

# Pharmacist

The last person who checks a prescription before it reaches a patient. Eight years of school, and one of the highest starting floors on this site.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$140,910**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$99k to \$174k**

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

**Chain and independent  
pharmacies, hospitals, clinics, mai...**

## How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12  
Chemistry, biology and math. Strong grades matter because the prerequisite courses are graded hard.
- 2 Prerequisite college courses** 2 to 4 years  
Two to four years of chemistry, biology, anatomy, statistics and calculus. Some schools admit you straight from high school into a combined six year program.
- 3 Doctor of Pharmacy degree** 4 years  
Four years at a school accredited by ACPE (the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education). Classroom for the first years, then full time rotations.
- 4 Rotations** Final year  
The final year is spent in real pharmacies and hospitals under supervision, rotating through community, hospital and specialty sites.
- 5 Two exams and a state license** Months after graduation  
Pass the national competence exam and a pharmacy law exam, then register with the board of pharmacy in your state.

## Pros and cons

- + A high, reliable salary from your first licensed day
- + You are trusted and your judgment overrules a prescription
- + Licensed work you can find in every town in the country
- Six to eight years and often more than \$150,000 of debt
- Retail shifts are long, understaffed and relentless
- Standing all day behind a counter with a queue

## Good to know

### Two exams, not one

Getting licensed means a national knowledge exam and, in most states, a separate law exam written for that state. Your license is not national: moving states means meeting a new board's rules and payin...

### Pharmacists vaccinate now

Giving vaccinations was not part of the job a generation ago. Today pharmacists administer them in every state after short extra training, and for many people the pharmacy counter is the only health care th...

## Optional boosts

Hospital residency. Board certification. Immunization certification. Sterile and nonsterile compounding.

### Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Pharmacists (29-1051.00)

National Association of Boards of Pharmacy: the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination

Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education: Doctor of Pharmacy program accreditation

Texas State Board of Pharmacy: applicant information

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/pharmacist>



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