

Carpenter

Frame houses, build forms, hang doors and trim. You can be paid from your first week and never owe a dollar in tuition.

TYPICAL PAY

\$60,580

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$100k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

House framing, commercial job sites, remodeling, concrete forming

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Shop, geometry and drafting. A summer as a laborer on a site tells you more than a year of reading about it.
- 2 Get on a crew, or apply to an apprenticeship** 0 to 6 months
Either get hired as a laborer or helper, or apply to a joint apprenticeship program run by a union local or a contractors association.
- 3 Registered apprenticeship** 4 years
The standard shape is about 2,000 paid hours on the job each year plus at least 144 hours of classroom time, over four years.
- 4 Journeyman carpenter** Year 4 or 5
You can read a set of plans, lay out a building, run your own section and be left alone with it.
- 5 Lead carpenter or foreman** Year 6 onward
Running a crew, ordering material, dealing with the general contractor and the inspector.

Pros and cons

- + You earn from day one and finish with no student debt
- + You can see what you built from the road years later
- + Fully qualified in about four years
- Hard on your back, knees and shoulders, and it adds up by 45
- Weather: freezing mornings, brutal afternoons, rained out days
- Construction goes quiet in a downturn and layoffs come fast

Optional boosts

Concrete formwork. Finish carpentry and trim. Layout. Welding.

Good to know

Half a million carpenters carry one union card

The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America says it has over half a million members, which makes it one of the largest building trades unions in North America. It runs its own international t...

Construction training is tracked like a transcript

NCCER (the National Center for Construction Education and Research) has logged more than 26 million training completions across roughly 5,600 training locations. Your credentials sit under a...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Carpenters (47-2031.00)
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America
NCCER: construction craft training and credentials
Apprenticeship.gov: United States Department of Labor

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/carpenter>



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