

# Sheet Metal Worker

You cut, form and hang the metal that moves air through every building. Paid to learn from the first week.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$61,800**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$39k to \$106k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**4 to 5 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Limited**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**No**

anyone can do it

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Fabrication shops, construction sites, rooftops, plant mechanical r...**

## How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or equivalent** Grade 12  
A diploma or a GED (high school equivalency credential) plus solid math is what most training centers ask for. Shop classes help your application.
- 2 Apply to an apprenticeship** Weeks to a year of waiting  
A SMART (International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers) local training center, or a contractor running its own registered program. Expect a math test, an interview and a physical.
- 3 Work and learn** 4 to 5 years  
Paid work beside a journeyman, plus classroom instruction in layout, welding, drawings and duct systems at a training center.
- 4 Certifications along the way** During the apprenticeship  
Welding qualifications, rigging, and in many programs a specialty such as testing and balancing air systems.
- 5 Journeyman** After your hours  
Full rate, a nationally recognized apprenticeship credential, and the option to run crews or move into detailing and estimating.

## Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one, no tuition and no student debt
- + Full journeyman rate in 4 to 5 years
- + A real craft: layout, welding and problem solving, not just lifting
- Sharp metal, overhead work and rooftops. Cuts and shoulder wear are normal
- Construction slows in downturns and in northern winters
- Federal projections for the trade are slower than average growth

## Optional boosts

Certified welder. Testing and balancing. Detailing in CAD (computer-aided design). Architectural metal.

## Good to know

### The old nickname is tin knocker

Sheet metal workers have been called tin knockers for more than a century, from the sound of a hammer setting a seam by hand. The metal is usually galvanized steel or aluminum now, and most seams a...

### Flat metal, curved building

Everything starts as a flat sheet. Getting a round duct, a tapered transition or a curved roof edge out of it is a layout problem solved with geometry before anyone picks up a tool. That is why the trade t...

### Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Sheet Metal Workers (47-2211.00)  
SMART, the sheet metal and transportation workers union  
International Training Institute, the trade's national training body  
Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association

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/sheet-metal-worker>



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