

Teaching Assistant

Work alongside a teacher and with the students who need the most help. The quickest way into a school.

TYPICAL PAY

\$36,780

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$27k to \$50k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Public school classrooms, special education rooms, preschools, libr...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grades 9 to 12
 The base requirement in essentially every district. Volunteer or work with children while you are still in school.
- 2 Meet the coursework rule** 0 to 2 years
 For a federally funded program you generally need an associate degree, two years of college, or a passing score on an approved assessment.
- 3 Pass the assessment if you take that route** A few weeks of study
 The ParaPro Assessment from ETS (Educational Testing Service) tests reading, writing and mathematics, and many states accept it.
- 4 Apply and clear a background check** Weeks
 Fingerprinting and a criminal record check are required before you can be alone with students.
- 5 Train on the job** Ongoing
 Districts run their own training on behavior support, safety and the specific needs of the students you work with.

Pros and cons

- + You can be doing it within months of finishing high school, with almost no debt
- + School holidays and hours that fit around a family
- + You find out quickly whether you want to teach, before paying for a degree
- The pay is low, and part time hours make the annual total lower still
- Health insurance often depends on hitting an hours threshold
- Little authority: you carry out decisions you did not make

Optional boosts

Special education support. Sign language. Bilingual support. Behavior technician training.

Good to know

It is one of the biggest jobs in the country

About 1.4 million people worked as teaching assistants in preschools and schools in 2024. Even though the total is projected to shrink slightly, roughly 170,000 openings come up each year because so m...

One test can replace two years of college

For the federal coursework rule, passing an approved assessment counts instead of an associate degree. The ParaPro Assessment from ETS (Educational Testing Service) covers reading, writing and mathe...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Teaching Assistants, Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School (25-9042.00)

O*NET OnLine: Teaching Assistants

ParaPro Assessment from ETS (Educational Testing Service)

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

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/teaching-assistant>



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