

HVAC (Heating and Cooling) Technician

Install and fix the furnaces, air conditioners and refrigeration that every building depends on.

TYPICAL PAY

\$61,010

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$95k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Rooftops, attics, crawlspaces, homes, stores, a service van

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) test** Grade 12
Math, physics and shop. Some high schools run a heating and cooling program that puts you a year ahead.
- 2 Pick apprenticeship or trade school** 6 months to 2 years
A registered apprenticeship pays you from the first day. A community college certificate takes 6 to 24 months and gets you hired faster by companies that want some theory first.
- 3 Get certified to handle refrigerant** A few weeks of study
Federal law requires certification before you can service equipment containing ozone-depleting refrigerants. The test has a core section plus separate parts for small appliances, high-pressure and low-pressure systems.
- 4 Work as a tech** 2 to 5 years
Two to five years of installs and service calls until you can diagnose a system without calling someone. This is the part that cannot be shortened.
- 5 State license and voluntary certification** Year 3 onward
Most states license heating and cooling contractors and some license technicians. Add a national skills certification to prove what you can actually do.

Pros and cons

- + Earning within a year, with little or no debt
- + The federal profile rates this trade as growing rapidly with lots of openings
- + Genuinely portable: every state, every town
- Attics in summer, crawlspaces in winter, rooftops in both
- On-call nights and weekends when the weather turns
- Electrical shock, refrigerant burns and falls are real risks

Good to know

Venting refrigerant is a federal offense

Section 608 of the Clean Air Act bans intentionally releasing ozone-depleting refrigerants into the air. That is why the certification exists, and why every technician carries a recovery machine to captu...

Your busiest days are the worst weather days

The first 95 degree day of summer and the first hard freeze of winter are when every phone rings at once. Service companies plan their whole year around those weeks, and techs who want overtime get all...

Optional boosts

Federal refrigerant certification. North American Technician Excellence certification. Commercial refrigeration. Controls and building automation.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers (49-9021.00)

Environmental Protection Agency: Section 608 technician certification

North American Technician Excellence certification

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/hvac-technician>



Scan for the full clicker