Secret Service Special Agent

Protect the president and other leaders, and investigate financial and cyber crime, for the United States Secret Service. Expect a long hiring process and years of moves.

TYPICAL PAY	PAY RANGE	COST TO QUALIFY	TIME TO QUALIFY
$93,790	**$55k to $161k**	**Nothing to $48k**	**4 to 6 years**
a year, full time	lower end to upper end	tuition, fees, exams, kit	after high school

DEMAND	LICENSE NEEDED	WHERE YOU WORK
Limited	**No**	**Field offices, protective details, event sites, offices in the Washington area**
job outlook	no license to hold	

How you get there

1. **High school** — Grade 12
   Keep your record clean. The background check will look at your driving, your credit, your school records and the people who know you.
2. **A degree or real experience** — 1 to 4 years
   A bachelor's degree with good grades, or a year of graduate study, or a year of investigative or protective work. You must be at least 21 to apply.
3. **Apply and pass the first phase** — A few months
   Posted on the federal jobs site. A written entrance exam, a fitness test, an interview and a hiring panel, then a conditional job offer.
4. **The security phase** — 6 to 9 months
   A security interview, credit checks, a polygraph (lie detector) exam, a medical exam and a full background check for a Top Secret clearance.
5. **Two academies** — About 7 months
   About 12 weeks of investigator training in Glynco, Georgia, then an 18-week Secret Service course at its own academy outside Washington.

Pros and cons

+ Two very different jobs in one career: investigations and protection
+ Paid from the first day of training
+ Help repaying student loans

– You sign up to go wherever you are sent, including overseas
– Frequent travel and several moves over a career
– A strict medical, fitness and appearance standard you keep meeting

Good to know

It started as a money police

The Secret Service was created in 1865 to stop counterfeiting. By the end of the Civil War, nearly one third of all the money in circulation was fake.

Investigations come before protection

New agents spend at least three years in a field office before a permanent protective assignment. The protection most people picture comes later in the career.

Optional boosts

The recent graduate program · Fluency in another language · Military service · Prior federal law enforcement

Where these numbers come from

United States Secret Service: qualifications for special agents
United States Secret Service: the application process
United States Secret Service: special agent training
United States Secret Service: special agent career path

Numbers checked October 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/secret-service-agent

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