

Basic Requirements for Security Guards

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READING ASSIGNMENT

What Does It Take to Become a Security Guard?

As with any career in law enforcement and criminal justice, you must meet basic requirements in your state to become a security guard. There are also particular traits that you should develop or nurture if you decide to work in this field. In this lesson, you're going to learn about the requirements for becoming a security guard, where you can get more information about becoming a security guard in your state, and the personal attributes you should have to work in this field. Let's get started!

Basic Requirements



The basic requirements to become a security guard:

1. *You must be at least 18 years old.* There are state training programs only available to legal adults (18 years of age and older). Some places such as nightclubs can't have minors on the premises.

Armed security guards must take specific training and be able to legally own a firearm; the minimum age for handgun possession is 18.

2. *Ideally, you should have a clean background.* If you have a criminal background, depending on the circumstances and when it occurred, a conviction may *not* prevent you from obtaining a security guard license or job. Many types of felonies restrict your right to own or use a firearm. In addition to a criminal background check, prospective employers might ask you to undergo a credit check and drug test.
3. *You may be required to obtain a license.* The licensing requirements for armed and unarmed security guards vary from state to state. Some states stipulate specific training, including their own licensing courses, while other states require no specific training. Training and licensure may or may not be paid for by the employer. You may also have to pass a state test to receive your license. In some states, you may only be able to get your security guard license if you're employed by a security company. You'll have to take specialized firearm courses and exams to become an armed security guard.

Getting More Information about State Licensing

Your state has its own requirements that must be met for you to become a licensed security guard. In addition, once you finish training, it's likely that you'll be required to complete continuing education courses in the field.

Do you want to work as an armed or unarmed security guard? Armed security guards generally make more money, but they're also subject to stricter licensing and educational requirements than unarmed guards.

To learn more about the requirements in your state, check out your state's licensure qualifications.

TRACKING DOWN YOUR STATE'S REQUIREMENTS

To find security guard license requirements, search on the Internet using the name of your state. For example, if you live in New Hampshire, search "New Hampshire security guard license requirements." One of your first hits would lead you to the New Hampshire Department of Safety website.

Make sure that you locate a state government web page to ensure that you're getting the right information. Many informational websites don't reflect the most current updates in each state. It's likely that you're looking at the right page if the web address ends in *.gov*.

The governing body for security guard licensing often varies from state to state. For instance, the New Hampshire State Police regulate security guard licensing under the New Hampshire Department of Safety. However, in Nevada security guard licenses fall under the Nevada Private Investigator's Licensing Board.

In addition, some states don't require an individual to have a security guard license. Or, in some cases, the state only grants a license to a private security company and not an individual. Finally, an individual license might be granted at the county level only. You'll need to be diligent in finding the particular requirements for your state.

LET'S GET SPECIFIC

To learn more about the requirements in your state, begin your search for your state's licensure qualifications by using a search engine (for example, Google) to find what, if anything, is required. If your state *does* require a license for employment, you'll need to find out the specific requirements before you can apply for a license.

For example, does your state require any of the following?

- High school diploma/GED
 - Certified training
 - Written exam
 - Fee(s)
 - Fingerprints
 - Background check
 - Valid driver's license
 - Additional ID requirements (such as a social security card)
 - In-service training
 - Continuing education after employment
 - No felony convictions
 - No addiction issues (drugs, alcohol)
 - No history of mental illness
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Personal Attributes



Personal Attributes of a Security Guard

There are many personal attributes that make someone a good security guard; the following list summarizes some of the main ones. It's important to note that if you feel you don't possess some of these traits, you can always develop them. The simplest way to do this is by continually working at them. Then as time goes on, you'll find yourself exhibiting these qualities more and more.

1. *Honesty.* In order for your employer and the public to trust you, you must practice honesty. As a security guard, you're allowed into people's homes, businesses, and other sensitive areas. If your actions give an employer reason to doubt your trustworthiness or sincerity, you may find yourself out of a job.
2. *Attention to detail.* Any job in law enforcement or security requires attention to detail. Is a door inside a warehouse facility unlocked when it's always been locked in the past? Does someone seem to be lingering for no reason outside the premises you patrol? Criminals and would-be criminals are often deterred—or caught—by workers with an eye for the “little things.” Your ability to focus on details can also keep you and others safe—always one of your key aims. Remaining aware of your surroundings is a crucial trait in this field.
3. *Even temperament.* Someone working in security can't get upset, sad, anxious, or angry at the drop of a hat. This means you should be able to keep your cool even in stressful situations. Having an even temperament helps you as a security guard because it helps people trust you. In addition, it empowers you to make rational decisions even in times of stress. This makes you a better leader. You'll be able to help others—and yourself—in questionable or dangerous situations when you're able to remain calm.
4. *Physical fitness.* While you don't need to be a bodybuilder, you'll find that a degree of physical fitness will make you better at your job. Of course, physical fitness can do more than make your job easier. It can also lift your mood and improve your thinking.
5. *Excellent communication skills.* Many tense situations can be defused by knowing how to communicate effectively. Showing others that you're truly listening and talking to them in a clear, rational manner will help you develop more trusted connections. Ideally, you should also have good written communication skills. As you read in the previous lesson, you may be required to complete multiple types of reports, including reports at the end of each shift.
6. *A value for life.* A good security guard values life. This means that you care about the people around you: your colleagues, your clients, and even those that you may have to question or detain. Knowing what will ensure their safety and acting accordingly is a trait of every successful security professional.
7. *An appreciation for education and training.* Good security guards appreciate the opportunities they receive to both educate and be educated. The training and education that you receive from this course, your state licensing courses, and your employer will remain valuable assets throughout your career and your life. You can learn something from every class or training session that you attend. What you take out of each one is ultimately up to you.

JOB SEARCHING

While conducting a job search, you may find various job titles related to "security guard" depending on the state and the job sector. Some of the titles you may run across include

- Safety and Security Officer
- Security Agent
- Security Officer
- Loss Prevention Officer
- Crime Prevention Officer
- Campus Security Officer
- Hotel Security Officer
- Store Detective

Reflect and Respond

Which of the personal traits covered in this assignment do you feel you could develop better? What are some ways you could do that?
