

College Instructor

Teach the trade you already know at a community or technical college. Your work history is the qualification.

TYPICAL PAY

\$63,820

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$109k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Community and technical colleges, training centers, shops and labs, o...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Then go learn the field you will eventually teach.
- 2 Qualify in your trade or field** 2 to 5 years
Journey-level certification, a nursing license, a commercial driver's license, an accounting credential. Whatever the industry standard is.
- 3 Work in it** 3 to 5 years
Colleges typically want several years of real industry experience, and students can tell instantly whether you have it.
- 4 Add the academic credential** Varies
Often an associate or bachelor's degree, sometimes a master's for academic subjects. Some states also require a career and technical education teaching credential.
- 5 Teach a course, then apply for a full-time line** 1 to 4 years
Nearly everyone starts as a part-time instructor teaching one class. Full-time openings usually go to people already teaching there.

Pros and cons

- + Your industry experience is the qualification, not a barrier
- + Steady schedule and long breaks compared with the trade itself
- + Public employer, pension and loan forgiveness if you are full time
- Most teaching is part time, per course, with no benefits
- Employment in this field is expected to stay flat, so full-time lines are scarce
- Pay is usually lower than staying in the trade

Optional boosts

Current industry credentials. Online teaching experience. Curriculum development. A master's degree.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary (25-1194.00)
American Association of Community Colleges
Portland Community College
National Center for Education Statistics: tuition and fees

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/college-instructor>

Good to know

Community college is the cheap door into everything

Average tuition and fees at a public two-year college run around \$4,000 a year, against roughly \$9,800 at a public four-year university and about \$40,700 at a private nonprofit one. Instructors at those tw...

Most students are part time

At Portland Community College, for example, 61% of students enroll part time, and about 5,600 transfer credits to four-year schools each year. Teaching here means teaching people who are also working.



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