

Court Reporter

Capture every word said in a courtroom at over 200 words a minute. Two years of school, no degree needed.

TYPICAL PAY

\$72,420

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$131k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Courtrooms, law offices for depositions, home offices, live bro...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development certificate)** Grade 12
 No degree is required for this career. English, grammar and typing are the useful preparation.
- 2 Court reporting program** 2 to 4 years
 An associate degree or certificate. The College of Court Reporting runs 7 semesters, about 28 months full time. Most of it is machine shorthand theory and daily speed building.
- 3 Hit the graduation speed** The hard part
 You must pass dictation tests at 180 words a minute on literary material, 200 on a jury charge and 225 on two-voice testimony, at 95% accuracy. Many students take longer than the catalog says because of this step.
- 4 Certification** Weeks
 Most states either require a state certificate, licensure, or the Registered Professional Reporter credential from the National Court Reporters Association. Check your own state before you enroll.
- 5 Start working** After certification
 Usually freelance depositions first, then an official court seat when one opens.

Pros and cons

- + Strong pay for a two-year path with no degree
- + Real independence, especially freelancing or captioning from home
- + Page rates on transcripts mean your income is not capped by a salary table
- The speed requirement washes a lot of students out before they graduate
- Digital recording and speech recognition are taking work at the lower end
- The federal outlook for the occupation is a decline

Optional boosts

Certified Realtime Reporter. Certified Realtime Captioner. Registered Merit Reporter and Registered Diplomate Reporter. Certified Legal Video Specialist.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Court Reporters and Simultaneous Captioners
 National Court Reporters Association: certification
 College of Court Reporting: court reporting degree
 United States Courts: careers in the federal judiciary

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/court-reporter>

Good to know

The machine has only 22 keys

A steno machine has around two dozen keys and you press several at once, writing whole syllables or words in one stroke. That is how a reporter keeps up with speech that would take hundreds of keystrokes...

225 words a minute is the gate

To graduate you have to take down two people arguing at 225 words a minute with 95% accuracy. Ordinary conversation runs around 150. It is closer to a sport than a school subject, and it takes daily practice f...



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