hair at home. In addition, cosmetologists may be trained to give manicures, pedicures, and scalp and facial treatments; provide makeup analysis; and clean and style wigs and hairpieces.

A number of workers offer specialized services. Manicurists and pedicurists, called nail technicians in some States, work exclusively on nails and provide manicures, pedicures, polishing, and nail extensions to clients. Another group of specialists is skin care specialists, or estheticians, who cleanse and beautify the skin by giving facials, full-body treatments, and head and neck massages, as well as apply makeup. They also may remove hair through waxing or, if properly trained, with laser treatments. Finally, in larger salons, shampooers specialize in shampooing and conditioning hair.

In addition to working with clients, personal appearance workers may keep records of hair color or skin care regimens used by their regular clients. A growing number actively sell hair, skin, and nail care products. Barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers who operate their own salons have managerial duties that may include hiring, supervising, and firing workers, as well as keeping business and inventory records, ordering supplies, and arranging for advertising.

Work environment. Many full-time barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers put in a 40-hour week, but longer hours are common, especially among self-employed workers. Work schedules may include evenings and weekends, the times when beauty salons and barbershops are busiest. Many workers, especially those who are self-employed, determine their own schedules. In 2008, about 29 percent of barbers, hairstylists and cosmetologists worked part time, and 14 percent had variable schedules.

Barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers usually work in clean, pleasant surroundings with good lighting and ventilation. Most work in a salon or barbershop, although some may work in a spa, hotel, or resort. Good health and stamina are important, because these workers are on their feet for most of their shift. Prolonged exposure to some hair and nail chemicals may cause irritation, so protective clothing, such as plastic gloves or aprons, may be worn.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

All States require barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers to be licensed, with the exceptions of shampooers. To qualify for a license, most job seekers are required to graduate from a State-licensed barber or cosmetology school.

Education and training. A high school diploma or GED is required for some personal appearance workers in some States. In addition, most States require that barbers and cosmetologists complete a program in a State-licensed barber or cosmetology school. Programs in hairstyling, skin care, and other personal appearance services can be found in both high schools and in public or private postsecondary vocational schools.

Full-time programs in barbering and cosmetology usually last 9 months or more and may lead to an associate degree, but training for manicurists and pedicurists and skin care specialists requires significantly less time. Shampooers generally do not need formal training. Most professionals take advanced courses in hairstyling or other personal appearance services to keep up with the latest trends. They also may take courses in sales and marketing.

Licensure. All States require barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers to be licensed, with the exception of shampooers. Qualifications for a license vary by State, but generally a person must have a high school diploma or GED, be at least 16 years old, and have graduated from a State-licensed barber or cosmetology school. After graduating from a State approved training program, students take a State licensing examination. The exam consists of a written test and, in some cases, a practical test of styling skills or an oral examination. In many States, cosmetology training may be credited toward a barbering license, and vice versa, and a few States combine the two licenses. Most States require separate licens-



Nail technicians work in salons and provide various services including manicures.

ing examinations for manicurists, pedicurists, and skin care specialists. A fee is usually required upon application for a license, and periodic license renewals may be necessary.

Some States have reciprocity agreements that allow licensed barbers and cosmetologists to obtain a license in another State without additional formal training, but such agreements are uncommon. Consequently, persons who wish to work in a particular State should review the laws of that State before entering a training program.

Other qualifications. Successful personal appearance workers should have an understanding of fashion, art, and technical design. They also must keep a neat personal appearance and a clean work area. Interpersonal skills, image, and attitude play an important role in career success. As client retention and retail sales become an increasingly important part of salons' revenue, the ability to be an effective salesperson becomes ever more vital for salon workers. Some cosmetology schools consider "people skills" to be such an integral part of the job that they require coursework in that area. Business skills are important for those who plan to operate their own salons.

Advancement. Advancement usually takes the form of higher earnings, as barbers and cosmetologists gain experience and build a steady clientele. Some barbers and cosmetologists manage salons, lease booth space in salons, or open their own salons after several years of experience. Others teach in barber or cosmetology schools or provide training through vocational schools. Still others advance to other related occupations, such as sales representatives for companies that sell salon-related products, image or fashion consultants, or examiners for State licensing boards.

Employment

Barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers held about 821,900 jobs in 2008. Of these, barbers and cosmetologists held 684,200 jobs, manicurists and pedicurists 76,000, skin care specialists 38,800, and shampooers 22,900.

Most of these workers are employed in personal care services establishments, such as beauty salons, barber shops, nail salons, day and resort spas. Others were employed in nursing and other residential care homes. Nearly every town has a barbershop or beauty salon, but employment in this occupation is concentrated in the most populous cities and States.

About 44 percent of all barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers are self-employed. Many of these workers own their own salon, but a growing number of the self-employed lease booth space or a chair from the salon's owner.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2008	Projected Employment, 2018	Change, 2008-2018	
				Number	Percent
Barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers	—	821,900	987,400	165,500	20
Barbers and cosmetologists.....	39-5010	684,200	817,400	133,200	19
Barbers	39-5011	53,500	59,700	6,200	12
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists.....	39-5012	630,700	757,700	127,000	20
Manicurists and pedicurists.....	39-5092	76,000	90,200	14,300	19
Shampooers.....	39-5093	22,900	26,300	3,400	15
Skin care specialists	39-5094	38,800	53,500	14,700	38

(NOTE) Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

In this case, workers provide their own supplies, and are responsible for paying their own taxes and benefits. They may pay a monthly or weekly fee to the salon owner, who is responsible for utilities and maintenance of the building.

Job Outlook

Overall employment of barbers, cosmetologists, and other personal appearance workers is projected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations. Opportunities for entry-level workers should be favorable, while job candidates at high-end establishments will face keen competition.

Employment change. Personal appearance workers will grow by 20 percent from 2008 to 2018, which is much faster than the average for all occupations.

Employment trends are expected to vary among the different occupational specialties. Employment of hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists will increase by about 20 percent, while the number of barbers will increase by 12 percent. This growth will primarily come from an increasing population, which will lead to greater demand for basic hair services. Additionally, the demand for hair coloring and other advanced hair treatments has increased in recent years, particularly among baby boomers and young people. This trend is expected to continue, leading to a favorable outlook for hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists. Employment of shampooers will grow by 15 percent, as many cosmetologists and barbers are able to perform shampooing services, as well.

Continued growth in the number full-service spas and nail salons will also generate numerous job openings for manicurists, pedicurists, and skin care specialists. Estheticians and other skin care specialists will see large gains in employment, and are expected to grow almost 38 percent, primarily due to the popularity of skin treatments for relaxation and medical well-being. Manicurists and pedicurists meanwhile will grow by 19 percent.

Job prospects. Job opportunities generally should be good, particularly for licensed personal appearance workers seeking entry-level positions. A large number of job openings will come about from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations, retire, or leave the labor force for other reasons. However, workers can expect keen competition for jobs and clients at higher paying salons, as these positions are relatively few and require applicants to compete with a large pool of licensed and experienced cosmetologists. Opportunities will generally be best for those with previous experience and for those licensed to provide a broad range of services.

Earnings

Median hourly wages in May 2008 for hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists, including tips and commission, were \$11.13. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.57 and \$15.03. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$7.47, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$20.41.

Median hourly wages in May 2008 for barbers, including tips, were \$11.56. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.93 and \$14.69. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$7.56, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$19.51.

Among skin care specialists, median hourly wages, including tips, were \$13.81, for manicurists and pedicurists \$9.46, and for shampooers \$8.32.

While earnings for entry-level workers usually are low, earnings can be considerably higher for those with experience. A number of factors, such as the size and location of the salon, determine the total income of personal appearance workers. They may receive commissions based on the price of the service, or a salary based on the number of hours worked, and many receive commissions on the products they sell. In addition, some salons pay bonuses to employees who bring in new business. For many personal appearance workers, the ability to attract and hold regular clients is a key factor in determining earnings.

Although some salons offer paid vacations and medical benefits, many self-employed and part-time workers in this occupation do not enjoy such benefits. Some personal appearance workers receive free trial products from manufacturers in the hope that they will recommend the products to clients.

Related Occupations

Fitness workers
Makeup artists, theatrical and performance
Massage therapists

Sources of Additional Information

For details on State licensing requirements and approved barber or cosmetology schools, contact your State boards of barber or cosmetology examiners.

State licensing board requirements and a list of licensed training schools for cosmetologists may be obtained from:

► National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences, 4401 Ford Ave., Suite 1300, Alexandria, VA 22302.

Internet: <http://www.naccas.org>

Information about a career in cosmetology is available from:

► National Cosmetology Association, 401 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Internet: <http://www.ncacares.org>

For information on a career as a barber, contact:

► National Association of Barber Boards of America, 2703 Pine Street, Arkadelphia, AR 71923. Internet:

<http://www.nationalbarberboards.com>

The Occupational Information Network (O*NET) provides information on a wide range of occupational characteristics. Links to O*NET appear at the end of the Internet version of this occupational statement, accessible at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/ocos332.htm>