

Concrete Finisher

Place and finish the concrete everything else is built on. Paid from your first day, no tuition.

TYPICAL PAY

\$57,020

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$39k to \$85k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Construction sites, roads and bridges, driveways, parking decks

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or the GED (General Educational Development) test** Grade 12
Most apprenticeships require one. Straight hire by a small contractor often does not.
- 2 Get on a crew as a helper** Right away
Moving hose, setting forms, pulling screed, cleaning tools. Nobody lets you finish a slab in week one.
- 3 Register an apprenticeship** 2 to 4 years
Roughly 2 to 4 years combining paid work with classroom hours, run by a union local or a contractor association through the federal apprenticeship system.
- 4 Learn to finish, not just to place** 2 to 5 years in
Timing the set, bull floating, edging, troweling and knowing when to walk away is what separates a laborer from a finisher.
- 5 Journeyman, then foreman** 5 years and up
Running your own crew, reading the plans, calling the pour and owning the result.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from week one with no tuition and no debt
- + A real skill learned in a few years, not a decade
- + Union work brings a pension and family health coverage
- Hard on knees, back and shoulders, and it catches up with people
- Weather rules your income: rain, frost and heat all stop or ruin a pour
- Work slows sharply when construction slows

Optional boosts

Flatwork finisher certification. Decorative and polished concrete. Concrete field testing technician. Safety training card.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers (47-2051.00)
Apprenticeship.gov: United States Department of Labor
Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association
American Concrete Institute: certification programs

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/concrete-finisher>

Good to know

Concrete does not dry, it reacts

Cement and water go through a chemical reaction called hydration and keep gaining strength for years. That is why a slab can be poured underwater and why finishers are watching a clock they cannot stop.

Wet concrete burns you

Fresh concrete is strongly alkaline and will cause chemical burns through wet clothing without you feeling it at the time. Knee pads, gloves and rubber boots are the reason experienced finishers still ha...



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