

Auto Body Repairer

Put wrecked cars back to straight and paint them so nobody can tell. Under a year of school, tools are the real cost.

TYPICAL PAY

\$54,890

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$37k to \$88k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Collision repair shops, dealerships, fleet garages, custom shops

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Auto shop if your school has it. Some districts run collision repair programs that put you a year ahead.
- 2 Training program or a shop job** 9 months to 2 years
 A collision repair program at a community or technical college, usually under a year, or hire on as a helper and learn from the floor.
- 3 Learn the trade on real cars** Years 1 to 3
 Disassembly, panel replacement, plastic repair, welding, then bodywork and filler. Paint is usually a separate specialty.
- 4 Get certified** Years 2 to 4
 Certification from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence is the standard credential in this trade, and I-CAR (Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair) training is what insurers and manufacturers look for.
- 5 Specialize** Year 4 and up
 Structural and aluminum repair, refinishing, estimating, or run your own shop.

Pros and cons

- + Cheap, short training and no debt if you go the shop route
- + You can see the finished result every single day
- + Skill nobody can outsource overseas
- Flat rate pay means a slow week is a small paycheck
- Dust, solvents, noise and years of awkward positions
- You buy your own tools, and they are expensive

Good to know

The insurance company writes the estimate

In most American collision repairs the customer is not really the one paying. An insurance adjuster approves a repair plan, and shops negotiate supplements when they find hidden damage after teardown...

Modern cars are not all steel any more

Aluminum bodies, high-strength steel and carbon fiber all need specific tools, specific welds and specific procedures written by the manufacturer. Repair one the old way and the car will not protect an...

Optional boosts

Aluminum and structural repair. Refinishing. Advanced driver assistance calibration. Estimating.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Automotive Body and Related Repairers (49-3021.00)
 National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence
 Universal Technical Institute: collision repair and refinish technology
 Pennsylvania College of Technology

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/auto-body-repairer>



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