

Petroleum Engineer

Work out how to get oil and gas out of rock, safely and cheaply. The highest paid bachelor's degree on this site, tied to a price you do not control.

TYPICAL PAY

\$144,910

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$81k to \$253k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Oil and gas fields, offshore platforms, service companies, cit...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Calculus, physics and chemistry, as strong as you can get them. Engineering admission is competitive on grades.
- 2 Bachelor of Science in petroleum engineering** 4 years
Four years at a program accredited by ABET (the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology). Chemical and mechanical engineering degrees also get hired into the industry.
- 3 Internships every summer**
This is how almost everyone gets a first job. Companies hire from their own intern pool.
- 4 Fundamentals of Engineering exam** One sitting
The first national engineering exam, usually taken in your final year. It makes you an engineer in training.
- 5 First job, then optional licensure** 4 years after graduation
Four years of supervised experience and the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam make you a licensed Professional Engineer.

Pros and cons

- + The highest median pay of any four-year engineering degree
- + Only four years of school before real money
- + Real responsibility young, on equipment worth millions
- Layoffs follow the oil price, and they are brutal
- The work is concentrated in a few states and a few cities
- Long hours and time away from home during operations

Optional boosts

Drilling engineer. Reservoir engineer. Production engineer. Completions and hydraulic fracturing.

Good to know

The United States is the biggest oil producer on earth

The Energy Information Administration reports that the United States produced about 21.91 million barrels a day in 2023, roughly 22 percent of world production, more than any other country. That is the reason...

There is a petroleum specific engineering exam

The National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying offers more than 20 different Principles and Practice of Engineering exams, and petroleum is one of them. The exam fee is \$425, paid on t...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Petroleum Engineers (17-2171.00)

National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying: Principles and Practice of Engineering exam

Texas A&M University: Harold Vance Department of Petroleum Engineering

Society of Petroleum Engineers: students, scholarships and chapters

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/petroleum-engineer>



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