

Judicial Law Clerk

You research the law and draft the decisions for a judge. One or two years that change the rest of a legal career.

TYPICAL PAY

\$64,920

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$46k to \$113k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Judges' chambers, federal courthouses, state appellate cour...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 English, government and anything that makes you write long arguments and defend them.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major. Grades matter, because law school admission runs mostly on your average and your LSAT (Law School Admission Test) score.
- 3 Law school** 3 years
 Three years for a Juris Doctor (JD) degree. Legal writing grades, law review and a judicial internship are what clerkship applications are judged on.
- 4 Apply through the courts' system** During your second and third year
 Federal law clerk and staff attorney positions are posted in OSCAR (the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review). State courts run their own processes.
- 5 Clerk for a judge** 1 to 2 years
 Usually one or two years. Then a law firm, a government office, academia, or a second clerkship at a higher court.

Pros and cons

- + The best legal training in the country, by a distance
- + A judge's recommendation opens doors for the next 20 years
- + Government hours, government benefits and no billable targets
- Seven years of school and six figures of debt first
- Most clerkships end after one or two years by design
- It pays far less than the firm jobs your classmates take

Good to know

It is a small profession

About 14,500 judicial law clerks work in the entire country, with roughly 1,000 openings projected over a decade. Nearly all of them are employed by government courts rather than private firms.

One website runs federal clerkship hiring

OSCAR (the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review) is run by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts and posts law clerk and staff attorney openings nationwide. New position...

Optional boosts

Law review or a journal. A top legal writing grade. A judicial internship. A professor who knows the judge.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Judicial Law Clerks (23-1012.00)

O*NET OnLine: Judicial Law Clerks

OSCAR, the federal judiciary clerkship application system

United States Courts: careers in the federal judiciary

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/judicial-law-clerk>



Scan for the full clicker