

Steamfitter and Pipefitter

Build the high pressure pipe systems inside power plants, refineries and hospitals. Paid from your first day of training.

TYPICAL PAY

\$63,800

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$44k to \$108k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Power plants, refineries, hospitals, factories, construction sites

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or an equivalency certificate** Grade 12
 Math through algebra and geometry, plus shop or welding if offered. You need to be 18, pass a drug test and be physically able to do the work.
- 2 Apply to an apprenticeship** Weeks to a year of waiting
 Local unions of the United Association run the biggest programs, and there are open shop and contractor association programs too. Applications open in windows, not all year.
- 3 Start work as an indentured apprentice** Immediately
 You are a paid employee from the first day, working beside qualified fitters.
- 4 Work plus classroom training** 4 to 5 years
 About 2,000 hours of paid on-the-job training a year plus technical instruction covering safety, codes, blueprint reading, math, physics and chemistry.
- 5 Journeyman pipefitter** After the hours
 Finish your hours, pass your welding tests, and sit your state or local exam if one is required.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from the first day, with no tuition debt
- + Federal projections put growth well above average
- + Real skill that cannot be outsourced or done remotely
- Heavy physical work in heat, cold, noise and confined spaces
- Construction work is uneven, with gaps between jobs
- Travel away from home is normal in industrial fitting

Good to know

Steamfitter and pipefitter mean slightly different things

Pipefitters build the pipe systems that carry liquids and gases through industry. Steamfitters are pipefitters who work on systems under high pressure and heat, like steam lines in a power plant. In most union loc...

It is a big trade

The United Association says it represents roughly 409,000 plumbers, pipefitters, sprinkler fitters, service technicians, welders and pipeliners across North America.

Optional boosts

Extra welding qualifications. Medical gas certification. HVACR (heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration) service. Rigging and foreman training.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters
 Bureau of Labor Statistics: Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters
 United Association: training and apprenticeship
 Apprenticeship.gov, the federal Registered Apprenticeship site

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/steamfitter-pipefitter>



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