

FBI Agent

Investigate federal crimes for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). You need a degree, real work experience first, and patience with a long hiring process.

TYPICAL PAY

\$93,790

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$55k to \$161k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 9 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Field offices, crime scenes,
interview rooms, courtrooms, sur...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
 Grades matter for university admission. A clean record matters more, because a background investigation will look at all of it.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any subject. Accounting, computer science, languages and law are the backgrounds the Bureau openly wants most.
- 3 Work full time in the real world** 1 to 2 years
 You need at least two years of full-time professional experience, or one year with an advanced degree. This is not optional and it is why almost nobody is hired at 22.
- 4 Apply and get through the process** 9 to 18 months
 Written testing, interviews, a physical fitness test, a full background investigation, a polygraph and a medical exam. Expect it to take many months.
- 5 The academy at Quantico, Virginia** About 5 months
 Months of residential training in law, investigations, firearms, defensive tactics and physical conditioning, then a first field office assignment.

Pros and cons

- + Work that genuinely matters and is well resourced
- + Paid from day one of training, with a strong pension
- + Constant training in real specialist skills
- The hiring process can take well over a year
- You go where you are assigned, not where you want
- On call, with unscheduled nights and weekends

Good to know

There is an age window and it closes

You must be at least 23 to become a special agent and you have to apply before your 38th birthday, unless you are a veteran or already have federal law enforcement service. It is one of the few careers wit...

You agree to go anywhere

Applicants sign up for mobility. Your first office could be anywhere in the country, and later assignments can move you again. People with roots in one town find this the hardest part of the job, not the danger.

Optional boosts

Certified public accountant. Military or police service. A law degree. Fluency in a hard language.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Detectives and Criminal Investigators (33-3021.00)
 O*NET OnLine: Detectives and Criminal Investigators
 USAJOBS, the federal government's official jobs site
 Office of Personnel Management: pay and locality tables

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/fbi-agent>



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