

State Trooper

You patrol the highways and the rural areas no town police department covers. The state hires you first and trains you at its own academy, paid.

TYPICAL PAY

\$76,210

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$48k to \$115k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Highways, rural roads, crash scenes, state barracks, a patrol car

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development certificate)** Grade 12
 That is the education floor in most states. Some agencies want college credits or military service instead, and a few require a degree.
- 2 Meet the minimums and apply** Age 20 or 21
 United States citizenship, a driver's license, no felony record, vision within the agency's standard, and a minimum age. Pennsylvania takes applications at 20 and will not appoint anyone who has reached their 40th birthday.
- 3 Get through the selection process** 6 to 12 months
 Written exam, physical fitness test, background investigation, polygraph in many states, then psychological and medical evaluations. It commonly takes six months to a year.
- 4 The academy** 4 to 8 months
 A live-in, disciplined training school run by the state: law, driving, firearms, defensive tactics, first aid, crash investigation. Usually several months, and you are paid throughout.
- 5 Field training, then solo patrol** 3 to 6 months
 You ride with a training officer who signs off on your decisions before you are turned loose in your own car.

Pros and cons

- + Paid a full salary from your first day of training, with no tuition
- + A pension after 20 to 25 years, often with a take home car meanwhile
- + Genuine variety, and no two shifts are the same
- The job is dangerous, and roadside work especially so
- Rotating nights, weekends and holidays for years
- You see fatal crashes, overdoses and violence, and it accumulates

Optional boosts

Criminal investigation. Crash reconstruction. Canine, aviation or marine units. Instructor roles.

Good to know

Your eyes are tested before your grades

Pennsylvania publishes exact vision standards for cadets: uncorrected vision no worse than 20/70 in the dominant eye and 20/200 in the other, correctable to 20/20 and 20/40, plus normal color vision and...

There is an upper age limit as well as a lower one

Most police jobs have a minimum age, usually 20 or 21. State police often have a maximum too, because the pension is built around a full 25 year career. Pennsylvania will not appoint anyone who has reached...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers (33-3051.00)
 Pennsylvania State Police
 Pennsylvania State Police cadet recruitment and requirements
 California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training

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/state-trooper>



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