

Drafting Technologist

Turn an engineer's sketch into the drawing a crew builds from. Two years of school, no license.

TYPICAL PAY

\$66,150

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$46k to \$100k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Engineering firms, architecture offices, city public works, manufa...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Geometry, drafting or technology classes, and art if you have room. Learn to read a tape measure properly.
- 2 Associate degree or certificate** 1 to 2 years
Drafting, CAD (computer aided design) technology, or architectural or civil technology at a community college. One to two years.
- 3 Learn the real software** During school
AutoCAD, Revit and Civil 3D for buildings and infrastructure, SolidWorks or Inventor for products and machines.
- 4 Internship or first job** Summer or on graduation
Junior drafter or drafting technician. You start by redlining, correcting and detailing other people's drawings.
- 5 Specialize** Years 2 to 5
Structural, civil site design, mechanical piping, electrical, or three dimensional modeling coordination. Each one narrows you and pays you.

Pros and cons

- + Two years and often no debt, for an office job in engineering
- + No license, no board exam, no long qualification period
- + A real route into engineering and architecture if you want to go further
- Growth is only average, and engineers increasingly model their own work
- It is desk work, precise and repetitive, for eight hours
- Pay stalls unless you pick up modeling coordination or a specialty

Optional boosts

BIM (building information modeling). Civil site design software. Point cloud and laser scan work. Clash detection and coordination.

Good to know

Blueprints really were blue

The old copying process printed white lines on deep blue paper, which is where the word comes from. Drawings have been black on white for decades, and are now mostly never printed at all, but the n...

The drawing is a legal document

Once an engineer or architect stamps a set of drawings, it becomes the contract a builder is held to. A dimension typed wrong can put a wall in the wrong place and cost more than your yearly salary to fix.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Architectural and Civil Drafters (17-3011.00)

American Design Drafting Association

Austin Community College: applied technology programs and tuition

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/drafting-technologist>



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