

Chemist

Find out what something is made of, or make something that did not exist yesterday. A bachelor's degree starts you; a doctorate decides your ceiling.

TYPICAL PAY

\$91,240

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$58k to \$161k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Industry labs, pharmaceutical companies, government labs, univ...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Chemistry, physics and calculus. Any of them missing makes the first year of the degree much harder than it needs to be.
- 2 Bachelor's degree in chemistry** 4 years
Four years of coursework and lab. Get into a professor's research group as an undergraduate: it matters more than your grades for graduate admission.
- 3 Industry job, or graduate school** Decision point
With the bachelor's you can work in analysis and quality control now, or apply to funded doctoral programs.
- 4 Doctorate** 5 to 6 years
Five to six years of original research on one narrow problem, paid a stipend to teach and to do it.
- 5 Industry, government or academic research** After the doctorate
Some fields expect a postdoctoral position of two or three years first, especially if you want a university job.

Pros and cons

- + Real pay with a four-year degree, before any graduate school
- + Doctoral programs are funded, so you are paid rather than charged
- + The federal outlook is bright, with rapid projected growth
- The ceiling with only a bachelor's degree arrives quickly
- A doctorate costs five or six years of low income in your twenties
- Industry research jobs move with company funding and layoffs happen

Optional boosts

Analytical chemistry. Organic and medicinal chemistry. Materials chemistry. Computational chemistry.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Chemists (19-2031.00)
University of California, Berkeley, College of Chemistry
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program
United States Environmental Protection Agency: careers

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/chemist>

Good to know

Graduate school can pay \$53,000 a year

The National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship gives a \$37,000 annual stipend plus a \$16,000 cost of education allowance for three years inside a five-year award, and there is no service requi...

The federal outlook is unusually strong

The government career profile flags chemistry as a bright outlook occupation, meaning new openings are very likely and the field is expected to grow rapidly. Most laboratory science occupations are n...



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