

Flight Attendant

Safety crew first, service second, paid by the flight hour and living by a seniority list.

TYPICAL PAY

\$63,580

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$35k to \$136k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Aircraft cabins, airports, hotels in other cities

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development certificate)** Grade 12
That is the education floor. Most airlines set a minimum age of 18 to 21 and require a valid passport with no travel restrictions.
- 2 Apply and interview**
An online application, a recorded video interview, then a face to face assessment day with group exercises. Airlines are looking for calm, friendly people who follow procedure.
- 3 Background check and medical** Weeks to months
A ten-year background check, fingerprinting, a drug test, and a reach test to confirm you can get to the emergency equipment in the overhead bins.
- 4 Airline training** 3 to 8 weeks
Live-in training at the airline's own center covering evacuations, fires on board, decompression, medical emergencies, self defense and service. There are written and practical exams and people do get sent home.
- 5 Reserve** 1 to several years
New crew sit on call, ready to leave for the airport on short notice, often for years at a large airline. Seniority is the only way out of it.

Pros and cons

- + No degree and no tuition needed
- + Free standby travel for you and family
- + Blocks of days off at home, not weekends nibbled away
- The first years are low paid and spent on call
- You do not choose your base and may have to move
- Body clock damage, dry air and constant time zone changes

Optional boosts

Language qualification. Purser or lead position. International and long-haul flying. Training instructor or recruiter.

Good to know

The number of crew is set by law, not by service

Federal rules require a minimum number of flight attendants based on how many passenger seats the aircraft has, roughly one for every 50 seats. They are on board to evacuate the aircraft, not to hand out dri...

Seniority governs everything

Your schedule, your base, your days off, your holidays and whether you sit reserve all come from your position on a single list ordered by hire date. Change airlines and you start at the bottom again, which is...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Flight Attendants (53-2031.00)
United States Code, Title 49, Section 44728: flight attendant certification
Association of Flight Attendants, Communications Workers of America
Apprenticeship.gov, the federal apprenticeship job finder

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/flight-attendant>



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