

Veterinary Technician

The nurse of the animal clinic. Two years of school, and you will do more hands-on medicine than you expect.

TYPICAL PAY

\$47,380

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$36k to \$63k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Animal clinics, emergency hospitals, shelters, research labs,...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, chemistry and math. Volunteer or work at a clinic, shelter or kennel. Programs like to see that you have seen the real thing.
- 2 Accredited program** 2 to 4 years
A two year associate degree, or a four year bachelor's. It must be accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association or most states will not credential you.
- 3 Clinical placements** During the program
Built into the program. Anesthesia, radiography, dentistry, lab work, surgical assisting and nursing care, on live animals.
- 4 Pass the national exam** Final term
The VTNE (Veterinary Technician National Examination), run by the American Association of Veterinary State Boards.
- 5 Get credentialed by your state** Weeks
Apply to your state veterinary board. Some states add a jurisprudence exam on state law.

Pros and cons

- + Real clinical medicine after only two years of school
- + Cheap training, often covered by a Pell Grant
- + Hired almost anywhere, immediately
- Pay is low for the skill and responsibility involved
- Burnout and turnover in this field are high
- Bites, scratches, lifting and radiation exposure

Optional boosts

Veterinary technician specialty. Laboratory animal technician certification. Practice management. Bachelor's completion online.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Veterinary Technologists and Technicians (29-2056.00)
American Association of Veterinary State Boards: the national technician examination
American Association of Veterinary State Boards
Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine: veterinary technology programs

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/veterinary-technician>

Good to know

Some states now call the job veterinary nurse

A national campaign has pushed to replace technician with nurse, and several programs and employers have adopted it. Nursing boards in some states objected, so the title is still a live argument.

You run the anesthesia

In most American clinics the credentialed technician, not the veterinarian, induces and monitors anesthesia for surgery. It is the single biggest responsibility in the job.



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