

Surveying Technician

Measure the land before anyone builds on it. You can start straight out of high school and learn on the crew.

TYPICAL PAY

\$54,240

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$38k to \$82k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Construction sites, open land, roadsides, survey offices

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Algebra, geometry and trigonometry are the ones that matter. Drafting and computer classes help too.
- 2 Get hired onto a crew** Weeks to months
 Entry titles are rodman, chainman or survey helper. Firms hire year round and train you themselves.
- 3 On-the-job training** 1 to 2 years
 You move from carrying the rod to running the instrument, then to handling the data. Most of this is moderate-term training on the crew.
- 4 Optional community college** 1 to 2 years, alongside work
 A surveying or geomatics certificate taken part time speeds up promotion and teaches the math properly.
- 5 Party chief, or on toward the license** 3 years and up
 Run your own crew, or start the long route to becoming a licensed surveyor who can sign plats.

Pros and cons

- + You can be hired with a high school diploma and no debt
- + Outdoors, varied sites, rarely the same day twice
- + Federal projections show faster than average growth
- Weather, insects, poison ivy and traffic are part of the deal
- Early starts and long drives to remote sites
- The ceiling is low unless you go after the surveyor license

Good to know

Three presidents did this job

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln all worked as surveyors. Washington was licensed at 17 and surveyed land in Virginia before he ever led an army.

Most of the country is on a grid drawn by surveyors

The Public Land Survey System divided much of the United States into six mile square townships starting in the 1780s. Those original corner markers still legally define property lines, and crews still go looking fo...

Optional boosts

Running the robotic total station. Drone and laser scanning surveys. GIS (geographic information system) software. Construction layout.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Surveying and Mapping Technicians
 Bureau of Labor Statistics: Surveying and Mapping Technicians
 NCEES (National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying): surveying licensure
 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/surveying-technician>



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