

GUIDE

# Teacher Certification



A guide to becoming a certified teacher in Texas

**TEACH**  
for **HOUSTON.ORG**



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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—also called a certification. You can earn your certification 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 you'll need to take to get certified to teach in Texas. 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.

If you're not sure yet or you're open to teaching different subject areas and grade levels, get a feel for what certifications are available by browsing the list below.

**Pro Tip:** Consider choosing a state-designated shortage subject, or a school that serves students in underserved areas, where the need for teachers is greatest. Your employment

prospects will be strong, since there's extra demand for these subjects, and you'll know you're making a difference.

**According to the Texas Education Agency, high-needs subject areas include:**

- Bilingual / English as a Second Language
- Career & Technical Education
- Computer Science / Technology Applications
- Mathematics
- Science
- Special Education

## Choose the right certification area

Once you know your grade and subject preferences, you can select a certification area.

In some cases, you may have multiple certification options to choose from. For example, if you want to teach fourth, fifth or sixth grade, you could get certified for Pre K-6th grade or for 4th-8th grade.

# What can I get certified to teach?

<b>Elementary &amp; Early Childhood (EC)</b>	
Early Childhood	Pre K-3
Elementary (It's called "Core Subjects" in Texas)	Early Childhood-6th grade
Elementary Core Subjects	Grades 4-8
<b>English &amp; History</b>	
English Language Arts and Reading	Grades 4-8 or 7-12
English Language Arts and Reading/Social Studies	Grades 4-8
Social Studies	Grades 4-8 or 7-12
History	Grades 7-12
Reading Specialist	Grades EC-12
<b>World Languages</b>	
Arabic	Grades EC-12
French	Grades EC-12
German	Grades EC-12
Hindi	Grades EC-12
Italian	Grades EC-12
Japanese	Grades EC-12
Korean	Grades EC-12
Latin	Grades EC-12
Mandarin Chinese	Grades EC-12
Russian	Grades EC-12
Spanish	Grades EC-12
Turkish	Grades EC-12
Urdu	Grades EC-12
Vietnamese	Grades EC-12
<b>Humanities &amp; Arts</b>	
Art	Grades EC-12
Dance	Grades 6-12
Music	Grades EC-12
Theatre	Grades EC-12
<b>Math &amp; Science</b>	
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Chemistry	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Life Science	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Mathematics	Grades 4-8 or 7-12 (Critical Need)

### ***Math & Science continued***

Mathematics/Physical Science/Engineering	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Mathematics/Science	Grades 4-8 (Critical Need)
Physical Science	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Physical Science/Mathematics/Engineering	Grades 8-12 (Critical Need)
Physics/Mathematics	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Science	Grades 4-8 or 7-12

### **Physical Education & Health**

American Sign Language	Grades EC-12
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Grades EC-12
Educational Diagnostician	Grades EC-12
Special Education	Grades EC-12 (Critical Need)
Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments	Grades EC-12

### **Career & Technical**

Business and Finance	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Computer Science	Grades 8-12 (Critical Need)
Driver Education	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Family and Consumer Sciences	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Hospitality, Nutrition and Food Sciences	Grades 8-12 (Critical Need)
Human Development and Family Studies	Grades 8-12 (Critical Need)
Journalism	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Marketing	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Principal as Instructional Leader	Grades EC-12 (Critical Need)
Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Speech	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Technology Applications	Grades EC-12 (Critical Need)
Technology Education	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)
Trade and Industrial Education	Grades 6-12 (Critical Need)

### **“Supplemental” Certificates**

You can add these additional certificates to gain additional experience and open more job options:

- Gifted and Talented
- Special Education (Critical Need)
- Bilingual Education—Mandarin Chinese, Spanish or Vietnamese (Critical Need)

**Pro Tip:** You can get certified in different subjects throughout your teaching career. You don't have to get all your certifications at once.

# Choose a Pathway to Teaching

Once you have an idea what you want to teach, you can choose a pathway that makes most sense to you based on your interests and current education. Remember, different pathways offer different certification programs, so make sure the path you choose offers you the certification you want.

## Bachelor's degree programs

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

**To get started:** Head over to [houston.teach.org/programs-search](https://houston.teach.org/programs-search) to search for programs in the Houston area.

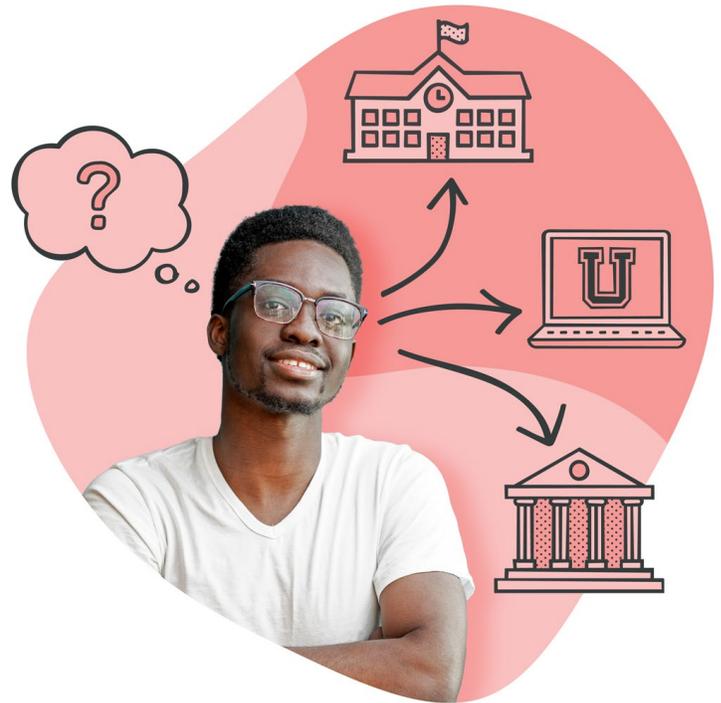
## Graduate programs with certification

If you already have a bachelor's degree in any subject, you can check out local programs that help you get certified.

**You have two basic choices:**

- Master's degree programs
- Certificate-only programs

If you want to earn a master's degree or feel like you would benefit from additional coursework in your teaching subject, check out programs at a university that end in an advanced degree.



This can be a really great option if you have less experience working with students, as traditional degree programs offer extra time and practice.

**Bonus:** Teachers with master's degrees often earn extra pay!

If you're not interested in a master's degree right away, a certificate-only program will allow you to earn your certification in as little as one year.

The main difference between a university-based certificate-only program and an "alternative route" program is that many university programs offer additional opportunities to take coursework and include a traditional student teaching requirement in which you learn the ropes as part of your school program and not as part of a paid job.

**To get started:** Head over to [houston.teach.org/programs-search](https://houston.teach.org/programs-search) to search for programs in the Houston area.

## Alternative route programs

If you already have a degree and feel confident that you're ready to enter the classroom, you might be able to fast track your certification through a program that gets you in the classroom right away.

Some colleges and universities offer alternate-route certificate programs, but they are often offered by non-profit institutions, education agencies or school districts. Some for-profit organizations also offer alternate-route programs, but make sure you get good details about how the program works before signing up.

These programs are ideal for someone who has experience working with students and an interest in teaching a subject area or grade in a critical shortage area.

## Types of alternate-route programs:

Residency programs typically get you in the classroom right away. You'll earn a salary or stipend and work with a mentor teacher for at least one semester before earning your certificate and getting your own classroom.

Internships and one-year permits allow people who have teaching experience but no license (if you worked at a private school or other educational setting) to teach their own class right away and with a full salary.

**To get started:** Head over to [houston.teach.org/programs-search](https://houston.teach.org/programs-search) to search for programs in the Houston area. You'll find these under the "certification-only" label.

## Pass Texas certification exams

You'll have to pass one or more exams to show that you know your subject well enough to teach it.

If you already have a bachelor's degree, you may need to take a Pre-admissions content test (PACT) in order to apply to your teaching program. Check with the program to find out!

For all programs and certifications, you'll take the TExES exam in your subject as you finish your program. The good news is, your program should guide you through this process and help prepare you!

**For more information:** Check out the testing guide at [houston.teach.org/services/guides](https://houston.teach.org/services/guides).

## If you are certified in another state

"Reciprocity" is the term used to describe what each state requires in order to transfer your certification from one state to another.

In Texas, you may be able to transfer your out-of-state credential or license and receive a one-year or longer certificate to begin teaching in a Texas

school. You'll need to submit your documents directly to the Texas Education Agency.

Check out their certification site at <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/certification> and look for the information that matches your situation.

## 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, bilingual education, and special education.

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2

### Enroll in an approved Texas educator preparation program.

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

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3

### Pass Texas certification 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.

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### Submit a state application.

After you meet all your requirements, it's time to formally apply for your teaching certificate. First, confirm with your educator preparation program that you are eligible to apply. Then you'll apply directly to the Texas Education Agency.

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### After you've taught for at least 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.