

Mail Carrier

A federal job you can start at 18, with a pension at the end and no tuition at the start.

TYPICAL PAY

\$60,550

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$81k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Post offices, delivery routes,
streets in all weather**

How you get there

- 1 Meet the basic requirements** Before applying
 Be 18 at appointment, or 16 with a high school diploma. Be a United States citizen, a permanent resident, or a citizen of American Samoa or another United States territory.
- 2 Apply online and take the assessment** A few hours
 The old written exam has been replaced by online assessments covering work scenarios, judgement and reliability. Apply for a specific office, since hiring is local.
- 3 Clear the screening** Weeks to a few months
 Criminal background check, drug screening, a medical assessment, and a review of your motor vehicle record if the route involves driving.
- 4 Start as an assistant or associate** 1 to 3 years
 Paid training, then covering routes on the days regular carriers are off. Expect irregular hours and no fixed days off at this stage.
- 5 Convert to a career position** When a slot opens
 A regular route, the federal pension, the health plan and the full contract pay scale. Conversion timing depends on your office's vacancies.

Pros and cons

- + A federal pension and health plan with no degree and no tuition
- + Pay set by a national contract, so it does not depend on negotiating well
- + Strong union protection and clear rules about what can be asked of you
- The wait from assistant to career position can run for years
- Outdoors in heat, ice and rain, walking miles daily with a loaded bag
- Six day weeks and heavy mandatory overtime in peak season

Optional boosts

Bidding a route by seniority. Moving to rural delivery. Union roles. Supervisor or postmaster.

Good to know

Your taxes do not pay for it

The Postal Service is funded by the postage and services it sells, not by tax money. It is a federal agency that has to cover its own costs, which is why the price of a stamp and the volume of parcels matter...

Same contract, every city

A letter carrier in rural Kansas and one in San Francisco sit on the same national pay scale at the same step. Where you live changes your cost of living, not your grade. Very few employers in the country...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Postal Service Mail Carriers (43-5052.00)
 United States Postal Service: how to apply
 United States Postal Service: careers
 National Association of Letter Carriers

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/mail-carrier>



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