

Aircraft Mechanic

Two years of school, a federal certificate, and your signature is what puts a plane back in the air.

TYPICAL PAY

\$79,870

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$49k to \$129k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Airline hangars, airport ramps,
repair stations, corporate flight d...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Shop, math and physics are the useful ones. Good eyesight, steady hands and a tolerance for detail matter more than grades.
- 2 Pick your route** Decision point
Either an approved maintenance school, or 30 months of documented hands-on experience under someone who will sign for it. The military is the classic experience route.
- 3 Aviation maintenance school** 18 to 24 months
Federally approved programs follow a fixed syllabus known as Part 147. Classroom plus hangar time on real airframes and engines.
- 4 Pass the written tests** Weeks
Three computer tests: General, Airframe and Powerplant.
- 5 Oral and practical exams** 1 to 2 days
A designated examiner quizzes you and watches you do real tasks. Pass and you hold the airframe and powerplant certificate.

Pros and cons

- + Well paid without a four-year degree
- + A federal certificate that works in every state and never expires
- + Free standby flights for you and your family at most airlines
- Nights, weekends and outdoor ramp work in every kind of weather
- Your signature carries legal responsibility
- First jobs at regional airlines pay poorly and often require relocating

Optional boosts

Inspection Authorization (IA). Avionics training. Nondestructive testing (NDT). Manufacturer type courses.

Good to know

Your certificate never expires

Unlike a driver's license, the airframe and powerplant certificate has no renewal date. What it does have is a recency rule: you must have worked as a mechanic recently to exercise its privileges.

The manual is not a suggestion

There is an approved procedure for almost every task, and doing it your own way is a violation even if the result works. Mechanics keep the manual open on the job, every single time.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians (49-3011.00)

Aviation Technician Education Council

Tulsa Technology Center, career and technical programs

Apprenticeship.gov, the United States Department of Labor apprenticeship site

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/aircraft-mechanic>



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