

Why the mad rush to hire tons of people at Christmas time? The holiday season is the peak-selling period for retailers nationwide, which translates into an abundance of opportunities for students. So how much hiring are companies really doing? According to Bruce Van Kleeck, vice-president of member services for the National Retail Federation, department stores increase their staff by 8.8 percent during the months of November and December. Small apparel stores will increase by 7.8 per cent. So if you want to spend your winter break making fast cash by working at your favorite clothing store, then start your job search now. "If you're even thinking about working, get in early, and you'll get the job," advises Kleeck. The holiday season is busier now than in recent years and due to the competitive job market, retailers are hiring months before the season starts. Tweak your resume before hitting the pavement and you'll find yourself a promising job this Christmas.

A part-time retail job can lead you down the road to a fulfilling career after graduation. As a seasonal employee, you are truly getting a taste of what it is like to work in a retail environment before you make any long-term commitments. "It's a good opportunity for college students to build work experience and get good references," says Kleeck, and it's a great way to check out retailing as a possible career choice. There are numerous career opportunities in retail including those in marketing, display, design, human resources, and computers. For those students not yet graduating, being a seasonal employee is a great way to get your foot in the door. It used to be that Dec. 24 meant all seasonal employees were laid off. That's not the case any longer. "Today, interested employees can stay on in a permanent retail job," says Kleeck, once the busy season is over.

Employers are looking for sales associates with the right attitude, flexibility in scheduling, a high level of maturity, and a genuine desire in helping people when the time comes to staff their stores, says Kleeck. Other qualities include strong communication skills, initiative, and a personal desire to achieve results. Retail also has great benefits such as employee discounts, overtime compensation, flexibility of hours, and wages are up right now—above minimum wage due to the competitive market.

Graduating this spring? If you are interested in pursuing a career in retail, don't wait too long. Retailers recruit in the late fall and early spring on campus. Kleeck advises visiting the college recruitment section on the web site of the company you are interested in to find out when they will be visiting your school for interviews. Or you can call their College Recruitment Office to find out where to send your resume. An internship is another great way of testing the waters of retail. Many colleges offer related programs or you can break out on your own and find yourself a challenging internship with a major retailer.

When applying for a retail position, don't forget to do your homework. Shop the store yourself, and look at other sales people for tips on how to land a job with the company. Retail is on fire during this season, why not be part of its tremendous success?

'Tis The Season To Be Working Part-Time