

**Crafts Council
Education
Craft Careers**

How to become a Stone Carver



What does a stone mason do?

Stone carvers and stonemasons make things using stone. Stonemasonry may involve repairing and restoring old buildings or working on new construction projects.

Stone carvers might create more sculptural pieces, specialise in letter cutting or working with a particular type of stone, such as marble or granite.

Construction stonemasons cut and prepare stone for buildings. There are two main types of work:

- Banker masons are based in workshops, crafting and shaping blocks of stone. They also texture and polish stone—a technique called dressing. Some masons carve figures and patterns
- Fixer masons build the dressed stone on site, following the architect's plan. Monumental or memorial masonry is a separate but related skill, which involves making memorials for the funeral industry.

Key Skills

Being good with your hands is the key skill of any stone carver or stonemason. You will be using a range of different tools each with their own power levels, on a number of different stones, each with their own properties. Stonemasonry requires a deft hand, strength and dexterity, excellent co-ordination and a delicate touch.

An artistic eye and a creative mind are important. You will often need to draw complex designs to scale, as well as read, understand and follow accurately technical blueprints and instructions from builders and architects.

You will also want to develop your own style of work. Being able to specialise in certain work, with a particular style, is important. If you make sculptural pieces, design and concept will be important to your work.

It's demanding work so you should be willing to have good physical fitness and strength. Lifting heavy stone and working with large, powerful tools is tiring work. Fixer masons will frequently work outdoors and poor weather is rarely enough to stop a job. Similarly, a head for heights is crucial for fixer masons, as is being happy and able to travel for work on a regular basis.

A careful, responsible approach to work and working as a team is necessary. Stonemasons work in dangerous environments with the potential for serious injury and even death if procedures are not followed. Health and safety regulations must be respected in order to keep everyone safe.



Bananas, Marcia Bennett-Male

Qualifications.

Stonemasonry is essentially open to anyone and there are no formal requirements to kick-start your career as a stonemason. Training colleges will take students with lower GCSE grades and employers value hands-on experience in the building trade far more highly.

For those with no prior experience in the construction field then the option is to take a college course. This will give you an initial grounding in the art and will help in finding work as you go up to the next level.

Popular entry-level courses recognised by the City and Guilds include the Level 1 Award in Stone Masonry Operations, the Level 1 Certificate in Construction and Building, and the Diploma in Preparation for Employment in the Construction Industries.

These are one-year courses available at colleges and further education centres across the country. Students will learn and develop basic skills relevant to working in construction and which will allow them to move onto to higher and more specialised qualifications and apprenticeships.

Students could then take on the following qualifications or work towards them while on an apprenticeship scheme: Level 2 Diploma in Craft Masonry, Level 2/3 (NVQ) Diploma in Stonemasonry (Construction) and Level 2/3 Diploma in Stonemasonry - Banker.

These include units on how to interpret building plans, making/repairing/installing architectural features, cladding and structure, and health and safety.

Those with an interest in working on historical buildings could specialise in this by completing the Level 3 (NVQ) Diploma in Heritage Skills.



Octopus, Marcia Bennett-Male

It's a requirement to hold a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card if you are working on a construction site in the UK. This card is proof that you have passed the CITB Health, Safety, and Environment test which proves your occupational competence in health and safety.

Apprenticeship Programs offer the opportunity to gain a wide range of real-world stonemasonry experience onsite, with involvement in the day-to-day running of projects including the likes of masonry consolidation, dressing stone and building stone, as well as many other conservation practices and general routine maintenance of properties.

Those with some prior experience in construction can skip the entry-level qualifications above but it's always worth checking out apprenticeship requirements before you apply as they do vary.

Apprentices attend college during the apprenticeship for further study to develop their knowledge, understanding and experience, leading to an NVQ Diploma in Stonemasonry. The final year of the apprenticeship consists of onsite training and skills tests.

The easiest way to find an apprenticeship is to use the [government's apprenticeship search tool](#), search for available opportunities elsewhere on the internet, or talk with a career's advisor.



Crowned, Marcia Bennett-Male

Other useful information

- [Colleges offering stonemasonry courses](#)
- [An overview of how to become a stonemason](#)
- [National Careers Service – becoming a stonemason](#)
- [City and Guilds - Stonemasonry](#)

Featured Maker.

[Marcia Bennett-Male](#) is a London based stone sculptor. After completing a degree in fine art went on to formally train as an architectural stone carver, letter cutter and then, a stone mason. Her workshop is based at Thames-Side Studios SE18.

A woman with short dark hair, wearing glasses and a green shirt, is shown in profile, focused on her work. She is using a large, light-colored mallet to shape a piece of stone. In the background, another person is visible, working on a large, detailed stone sculpture of a human head. The setting is a well-lit workshop with various tools and materials visible on shelves and workbenches.

Craft Careers

Craft generates £3.4 billion for the UK economy each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. British craft has never been so sought-after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from aerospace to architecture.

To learn more about craft careers visit:
www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers