

Geologist

Read the rock. Find the water, the metal or the fault line, and tell people what is under their feet.

TYPICAL PAY

\$101,920

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$59k to \$200k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Field sites, consulting offices,
mines, state and federal surveys**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Chemistry, physics and math. Earth science if it is offered. Go outside and look at rock cuts on the highway.
- 2 Bachelor's degree in geology** 4 years
Mineralogy, petrology, structural geology, sedimentology, plus chemistry, physics and calculus.
- 3 Summer field camp** One summer
Four to six weeks mapping real terrain, usually in the mountain west. Almost every program requires it and most employers ask whether you did it.
- 4 First job or a master's** 0 to 2 years
Environmental consulting hires bachelor's graduates. Mining, petroleum and research work mostly want a master's, and those are often funded.
- 5 State license, if your work needs it** After about 5 years of experience
Pass the Fundamentals of Geology exam and later the Practice of Geology exam from ASBOG (the National Association of State Boards of Geology).

Pros and cons

- + Real field work, not a desk every day
- + Median pay above \$100,000 on a four-year degree
- + Skills used in water, energy, mining, construction and hazards
- Hiring swings hard with oil and metal prices
- Starting pay in environmental consulting is low for the training
- Field seasons mean weeks away from home

Optional boosts

Hydrogeology. Economic and mine geology. Engineering geology. Environmental geology.

Good to know

Field camp is the rite of passage

Most geology degrees end with four to six weeks camped in the mountains, mapping terrain with a compass, a notebook and your own two legs. People talk about their field camp for the rest of their career...

The national survey is older than most states

The United States Geological Survey was created in 1879 to study the nation's lands and resources, and it has been making maps for well over a century. It is still one of the largest single employers of geologists.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Geoscientists, Except Hydrologists and Geographers (19-2042.00)

O*NET OnLine: Geoscientists, employment and outlook

National Association of State Boards of Geology

American Geosciences Institute

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/geologist>



Scan for the full clicker