

GUIDE

Teacher Certification



A guide to becoming a certified teacher in South 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 certificate—also called licensure. 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 South 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—the next step is to identify your certification area on the list below. Then, 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 certification area list (see page 4).

Choose the right certification area

In South Carolina, teachers earn a certificate 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 English 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 Need Subject or Shortage Area" on page 8).

To broaden your options, you could also consider a subject area that allows you to teach all grades:

- Art
- Dance
- English for Speakers of Other Languages
- Gifted and Talented Education
- Health
- Literacy
- Music
- Physical Education
- Special Education
- Theater
- World Languages

What can I get certified to teach?

Elementary & Early Childhood

Early Childhood Education	Grades PK-3 (Critical Need)
Elementary Education	Grades 2-6 (Critical Need)
Montessori Early Childhood Education	Ages 3-5 (Critical Need)
Montessori Education Elementary I (+)	Grades 1-3 (Critical Need)
Montessori Education Elementary II (+)	Grades 4-6 (Critical Need)

(+) To earn your Montessori certification, you'll need to complete a training program that is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education. Visit the South Carolina Department of Education Montessori page to learn more (<https://ed.sc.gov/educators/teaching-in-south-carolina/specialized/montessori/>).

Fine Arts

Art	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Dance	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Music Education	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Music Education: Choral	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Music Education: Instrumental	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Music Education: Piano	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Music Education: Strings	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Music Education: Voice	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Theater	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)

Humanities & Social Sciences

Economics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
English	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Geography	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Government	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
History	Grades 9-12
Middle Level Language Arts	Grades 5-8 (Critical Need)
Middle Level Social Studies	Grades 5-8 (Critical Need)
Montessori Middle Language Arts (+)	Grades 6-8 (Critical Need)

Montessori Middle Social Studies (+)	Grades 6-8 (Critical Need)
Psychology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Social Studies	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Sociology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)

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Math & Science

Agriculture Education	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Biology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Business and Marketing Education*	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Chemistry	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Computer Science*	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Earth and Space Science	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Family and Consumer Science*	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Industrial Technology Education	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Mathematics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Middle Level Math	Grades 5-8 (Critical Need)
Middle Level Science	Grades 5-8 (Critical Need)
Montessori Education Middle Math (+)	Grades 6-8 (Critical Need)
Montessori Education Middle Science (+)	Grades 6-8 (Critical Need)
Physics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Science	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)

*There are currently no standard programs in South Carolina that offer certification in this subject area. However, you can add it to your initial certification subject area or pursue certification through an alternative pathway.

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Special Education

Early Childhood Special Education	Ages 3-5 (Critical Need)
Emotional Disabilities	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Hearing Impairments	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Learning Disabilities	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Multi-categorical	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Severe Disabilities	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Visual Impairments	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)

World Languages

American Sign Language	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Chinese (Mandarin)*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
French	PK-12 (Critical Need)
German	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Greek*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Italian*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Japanese*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Latin	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Portuguese*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Russian*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Spanish	PK-12 (Critical Need)

**There are currently no standard programs in South Carolina that offer certification in this subject area. However, you can add it to your initial certification area or pursue certification through an alternative pathway.*

Health & Physical Education

Health Education*	PK-12 (Critical Need)
Physical Education	PK-12 (Critical Need)

**There are currently no standard programs in South Carolina that offer certification in this subject area. However, you can add it to your initial certification area or pursue certification through an alternative pathway.*

Career & Technical Education

To earn your teaching certificate in one of these subject areas, you'll pursue an alternative certification pathway—meaning you don't need to complete a standard teaching program. You can learn more about alternative certification on pages 9 and 10.

Automotive Collision Repair	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Automotive Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Barbering	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Carpentry	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Clothing Design and Construction	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Cosmetology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Culinary Arts	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Diesel Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Digital Art and Design	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Drafting	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Electricity	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Electronics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Emergency and Firefighting Services	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Engineering Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Environmental Control Systems	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Esthetics	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Graphic Communications	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)

Health Science Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Information Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Law Enforcement Services	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Machine Tool Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Marine Engine Repair	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Masonry	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Media Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Nail Technology	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Plumbing	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Power Equipment	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Welding	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)

Academic Specialty

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)*	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Gifted and Talented Education**	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Literacy Coach**	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Literacy Teacher**	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Literacy Specialist**	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)
Montessori Education Secondary(+)	Grades 9-12 (Critical Need)
Teaching Children of Poverty**	Grades PK-12 (Critical Need)

*There are currently no standard programs in South Carolina that offer certification in this subject area. However, you can add it to your initial certification area or pursue certification through an alternative pathway.

**There are currently no programs in South Carolina that offer this subject as an initial certification area. However, you can add it to your teaching certificate in another subject.

(+) To earn your Montessori certification, you'll need to complete a training program that is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education. Visit the South Carolina Department of Education Montessori page to learn more (<https://ed.sc.gov/educators/teaching-in-south-carolina/specialized/montessori/>).

Pro tip: You can add additional certifications and endorsements in different subject areas throughout your teaching career. You don't have to achieve all your certifications at once.



Consider a critical need subject or shortage area

You'll have more job opportunities—and make a bigger impact—teaching in a high-need area. The greatest need for teachers is in state-designated shortage areas.

Shortage area loan forgiveness

If you choose to teach in a critical need 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:

- South Carolina Student Loan has loan forgiveness options for teachers who have a **South Carolina Teacher Loan, Career Changes Loan or PACE Loan**. To qualify, you'll need to commit to teach in a critical need subject area, critical need geographic area or both. To learn more, visit <https://scstudentloan.org/school-loans/sc-teacher-loan-programs-forgiveness>.
- You may also be eligible for up to \$17,500 in student loan relief from Uncle Sam if you're willing to commit to teaching for several years in high-need areas, thanks to the federal **Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program**. To learn more, visit <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher>.



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 South 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 certification 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 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 <https://southcarolina.teach.org/programs-search> to search for undergraduate teaching programs.

Graduate programs and alternative pathways to certification

If you already have a bachelor's degree in any subject or vocational work experience, you have



several options to choose from to earn your certificate.

- **Certification-only or alternative certification** programs can get you certified to teach without earning an additional degree. These programs may take less time and cost less than master's degree certification programs. Visit the South Carolina Department of Education alternative certification page to learn more (<https://ed.sc.gov/educators/alternative-certification/programs/>) or search for "certification-only" programs on the TeachSC program explorer (<https://southcarolina.teach.org/programs-search>).

- **Master's degree** programs let you to take additional classes in your teaching area and work towards an advanced degree while earning your certificate. Head over to the TeachSC programs page and search for "master's and certification" programs (<https://southcarolina.teach.org/programs-search>).

- **Are you a tradesperson?** If you have vocational experience, you can get certified to teach as a trade instructor for a Career & Technical Education program in a middle or high school. Positions may be available in fields such as automotive repair, construction, culinary arts, plumbing and others (<https://ed.sc.gov/educators/teaching-in-south-carolina/cte/>).



Pass South Carolina certification assessments

You'll have to pass one or more exams to show that you know your subject well enough to teach it. Like many states, South Carolina uses the Praxis test for most teacher candidates. If you're getting certified in a world language, you might take an ACTFL exam instead.

Your teaching program will determine the timing of when you take your exam.

For more information: Check out the testing guide at <https://southcarolina.teach.org/services/guides>.

If you are certified in another state or country

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

In South Carolina, you may be able to transfer your out-of-state credential and receive a certificate to begin teaching in a South Carolina school. You'll

need to submit your documents directly to the **South Carolina Department of Education**.

Visit <https://ed.sc.gov/educators/teaching-in-south-carolina/reciprocity/> for an out-of-state certification checklist.

Are you an international educator?

South Carolina has a partner program that helps place qualified international teachers in South Carolina schools.

To learn more: Check out the South Carolina Department of Education page for international teachers at <https://ed.sc.gov/educators/teaching-in-south-carolina/international-applicants-for-educator-certification/>.



Adding up certification 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 certified to teach in South Carolina.

The total costs will vary depending on the educator preparation program you attend and the tests required for your certification area. Below are

some of the costs you can expect while earning and obtaining your certificate:

Teaching certificate: \$105

Content test: \$64-\$156 for Praxis exams, \$218 for ACTFL exams

Pedagogy assessment: \$156-\$300

Financial aid and scholarships

It's understandable to have your eye on the cost of teaching programs. Remember, there are lots of scholarships, loan forgiveness and other funding opportunities that may lower program costs for South Carolina's future teachers.

To learn more: Check out our About Financial Aid page for info and resources to pay for your program: <https://southcarolina.teach.org/become/financial-aid/about>.

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 certificate.



1

Choose the subject area you want to teach.

Explore your options and consider high need subjects and specialties, like math, trades, bilingual education and arts.



2

Enroll in an approved South Carolina educator preparation program.

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



3

Pass South Carolina 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.



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 South Carolina Department of Education.



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.