

Sound Engineer

You record, mix and run sound for music, film, television and live shows. Nobody checks your diploma, they listen to what you have mixed.

TYPICAL PAY

\$73,130

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$38k to \$137k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Recording studios, live venues and tours, film and television post pro...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 9 to 12
Record everything. Your band, the school play, a podcast, a friend's short film. Two years of bad recordings is how everyone starts.
- 2 Pick a route** 1 to 4 years
A four year audio degree, a one or two year certificate, or teaching yourself while working at a venue. All three produce working engineers.
- 3 Learn one recording program properly** Ongoing
Depth in one industry standard program beats a shallow tour of five. Studios and post houses ask what you know before they ask where you studied.
- 4 Assist, intern, push cases** 1 to 3 years
The real apprenticeship. Set up microphones, coil cables, take notes and be early. Most first paid jobs come from someone who saw you do that.
- 5 Build credits and specialize** Ongoing
Live sound, music mixing, dialogue editing for picture or broadcast. Your credit list is your qualification.

Pros and cons

- + You can enter without a degree and without debt
- + Real skill is visible, so good work travels by word of mouth
- + The top tenth clears \$137,000 a year
- Employment in this occupation is projected to fall, not grow
- Early years are badly paid and often unpaid
- Freelance means no sick pay, chasing invoices and quiet months

Good to know

This is a shrinking job, and the survey says so plainly

The federal occupation profile for sound engineering technicians lists a below average outlook with employment expected to decline and no large number of openings. Cheap software and one person doing thr...

There is a federal law about how loud adverts are

The CALM Act (Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation Act), passed in 2010, stops television commercials being broadcast louder than the show around them. That is why broadcast audio has strict lo...

Optional boosts

Dialogue editing and re-recording for picture. Immersive and surround mixing. Networked audio systems. Broadcast audio.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Sound Engineering Technicians (27-4014.00)
Middle Tennessee State University: Audio Production
Berklee College of Music
Apprenticeship.gov, the federal registered apprenticeship finder

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/sound-engineer>



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