

GUIDE

How to Earn Your Teaching License



A guide to becoming a licensed teacher in North Carolina

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How to Become a Teacher

The very short version is this: You'll need a bachelor's degree and professional teaching license—it's called "licensure" in North Carolina. You can earn your licensure at the same time as your bachelor's degree or after you graduate.

There's a bit more to it than that, but don't panic! This guide walks you through the steps to get licensed to teach in North Carolina. You can start by getting clear on your direction. This will help you choose the pathway that's best for you.

Determine what you want to teach

If you already know what you'd like to teach—the grade level and subject matter—you can move on to the next section, "Choose a Pathway to Teaching."

If you're not sure yet or you're open to teaching different subject areas and grade levels, get a feel for what licensures are available by browsing the list on pages 4-6.

Choose the right teaching license

In North Carolina, teachers earn a license to teach a specific set of grades and subjects. Whether you want to focus on a specific subject, like math, or a particular student population, like second-language learners, you'll find a teaching area that fits.

Pro Tip: You can narrow down which grade levels and subject areas to teach by considering state-designated shortage areas, where the need for teachers is greatest. Your employment prospects may be stronger and you may qualify for loan forgiveness (for more on this, see "Consider a Critical Needs Subject or Shortage Area" on page 7).

To broaden your options, you could also consider a subject area that allows you to teach in grades K-12:

- English as a Second Language
- Exceptional Children
- Music & Art
- Physical Education & Health
- Technology Education
- World Languages

What can I get licensed to teach?

Elementary & Early Childhood	
Birth to Kindergarten	Birth-K
Elementary Education	Grades K-6
English as a Second Language	Grades K-6
Exceptional Children: General Curriculum	Grades K-6
Exceptional Children: Adapted Curriculum	Grades K-6
Reading	Grades K-6
Fine Arts	
Art	Grades K-12
Dance	Grades K-12
Music	Grades K-12
Theatre Arts	Grades K-12
Humanities & Social Sciences	
Anthropology	Grades 9-12
Economics	Grades 9-12
English	Grades 9-12
English as a Second Language	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Geography	Grades 9-12
Greek (Ancient)	Grades K-12
History	Grades 9-12
Language Arts	Grades 6-9
Latin	Grades K-12
Reading	Grades K-12
History	Grades 9-12
Social Studies	Grades 6-9
Social Studies	Grades 9-12
Sociology	Grades 9-12
Political Science	Grades 9-12
Math and Science	
Biology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Chemistry	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Earth Science	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Math	Grades 6-9 (Critical Need)
Math	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Physics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)

Math and Science continued

Science	Grades 6-9 (Critical Need)
Science	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)

Exceptional Children

Academically Gifted	Grades K-12
Behaviorally/Emotionally Disabled	Grades K-12
Cross Categorical (mildly/moderately disabled)	Grades K-12
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	K-12
Mentally Disabled	Grades K-12
Severely & Profoundly Disabled	Grades K-12
Special Education: Adapted Curriculum	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Special Education: General Curriculum	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Specific Learning Disabled	Grades K-12
Visually Impaired	Grades K-12

World Languages

American Sign Language	Grades K-12
Arabic	Grades K-12
Cherokee	Grades K-12
Chinese	Grades K-12
French	Grades K-12
German	Grades K-12
Greek (Ancient)	Grades K-12
Greek (Modern)	Grades K-12
Hebrew	Grades K-12
Hindi	Grades K-12
Italian	Grades K-12
Japanese	Grades K-12
Korean	Grades K-12
Latin	Grades K-12
Portuguese	Grades K-12
Russian	Grades K-12
Spanish	Grades K-12
Swahili	Grades K-12
Turkish	Grades K-12

Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education	Grades K-12
Health Specialist	Grades K-12
Physical Education	Grades K-12

Careers and Technical Education

Agricultural Education	Grades 6-12
Business, Finance and Information Technology Education	Grades 6-12
Family & Consumer Sciences	Grades 6-12
Health Science Education	Grades 6-12
Information Technology Education	Grades 6-12
Marketing Education	Grades 6-12
Technology Education	Grades 6-12
Trade & Industrial Education	Grades 6-12

Special Licensures, Endorsements and Add-ons

You can add these additional licensures and endorsements onto your teaching license, to gain experience and open more job options.

Computer Education Endorsement	Grades K-12
Elementary Math	Grades K-6
Elementary Science	Grades K-6
English as a Second Language	Grades K-6
Journalism	Grades 9-12
Literacy Coach	Grades 6-9
Psychology	Grades 9-12
Preschool	
Safety and Driver Education	

Pro Tip: You can add licenses in different grade levels and subject areas throughout your teaching career. You don't have to get all your licensures at once.



Consider a critical needs subject or shortage area

You'll have more job opportunities—and make a bigger impact—teaching in a high-needs area. The greatest need for teachers is in state-designated shortage areas, many of which are at the middle and high school levels.

If you want to teach elementary school, high-demand areas include:

Birth to Kindergarten	Birth-K (Early Childhood)
Elementary Education	Grades K-6
Elementary Reading	Grades K-6
Exceptional Children: General curriculum	Grades K-12
Exceptional Children: Adapted Curriculum	Grades K-12
English as a Second Language	Grades K-12

If you prefer middle or high school, high-demand areas include:

Exceptional Children: General curriculum	Grades K-12
Exceptional Children: Adapted Curriculum	Grades K-12
Math	Grades 9-12, Middle Grades
Sciences, like Biology and Chemistry	Grades 9-12, Middle Grades
Technology Education	Grades 6-12
World Languages	Grades K-12
English as a Second Language	Grades K-12

Shortage area loan forgiveness

If you choose to teach in a shortage area, you may be able to have education loans forgiven—that means you don't have to pay them back! Explore these opportunities to learn more:

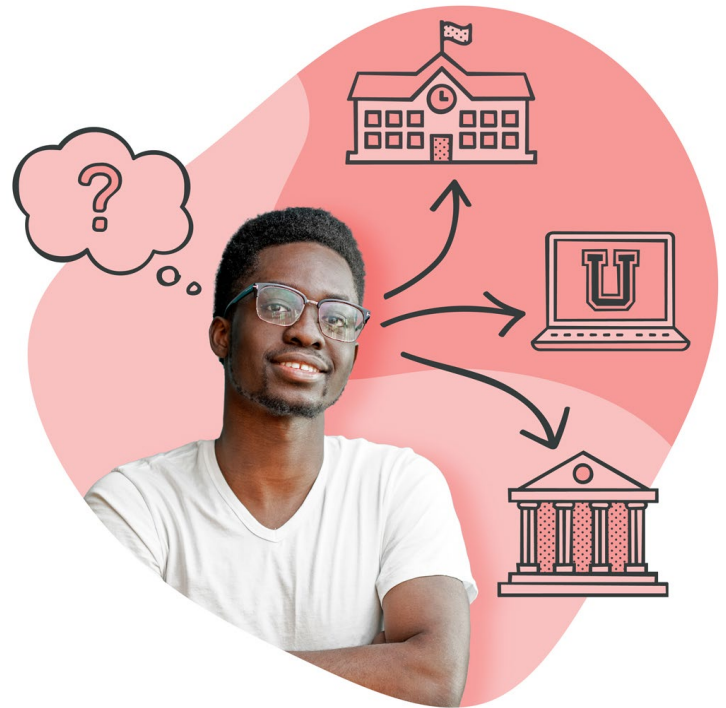
- The state offers **Forgivable Education Loans for Service** of up to \$3,500 a semester (\$7,000 a year) for bachelor's degree programs and \$5,000 a semester (\$10,000 a year) for master's degree programs leading to licensure in one of the shortage areas listed above.
- The **North Carolina Teaching Fellows** program offers forgivable loans of up to \$4,125 a semester (\$8,250 a year) for up to four years to highly-qualified students committed to teaching special education or a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) field in a North Carolina public schools. <https://northcarolina.teach.org/teaching-fellows>
- You may also be eligible for student loan relief from Uncle Sam if you're willing to commit to teaching for at least five years in high-need areas, thanks to the federal **Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program**.

Choose a Pathway to Teaching

Once you know what you want to teach, you're ready to start your journey to become a licensed teacher!

To teach in North Carolina, your next steps will look different depending on your background. We'll help you figure out what you'll need to move forward.

Pro Tip: If you've already earned a bachelor's degree or have vocational work experience, you may be eligible for alternative pathways to licensure that put you in the classroom faster. Read on to learn more.



Bachelor's degree programs

If you don't already have a degree, you may be able to earn your degree and your teaching license at the same time.

Many colleges and universities offer a teacher prep program that goes along with a degree in education or a teaching subject, like math, history or art. So you might major in English or biology, minor in education and earn your teaching license all at the same time.

Pro Tip: You can even launch your degree with an Associate in Arts in Teacher Preparation or Associate in Science in Teacher Preparation with North Carolina Community Colleges.

<https://northcarolina.teach.org/north-carolina-community-colleges>

To get started: Head over to <https://northcarolina.teach.org/programs-search> to search for undergraduate teaching programs.

Graduate programs with licensure

If you already have a bachelor's degree in any subject, you have several options to choose from to earn your license.

- **Licensure-only or Residency Licensure** programs can get you licensed to teach without earning an additional degree. These programs may take less time and cost less than master's degree licensure programs. Check out the TeachNC Alternative Licensure page to learn more. <https://northcarolina.teach.org/alternative-licensure>
- **Teach for America** offers in-depth support and licensure through partnerships in the Charlotte-Piedmont Triad region or Eastern North Carolina region. <https://northcarolina.teach.org/teach-for-america>

- **Are you a tradesperson?** If you have vocational experience, you can get licensed to teach as a trade instructor for a Career & Technical Education program in a middle or high school through an alternative program. Positions may be available in fields such as automotive, manufacturing, construction, culinary arts, hospitality, plumbing, and others.
- **Are you a military veteran?** North Carolina students need veterans to serve again as their teachers. Check out Troops to Teachers for resources and opportunities available

for veterans interested in teaching (<https://northcarolina.teach.org/north-carolina-troops-teachers>).

- **Master's degree** programs allow you to take additional coursework in your teaching area and work towards an advanced degree while earning your license.

To get started: Head over to <https://northcarolina.teach.org/programs-search> to search for “licensure-only” and “master’s and licensure” programs.

Pass North Carolina licensure assessments

Most teacher candidates have to pass specific tests that evaluate your knowledge of teaching and the subject area you wish to teach. Your teaching program will determine the timing of when you will take these assessments.

In addition, all teacher candidates completing preparation programs will put together an official

portfolio of lesson plans, student work and other artifacts to submit for assessment as a part of your teacher training experience.

For more information: Check out the testing guide at <https://northcarolina.teach.org/guides/required-assessments-north-carolina>

If you are licensed in another state or country

“Reciprocity” is the term used to describe what each state requires in order to transfer your license from one state to another.

If you’re already licensed to teach—in North Carolina or elsewhere—your next step is to learn more about your eligibility for licensure by reviewing the **NC Department of Public Instruction** licensure page.

Check out the licensure site at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educators-licensure/renew-or-update-your-professional-educators-license>

Are you an international educator?

North Carolina has several partner programs that help place qualified international teachers in North Carolina schools.

To learn more: Check out the Department of Public Instruction page for beginning, out-of-state and international teachers at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educators-licensure/forms-and-faqs>.



Adding up licensure costs

Teaching is the greatest opportunity to shape the trajectories of young people's lives—and the future of our world. While the experiences you'll have are priceless, you may be wondering what it costs to get licensed to teach in North Carolina.

The total costs will vary depending on the educator preparation program you attend and the tests required for your licensure area. Below are some of the costs you can expect while earning and obtaining your license:

- Initial educator license: \$70
- Out-of-state initial educator license: \$100
- edTPA Portfolio assessment: \$300
- Content-specific exams: Starting at \$120

Financial aid and scholarships

It's understandable to have your eye on the cost of educator preparation programs. Remember, there are lots of scholarships, loan forgiveness and other funding opportunities that may lower program costs for North Carolina's future teachers. The [NC Promise](#) program lets you complete your licensure coursework for \$1,000 per year in tuition at certain UNC system schools.

To learn more: Check out the TeachNC Financial Aid & Scholarships page at <https://northcarolina.teach.org/become/financial-aid>.

QUICK VIEW

How to Become a Teacher

To help you get started, here's a crash course on the steps you'll need to take to earn your professional license.



1

Choose the subject area you want to teach.

Explore your options and consider high needs subjects and specialties, like math, trades and special education.



2

Enroll in an approved North Carolina educator preparation program.

Check out programs for undergraduates, people with degrees, and career changers. Browse programs now with the [North Carolina Program Explorer](#).



3

Pass North Carolina licensure exams.

You'll have to pass one or more tests designed to show you know your subject well enough to teach it. Depending on your teaching program, you might take a test before you enroll, during, or after you finish.



4

Submit a state application.

After you meet all your requirements, it's time to formally apply for your teaching license. First, confirm with your educator preparation program that you are eligible to apply. Then you'll apply directly to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.



5

After you've taught for three years, think about getting your National Board Certification.

[The National Board Certification](#) is considered the most advanced certification that a teacher can receive. It's purely optional, but completing the rigorous and challenging certification process is a prestigious accomplishment and could lead to a higher salary, more professional opportunities and easier transfer between states.