

Land Surveyor

Decide exactly where one person's land stops and the next one's starts, and sign your name to it.

TYPICAL PAY

\$75,440

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$47k to \$126k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Survey firms, construction sites, engineering companies, county of...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Math above everything, especially geometry and trigonometry. Drafting, geography and any computer class help.
- 2 Accredited degree** 4 years
 Most state boards now want a bachelor's degree from a surveying program accredited by ABET (formerly the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology). Some states still allow an associate degree or straight experience, so read your own board's rules before yo...
- 3 Fundamentals of Surveying exam** One day
 110 questions, about five and a half hours at a testing center, \$225. Most people take it in their final year of college while the math is fresh.
- 4 Work under a licensed surveyor** 4 years
 Most states require four years of progressive, verifiable experience. You will run crews, do research in the deeds office and learn how boundaries are actually decided.
- 5 Principles and Practice of Surveying exam, plus a state exam** After your four years
 The national exam tests whether you can practice competently. Nearly every state adds its own test on local property law.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one and no long unpaid training
- + A protected license and a business you can own
- + Indoors and outdoors, never the same site twice
- Six to eight years and three exams before you can sign anything
- Field work in heat, cold, brush, traffic and insects
- Boundary disputes mean angry neighbors and occasional court

Optional boosts

Laser scanning and drone mapping. Geographic information systems. Hydrographic surveying. Expert witness work.

Good to know

Three presidents were surveyors

George Washington was a licensed county surveyor at 17 and surveyed land in Virginia for years before the revolution. Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln also did survey work. It was one of th...

It is a small profession

About 56,100 people work as surveyors in the United States, with roughly 3,900 openings a year. For comparison, there are more than 800,000 lawyers.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Surveyors (17-1022.00)
 National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying: surveying licensure
 National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying: Fundamentals of Surveying exam
 O*NET OnLine: Surveyors

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/land-surveyor>



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