

Scaffolder

Build the temporary structures every other trade stands on. First on site, last off.

TYPICAL PAY

\$47,120

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$35k to \$78k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Commercial construction,
refineries, shipyards, bridges, ind...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Finish it if you can. Geometry and shop help. A summer of labor work tells you fast whether heights bother you.
- 2 Hired as a scaffold laborer** 0 to 6 months
Loading, unloading, carrying and passing material. This is where they find out if you will show up at 5:30am.
- 3 Erector** 6 months to 2 years
Building standard tube and clip or system scaffold, tying to the structure, decking, guardrails and access ladders.
- 4 Competent person training** Short course plus experience
Federal workplace safety rules require a trained competent person to supervise erection, alteration and inspection. Getting that designation is the real step up.
- 5 Leadhand, foreman or estimator** Year 3 onward
Designing the scaffold for a job, calculating loads, ordering material and running a crew.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one with no tuition and no debt
- + Industrial and shutdown work pays far above the trade median
- + Skills work in every state and on every kind of site
- Heights, weather and heavy lifting every single day
- Shutdown work means living away from home for weeks
- Construction goes quiet in a downturn and layoffs are fast

Optional boosts

Suspended and swing stage scaffold. Refinery and power plant work. Rigging and signal person training. Competent person and scaffold inspector training.

Good to know

This trade has no box on the wage survey

The federal occupation list has codes for roofers, ironworkers and cement masons, but none for scaffolders. Most are counted as construction laborers, and erecting scaffolding is written into that job...

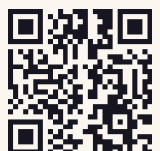
The industry writes its own rulebook

SAIA (the Scaffold and Access Industry Association) is the secretariat for the national scaffold and aerial lift standards, meaning the trade association itself runs the committee that writes the technical rules...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Construction Laborers (47-2061.00)
Scaffold and Access Industry Association
NCCER: construction craft training and credentials
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/scaffolder>



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