

# Massage Therapist

Licensed in about a year, then paid per massage. The work helps people and it wears out your hands, so plan for both.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$58,450**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$34k to \$100k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**1 to 2 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Very high**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**Yes**

regulated job

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Spas, chiropractic and physical therapy clinics, hotels, sports tea...**

## How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12  
Biology and anatomy if offered, plus health and physical education. A part time job dealing with the public is genuinely useful preparation.
- 2 Massage program** 6 to 12 months  
Commonly 500 to 750 hours covering anatomy, physiology, technique, ethics and supervised hands-on practice in a student clinic.
- 3 The licensing exam** One appointment  
Most states use the MBLEx (Massage and Bodywork Licensing Examination): 100 multiple choice questions in 110 minutes, reported as a pass or a fail.
- 4 State license and background check** Weeks  
Apply to your state board with your transcript, your exam result and a criminal background check.
- 5 Build a book of regulars** 1 to 3 years  
Start employed so someone else finds the clients, then decide whether to go independent once people ask for you by name.

## Pros and cons

- + Licensed and working in about a year, for a fraction of a degree's cost
- + People leave feeling better and they tell you so
- + Flexible scheduling and easy to work part time
- It wears out your hands, wrists and shoulders over time
- Income depends on bookings, and cancellations are not paid
- Many jobs are contract, so no health insurance or paid sick days

## Optional boosts

Clinical and medical massage. Sports massage. Prenatal massage. Manual lymphatic drainage.

## Good to know

### Ohio has regulated massage since 1915

The American Massage Therapy Association's list of state massage practice laws runs from Ohio in 1915 through to Oklahoma in 2016. It took a century for the rest of the country to catch up.

### The exam is 100 questions in 110 minutes

The MBLEx (Massage and Bodywork Licensing Examination) is 100 multiple choice questions with a 110 minute limit, and the result comes back simply as a pass or a fail. 47 jurisdictions accept it.

### Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Massage Therapists  
Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards: the MBLEx process  
Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards: regulated states  
National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork: Board Certification

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/massage-therapist>



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