

Plasterer

Put the skin on a building. Interior plaster, exterior stucco, and the decorative work machines cannot do.

TYPICAL PAY

\$57,660

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$97k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

3 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**House construction sites,
commercial buildings, restoration...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or equivalent** Grade 12
 That is the usual requirement. Shop class, math and any construction course help you get taken on.
- 2 Find a sponsor** Weeks to months
 A plastering contractor or a local of the Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association. This is the hard step, and knowing somebody in the trade is how most people manage it.
- 3 Register the apprenticeship** Days
 Through a program registered with the United States Department of Labor or your state apprenticeship agency. Apprenticeship.gov lists open positions by trade and zip code.
- 4 Work and learn** 3 to 4 years
 Usually 3 to 4 years, roughly 2,000 hours on the job each year plus classroom hours in the evenings. You start carrying material and end running a wall yourself.
- 5 Journey level** After your hours
 You finish with a nationally recognized completion certificate and the full hourly rate. No exam board sits between you and the job.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one, no student debt at all
- + Journey level in 3 to 4 years
- + A finished wall you can point at, every single day
- Hard on shoulders, wrists and knees, and it adds up
- Weather and the building cycle decide how much you work
- Silica dust and wet cement burns are real hazards

Good to know

Stucco goes on three times

Traditional exterior stucco is a three-coat system: a scratch coat keyed into the lath, a brown coat that flattens the wall, and a finish coat that gives it color and texture. Each one has to cure before the...

Nearly a million people are learning a trade this way

Apprenticeship.gov, run by the United States Department of Labor, reports more than 800,000 apprentices in registered programs each year and a 93% employment retention rate for people who finish. You...

Optional boosts

Ornamental and historic plaster. Exterior insulation and finish systems. Venetian and polished finishes. Cement masonry as a second trade.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Plasterers and Stucco Masons, wages and tasks
 Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association
 Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Training Fund: apprenticeship
 Apprenticeship.gov, United States Department of Labor

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/plasterer>



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