

Architect

Design buildings and get them built. A long licensing path with three gates: a degree, logged experience, and six exams.

TYPICAL PAY

\$99,280

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$62k to \$161k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Architecture firms, developers, government agencies, constructi...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Math, physics and art. Build a portfolio of drawings and models, because many programs ask to see one.
- 2 Accredited professional degree** 5 to 7 years
 The National Architectural Accrediting Board accredits the professional degrees. The usual routes are a five-year Bachelor of Architecture straight out of high school, or a four-year pre-professional degree followed by a Master of Architecture.
- 3 Log experience** 3 to 5 years, usually overlapping work
 The Architect Experience Program run by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards. Several thousand hours spread across six practice areas, from project management to construction administration, recorded as you work at a firm.
- 4 Pass six exams** 1 to 3 years of evenings
 The Architect Registration Examination has six divisions covering practice management, project management, programming and analysis, planning and design, development and documentation, and construction and evaluation.
- 5 Register in your state** Weeks
 Apply to your state board. You are not an architect and may not use the title until that registration is issued.

Pros and cons

- + You can point at a building and say you made that
- + A protected title and a real profession
- + Work spans art, engineering, law and business
- Seven to ten years and six exams before you are licensed
- Pay is low for the education compared with engineering or law
- The first jobs are construction ones and vanish in a recession

Good to know

The title is legally protected

In every American state it is illegal to call yourself an architect without a license, the same way it is for a doctor. People who design buildings without one are called designers, and they have to say so.

Six exams, one at a time

The Architect Registration Examination is split into six separate divisions. Candidates take them one by one over months or years, at \$263 a shot, and retakes cost full price. Most people fail at least one...

Optional boosts

Healthcare and lab design. Building information modeling. Sustainability and energy modeling. Historic preservation.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Architects, Except Landscape and Naval (17-1011.00)
 National Council of Architectural Registration Boards: become an architect
 National Council of Architectural Registration Boards: fees
 National Architectural Accrediting Board

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/architect>



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