

Ironworker

Steel is the skeleton of everything. You tie it, bolt it, weld it and hang it, usually outdoors and often high up.

TYPICAL PAY

\$58,970

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$43k to \$105k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

3 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Bridges, high-rise frames,
highways, power plants, precast y...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or equivalent** Grade 12
Most programs want a diploma or a GED (high school equivalency credential), plus basic math. Shop classes help but are not required.
- 2 Apply to an apprenticeship** Weeks to a year of waiting
Either a union local of the Iron Workers, or a contractor running its own registered program. Expect a math test, an interview and a physical.
- 3 Work and learn** 3 to 4 years
Paid work on site with a journeyman, plus evening or block classroom instruction at a training center.
- 4 Welding and rigging tickets** During the apprenticeship
Most apprentices certify in welding and in rigging and signalling during the program. These are what raise your rate fastest.
- 5 Journeyman** After your hours
You finish with a nationally recognized credential, full rate, and the option to run crews as a foreman.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one with no student debt
- + Full rate in 3 to 4 years, earlier than most careers on this site
- + Skills that work in every state, and the credential travels
- Hard on your back, knees and hands, and it accumulates
- Outdoors in heat, cold and rain, starting very early
- Construction slows in downturns and in winter in northern states

Optional boosts

Certified welder. Rigger and signal person. Post-tensioning. CDL (commercial driver's license).

Good to know

Concrete needs steel to work at all

Concrete is very strong when you squash it and very weak when you pull it apart. Steel is the opposite. Putting bar inside concrete is what lets bridges span and towers stand, which is why someone has to pla...

The union has the longest name in construction

The trade's union is the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers. Those four words are the four main branches of the job, all in the title.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers (47-2171.00)
O*NET OnLine: Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers
Apprenticeship.gov: what a Registered Apprenticeship is
IMPACT, the Ironworker Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust

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/ironworker>



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