

The United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics describes the profession of Architect as follows:

Work Environment

Although architects usually work in an office, they must also travel to construction sites.

Architects held about 113,700 jobs in 2010, of which 65 percent were employed in the architectural, engineering, and related services industry. About 24 percent were self-employed.

Architects spend most of their time in offices, where they consult with clients, develop reports and drawings, and work with other architects and engineers. However, they often visit construction sites to review the progress of projects.

Work Schedules

Nearly all architects work full time. Many work more than 50 hours per week. Working evenings and weekends is often necessary to meet deadlines.

How to Become an Architect

Architects need internships to gain practical experience.

There are three main steps in becoming a licensed architect: completing a professional degree in architecture, gaining work experience through an internship, and passing the Architect Registration Exam.

Education

In most states, architects must hold a professional degree in architecture from one of the 123 schools of architecture accredited by the [National Architectural Accrediting Board \(NAAB\)](#). However, state architectural registration boards set their own standards, so, in a few states, graduation from a nonaccredited program may meet the educational requirement for licensing.

Most architects earn their professional degree through a 5-year Bachelor of Architecture degree program, intended for students with no previous architectural training. Others earn a master's degree which can take 1 to 5 years to complete, depending on the extent of one's previous training in architecture.

The choice of degree depends on preference and educational background. Although the 5-year Bachelor of Architecture offers the most direct route to the professional degree, courses are specialized. A typical program includes courses in architectural history and theory, building design with an emphasis on computer-aided design and drafting (CADD), structures, technology, construction methods, professional practice, math, physical sciences, and liberal arts. Central to most architectural programs is the design studio, which is a hands-on learning experience where students work on projects from concept to completion. The design studio is a critical part of the education and is often the most challenging and rewarding part of the program. It is where students learn to think creatively and solve problems. The design studio is also where students learn to work in teams and to communicate their ideas effectively. The design studio is a key component of the architectural education and is essential for preparing students for the profession.

All state architectural registration boards require architecture graduates to complete a training period—usually at least 3 years—before they may sit for the licensing exam. Most new graduates complete their training period by working as interns at architectural firms. Some states allow a portion of the training to occur in the offices of related professionals, such as engineers and general contractors. Architecture students who complete internships while still in school can count some of that time toward the 3-year training period.

Interns in architectural firms may help design part of a project. They may help prepare architectural documents and drawings, build models, and prepare construction drawings on CADD. Interns also may research building codes and write specifications for building materials, installation criteria, the quality of finishes, and other related details.

Licenses

All states and the District of Columbia require architects to be licensed. Licensing requirements include a professional degree in architecture, a period of practical training or internship, and a passing score on all parts of the Architect Registration Examination.

Most states also require some form of continuing education to keep a license, and some additional states are expected to adopt mandatory continuing education. Requirements vary by state but usually involve additional education through workshops, formal university classes, conferences, self-study courses, or other sources.

Certification

A growing number of architects voluntarily seek certification by the [National Council of Architectural Registration Boards \(NCARB\)](#). Certification can make it easier to become licensed across states. In fact, it is the primary requirement for reciprocity of licensing among state boards that are NCARB members. In 2011, approximately one-third of all licensed architects had this certification.

Important Qualities

Analytical skills. Architects must understand the content of designs and the context in which they were created. For example, architects must understand the locations of mechanical systems and how those systems affect building operations.

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Visualization skills. Architects must be able to "see" how the parts of a structure relate to each other. They also must be able to visualize how the overall building will look once completed.

[More information:](https://stats.bls.gov/ooh/Architecture-and-Engineering/Architects.htm#tab-1) <https://stats.bls.gov/ooh/Architecture-and-Engineering/Architects.htm#tab-1>