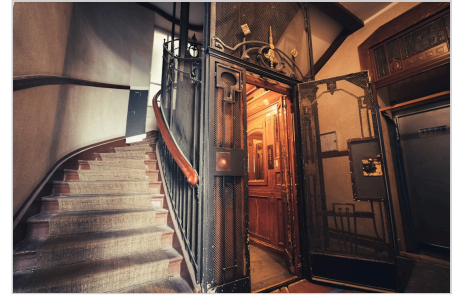


Elevator Operators

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Before the invention of **automatic** elevators, tall buildings employed **elevator operators** to transport passengers safely between floors. Early elevators were dangerous and complex **mechanisms** that required skilled operation. The operator controlled speed, direction, and stopping **precision** using manual levers and wheels, making their expertise essential for safe vertical transportation.



These **professionals** served in **prestigious** locations including upscale department stores like Macy's and Lord & Taylor, luxury hotels, apartment buildings, and **commercial** office towers. Operators maintained strict appearance standards, wearing pressed uniforms, white gloves, and polished shoes. They performed a dual role as both technical operators and customer service representatives, announcing floors with phrases like 'Third floor, men's furnishings and sporting goods!'

The daily routine demanded physical stamina and social skills. Operators stood for eight to twelve hours, repeatedly operating heavy manual controls while maintaining courteous interaction with passengers. The position represented stable **employment** for working-class individuals, though wages remained modest. A skilled operator in 1940 earned approximately \$20-25 weekly, sufficient to support a small family but not achieving middle-class prosperity.

Qualifications were minimal yet specific: operators needed physical strength, pleasant demeanor, basic literacy, and reliable attendance. Most received on-the-job training lasting several weeks. The profession reached its zenith during the building boom of the 1920s through 1950s, when thousands of new skyscrapers created abundant opportunities in major metropolitan areas.

The **decline** began in the 1950s when Otis Elevator Company perfected reliable automatic elevator systems with push-button controls. These **innovations** eliminated the need for human operators while improving efficiency and reducing **labor** costs. By the 1970s, the profession had become virtually **obsolete**. Today, only select luxury establishments like the Plaza Hotel in New York maintain traditional elevator operators as a nostalgic amenity for discerning guests.

A. Vocabulary

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. automatic _____ | a. new methods, ideas, or products |
| 2. mechanisms _____ | b. the condition of having paid work |
| 3. precision _____ | c. skills, knowledge, or experience needed for a job |
| 4. professionals _____ | d. exactness and accuracy in movement or measurement |
| 5. prestigious _____ | e. having high status and respect in society |
| 6. commercial _____ | f. no longer in use; outdated and replaced |
| 7. employment _____ | g. operating without human control or intervention |
| 8. qualifications _____ | h. systems of moving parts working together in a machine |
| 9. innovations _____ | i. people engaged in skilled work requiring special training |
| 10. obsolete _____ | j. relating to business and trade activities |

B. True or False

1. Early elevators were simple machines that anyone could operate safely. ____
2. Elevator operators worked primarily in luxury hotels and department stores. ____
3. The job required extensive formal education and technical certification. ____
4. Operators controlled elevator movement using manual levers and wheels. ____
5. Most operators earned middle-class wages that supported comfortable lifestyles. ____
6. The profession peaked during the building boom of 1920-1950. ____
7. Otis Elevator Company developed the first automatic elevator systems. ____
8. Modern luxury hotels have completely eliminated elevator operators. ____
9. Operators served both technical and customer service functions. ____

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: mechanisms, obsolete, prestigious, building, qualifications, commercial, innovations

1. Early elevators were dangerous _____ that required skilled operation by trained professionals.
2. The job became _____ when automatic elevators with push-button controls were invented.
3. Elevator operators worked in _____ locations like luxury hotels and upscale department stores.
4. The profession reached its peak during the _____ boom of the mid-20th century.
5. Operators needed minimal _____ but required physical strength and pleasant social skills.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. Why were elevator operators necessary in early tall buildings?
2. What types of establishments typically employed elevator operators?
3. Describe the working conditions and social status of elevator operators.
4. What technological development led to the decline of this profession?
5. Where can elevator operators still be found today, and why?

E. Discussion Questions

1. How do you think technological automation affects workers in modern society?
2. What qualities made a person successful as an elevator operator in the past?
3. Should luxury hotels preserve traditional jobs like elevator operators? Justify your opinion.

Answer Key

Elevator Operators — Teacher Reference Only

A. Vocabulary: 1-g, 2-h, 3-d, 4-i, 5-e, 6-j, 7-b, 8-c, 9-a, 10-f

B. True/False: 1-F, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-T, 8-F, 9-T

C. Fill Blanks: 1-mechanisms, 2-obsolete, 3-prestigious, 4-building, 5-qualifications

D. Comprehension:

1. Early elevators were dangerous and complex machines requiring skilled manual operation for safe transportation.
2. Luxury hotels, upscale department stores, apartment buildings, and commercial office towers.
3. They worked long hours standing, performed both technical and customer service duties, earned modest working-class wages.
4. Otis Elevator Company's automatic elevator systems with push-button controls eliminated the need for human operators.
5. Select luxury hotels like the Plaza Hotel maintain them as nostalgic amenities for guests.