

# Real Estate Agent

Fast to get licensed, and paid only when a deal closes. Most people who start quit inside two years.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$52,830**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$33k to \$124k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**up to 1 year**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Moderate**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**Yes**

regulated job

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Brokerage offices, client homes,  
open houses, your car**

## How you get there

- 1 Finish high school and turn 18** Grade 12  
 Every state sets a minimum age of 18 or 19 and expects a high school diploma or equivalent.
- 2 Pre-license courses** Weeks to months  
 State-approved coursework in real estate principles, contracts, agency law and finance. Texas requires 180 classroom hours across six courses. Several states require far fewer.
- 3 Pass the license exam** One day  
 A state section and a national section, usually at a testing center. Fail three times in Texas and you must take more coursework before retesting.
- 4 Background check** Weeks  
 Fingerprints and a criminal history check through the state.
- 5 Find a sponsoring broker** Weeks  
 Your license is inactive until a licensed broker sponsors you. You cannot work on your own as a brand new agent in any state.

## Pros and cons

- + Licensed in months, for under \$1,500
- + No ceiling on what a good year can pay
- + You set your own schedule and run your own book of clients
- No salary, no benefits and nothing withheld for taxes
- Income swings hard with interest rates and the housing market
- Evenings and weekends are the job, not an exception

## Optional boosts

Broker license. Commercial real estate. Property management. Designations.

## Good to know

### Realtor is a trademark, not a job

Realtor is a registered membership mark of the National Association of Realtors. Every Realtor is a licensed agent, but not every licensed agent is a Realtor. You become one by joining the association and agr...

### Your license starts out switched off

In every state, a new sales license is inactive until a licensed broker sponsors you. Until then you are legally not allowed to show a house or write an offer, no matter how well you did on the exam.

### Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Real Estate Sales Agents (41-9022.00)  
 Texas Real Estate Commission: become a sales agent  
 California Department of Real Estate  
 National Association of Realtors: about

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/real-estate-agent>



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