

Upholsterer

Strip a chair to its frame and rebuild it. A small trade where the good ones are never short of work.

TYPICAL PAY

\$46,340

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$32k to \$64k

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

Furniture workrooms, auto trim shops, boat yards, home studios

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
 Sewing, woodshop and art classes all count here. So does anything that teaches patience with detail.
- 2 Learn the basics** 3 months to 1 year
 Either a community college certificate, like the two and three quarter upholstery certificates at Clover Park Technical College in Washington state, or a job as a shop helper.
- 3 Work under someone good** 1 to 3 years
 Stripping, frame repair, springs, foam, patterning, sewing, finishing. Each stage takes months to get clean.
- 4 Build a portfolio** Ongoing
 Photograph every piece before and after. This is your whole reputation, and it is how designers find you.
- 5 Go out on your own** Optional
 Most upholsterers eventually run a workroom. That means quoting, buying fabric, and handling customers as much as sewing.

Pros and cons

- + Cheap and quick to train for
- + You finish something visible every few days
- + Easy to run as a one-person business from a garage
- Pay is modest unless you own the shop
- Cheap imported furniture is not worth reupholstering, so the market is smaller
- Hard on your hands, wrists, shoulders and back

Optional boosts

Automotive and hot rod trim. Marine canvas and boat interiors. Aircraft interiors. Antique restoration.

Good to know

The trade is shrinking and that helps the survivors

Federal projections list upholstery as a declining occupation. Fewer people enter it every year, so shops that do good work often have a waiting list months long.

North Carolina is the furniture capital

The area around High Point and Hickory has made American furniture for over a century. High Point still hosts the largest furniture trade show in the world twice a year.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Upholsterers (51-6093.00)

National Upholstery Association

Clover Park Technical College: upholstery certificates

Guilford Technical Community College: industrial furniture upholstery and assembly

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/upholsterer>



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