

GUIDE

Teacher Certification



A guide to becoming a certified teacher in Missouri

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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 Missouri. 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 certifications are available by browsing the list below.

Choose the right certification area

In Missouri, teachers are awarded certification that allows them to teach a specific set of grades and subjects.

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 fifth or sixth grade, you could get licensed for either 1st-6th grade or 5th-9th grade.

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 (for more on this, see "Consider a Critical Needs Subject or Shortage Area" on page 5).

What can I get certified to teach?

Elementary & Early Childhood	
Early Childhood Education	Birth to Grade 3
Early Childhood Special Education	Birth to Grade 3 (Critical Need)
Elementary Education	Grades 1-6 (Critical Need)
Fine Arts	
Art	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Dance	Grades K-12
Music: Instrumental and Vocal	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Speech and Theater	Grades 9-12
Humanities and Social Sciences	
English	Grades 9-12
Journalism	Grades 9-12
Middle School Language Arts	Grades 5-9 (Critical Need)
Social Science	Grades 5-9 or 9-12 (Critical Need)
Math and Science	
Biology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Chemistry	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Earth Science	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Math	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Middle School Math	Grades 5-9 (Critical Need)
Middle School Science (Also called "General Science")	Grades 5-9 (Critical Need)
Physics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Exceptional Children	
Blind and Low Vision	Birth to Grade 12
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Birth to Grade 12
Early Childhood Special Education	Birth to Grade 3 (Critical Need)
Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical Special Education	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Severe Developmental Disabilities	Birth to Grade 12
World Languages	
French	Grades K-12
German	Grades K-12
Mandarin	Grades K-12
Spanish	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)

Health & Physical Education	
Health	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Physical Education	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Career and Technical Education	
Agriculture	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Business Education	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Marketing	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Technology and Engineering	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Family & Consumer Sciences	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Special Licensures, Endorsements and Add-ons	
Computer Science	Grades K-12
Driver Education	Grades 9-12
Elementary Math Specialist	Grades K-6
English Language Learners	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Gifted Education	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Special Reading (also called "Reading Specialist")	Grades K-12

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. In Missouri, high-demand areas include all the subjects and grades marked as "critical needs" in the chart above.

If you choose to teach in any of these areas, you may be eligible for additional financial benefits, like loan forgiveness.



Choose a Pathway to Teaching

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

To teach in Missouri, your next steps will look different depending on your background. We'll help you figure out what you'll need to move forward. Remember, different pathways offer different certification programs, so make sure the path you choose offers you the certification you want.

Bachelor's degree programs

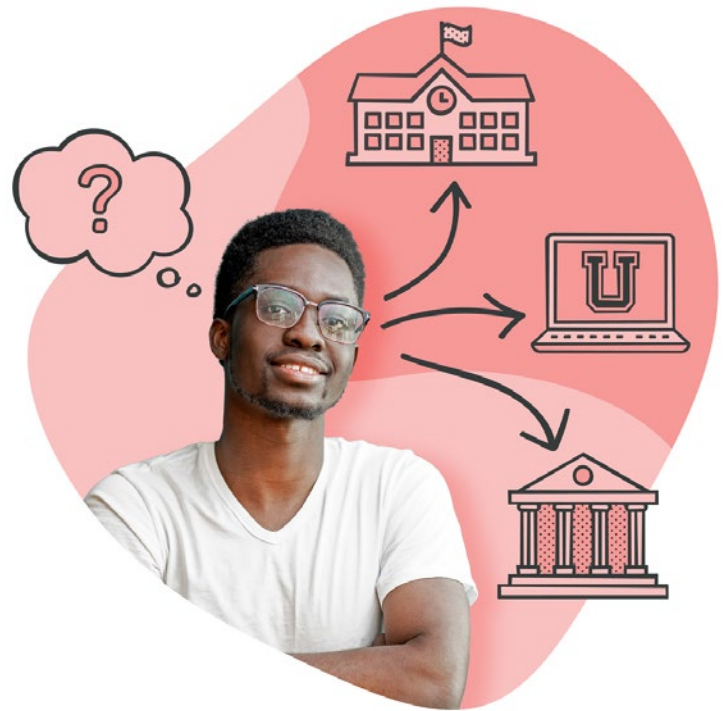
If you don't already have a degree, you may be able to earn your degree and your teaching certificate at the same time. This can reduce your total education costs and the time it takes to complete your educator prep program.

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 kansascity.teach.org/programs-search to search for undergraduate teaching programs. (You'll find KC programs located in Missouri and Kansas.)

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 kansascity.teach.org/programs-search to search for master's degree and certificate-only programs. (You'll find KC programs located in Missouri and Kansas.)

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 alternative programs, but make sure you get good details about how the program works before signing up.

These programs are ideal for someone who has a bachelor's degree in their teaching subject (often in a critical shortage area). Alternative programs may require you to have a certain amount of experience working with students before you enroll.

Types of alternate-route programs in Missouri:

- **Provisional Certificate:** A provisional certificate is a two-year certificate that lets you teach while you take teaching courses. After you complete your teaching coursework, your program will recommend you for a teaching certificate. This route is good if you already have a bachelor's degree in the subject you want to teach, but need more experience as a teacher. Check out dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-preparation/alternative-teacher-cert-programs to learn more.
- **Temporary Authorization Certificate (TAC):** A TAC is a two-year certificate for people who want to teach a specific middle or high school subject and who have not completed an educator prep program. To apply for a TAC, you must have a job offer from a school district, and your district must recommend you for the certificate. You can then enroll in an educator prep program that offers TAC coursework. To learn more, visit dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/certification/temporary-authorization-information.
- **American Board of Certification for Teacher Excellence (ABCTE):** ABCTE offers self-paced certification programs. Missouri accepts ABCTE certificates in biology, chemistry, elementary education, English/language arts, general science, math, physics and social science. Learn more at americanboard.org/missouri.

Pass the Missouri Content Assessment (MoCA)

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

Your teaching program will determine the timing of when you will take the MoCA. In an undergraduate educator prep program, you'll take the MoCA

halfway through your program, before you start student teaching.

For more information: Check out the testing guide at <https://kansascity.teach.org/guides/testing-missouri>.

If you are certified in another state

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

In Missouri, you may be able to transfer your out-of-state credential or license and receive a certificate to begin teaching in a Missouri school.

You'll need to submit your documents directly to the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

Visit dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/certification/out-state-information for an out-of-state certification checklist.



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.

2

Enroll in an approved Missouri educator preparation program.

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

3

Pass Missouri Content Assessment (MoCA)

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 certificate. First, confirm with your educator preparation program that you are eligible to apply. Then you'll apply directly to the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

5

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.