

Welder

Join metal to metal so it holds. A trade you can learn in under a year, tested by whether the weld passes, not by what you say.

TYPICAL PAY

\$53,750

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$39k to \$78k

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

Fabrication shops, construction sites, shipyards, refineries, pipelin...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or equivalent** Grade 12
A diploma or a GED (high school equivalency credential) is enough almost everywhere. A school metal shop is a real head start.
- 2 Learn the processes** 6 to 12 months
Stick welding, MIG (metal inert gas) welding and TIG (tungsten inert gas) welding, plus blueprint reading and weld symbols. Community college, trade school, or on the job.
- 3 Pass a weld test** One afternoon
Employers test you before they hire you. You weld a coupon, they bend it or cut it and look at the inside. That is the whole interview.
- 4 Get certified** Year 1 to year 2
A performance certification from the American Welding Society is taken at an accredited test facility, with no prerequisite courses, and travels with you between employers.
- 5 Specialize** 2 to 10 years
Pipe, pressure vessels, aluminum, stainless, aerospace or underwater. Each one narrows the field of people who can do it and raises your rate.

Pros and cons

- + Under a year of training to a full wage, with little or no debt
- + Certifications are portable and the skill works in any state
- + Clear, immediate proof of whether you are good at it
- The survey expects slower than average growth as robots take shop welding
- Hard on your body: burns, fumes, noise and awkward positions
- Eye damage from arc flash is real and cumulative

Optional boosts

Pipe welding qualification. Certified Welding Inspector. Certified Welding Supervisor. Robotic arc welding.

Good to know

The certification has no prerequisites at all

The American Welding Society's Certified Welder program requires no courses, no degree and no prior certificate. You turn up at an accredited test facility, weld the coupon, and it is either accepted or...

Looking at the arc burns your eyes

A welding arc puts out enough ultraviolet light to give you arc eye, a burn on the surface of the eye that feels like sand and shows up hours later. It heals, but it is cumulative over a career, which is why hoods, s...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Welders, Cutters, Solderers and Brazers (51-4121.00)

American Welding Society: certification programs

Lincoln Tech: welding technology program

Apprenticeship.gov, the federal apprenticeship finder

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/welder>



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