

# Flight Dispatcher

Plan and legally share control of an airline flight from a desk, without ever leaving the ground.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$56,850**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$36k to \$102k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**1 to 3 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Moderate**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**Yes**

regulated job

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Airline operations control centers,  
airport operations offices, military...**

## How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12  
No degree is required. What you need is to read, speak, write and understand English, which the regulation states outright.
- 2 Take an approved dispatcher course** 2 to 6 weeks  
An approved aircraft dispatcher certification course covering weather, navigation, aircraft performance, regulations and flight planning. It runs around 200 hours, often packed into five or six intense weeks.
- 3 Pass the knowledge test** 1 day  
A federal multiple choice exam. You can sit it from age 21, two years before you are allowed to hold the certificate itself.
- 4 Pass the practical test** 1 day  
An oral and practical exam with an examiner where you plan real flights and defend your decisions.
- 5 Get hired and get seniority** 2 to 5 years  
Start at a regional, cargo or charter operator, often on an assistant desk or as an operations agent first, then move up and across to a larger airline.

## Pros and cons

- + A serious aviation career for a few thousand dollars, not six figures
- + Airline travel benefits without living out of a suitcase
- + Real authority: you share legal control of the flight
- Nights, weekends and holidays for years
- The pay ladder starts low and the good jobs are in few cities
- Sustained mental load and no leaving early when it goes wrong

## Optional boosts

International and long-range qualification. Meteorology study. A pilot certificate. Moving into operations management.

## Good to know

### You have to be 23

The regulation sets a minimum age of 23 to hold an aircraft dispatcher certificate, though you may take the written knowledge test at 21. It is one of the highest minimum ages attached to any American certifica...

### Two people say yes, or the flight does not go

On a scheduled airline flight, the captain and the dispatcher each hold a veto. Either one can refuse to release the flight, and neither can overrule the other.

### Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Airfield Operations Specialists (53-2022.00)  
Code of Federal Regulations, Title 14, Section 65.53: aircraft dispatcher eligibility  
Airline Dispatchers Federation  
Sheffield School of Aeronautics

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-dispatcher>



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