

GUIDE

# How to Earn Your Teaching License



A guide to becoming a licensed teacher in Colorado

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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 Colorado. You can earn your license 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! There are early childhood pathways for aspiring educators who do not have bachelor's degrees. This guide walks you through the steps to get licensed to teach in Colorado. 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 licensure endorsement areas are available by browsing the list below.

## Choose the right teaching license

In Colorado, teachers earn a license with one or more subject matter endorsements. Endorsements refer to the subjects and/or specialty areas (e.g. special education, math, etc.) that you can teach.

**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 6).

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

- Special Education
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education
- Technology Education
- Physical Education & Health
- Dance
- Music & Art

# What can I get licensed to teach?

<b>Elementary &amp; Early Childhood</b>	
Early Childhood Education	Ages 0-8 (Critical Need)
Elementary Education	Grades K-6 (Critical Need)
<b>Fine Arts</b>	
Dance	Grades K-12
Drama Theater Arts	Grades K-12
Speech	Grades 7-12
Visual Arts	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
<b>Humanities &amp; Social Sciences</b>	
English Language Arts	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Latin	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Social Studies	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
<b>Math and Science</b>	
Math	Grades 6-8 (Critical Need)
Math	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Science	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
<b>Exceptional Children</b>	
Early Childhood Special Education	Ages 0-8 (Critical Need)
Early Childhood Special Education Specialist	Ages 0-8 (Critical Need)
Special Education Generalist	Ages 5-21 (Critical Need)
Special Education Specialist	Ages 5-21 (Critical Need)
Special Education Specialist: Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Ages 0-21 (Critical Need)
Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired	Ages 0-21
<b>World Languages</b>	
American Sign Language	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
French	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
German	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Italian	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Japanese	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Latin	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Mandarin Chinese	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Russian	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Spanish	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)

## Health and Physical Education

Health	Grades K-12
Physical Education	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)

## Careers and Technical Education

Agricultural and Natural Resources	Grades 7-12
Business/Marketing	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)
Family & Consumer Sciences	Grades 7-12
Instructional Technology	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Technology Education	Grades 7-12 (Critical Need)

## 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.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Bilingual Education Specialist	Grades K-12 (Critical Need)
Gifted Education Specialist	Grades PK-12
Instructional Technology Specialist	Grades K-12
Mentor Teacher	Grades K-12
Reading Specialist	Grades K-12
Reading Teacher	Grades K-12
Teacher Librarian	Grades K-12

**Pro Tip:** You can add endorsements onto your original teaching license, to gain experience and open more job possibilities



# 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.

## These are Colorado's shortage areas for the 2022-2023 school year:

Business/Marketing	Grades 7-12
Early Childhood Education	Ages 0-8
Early Childhood Special Education	Ages 0-8
Elementary Education	Grades K-6
English Language Arts	Grades 7-12
Instructional Technology	Grades K-12
Math	Grades 6-8 or 7-12
Music	Grades K-12
Physical Education	Grades K-12
Science	Grades 7-12
Social Studies	Grades 7-12
Special Education Generalist	Ages 5-21
Special Education Specialist: Deaf & Hard of Hearing	Ages 0-21
Technology Education (Industrial Arts)	Grades 7-12
Visual Art	Grades K-12
World Languages	Grades K-12
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education	Grades K-12
Rural education	All ages & grades

## Shortage area loan forgiveness

If you choose to teach in a hard-to-staff area, you may qualify for scholarships, stipends or forgivable loans (which means you don't have to pay them back!). Explore these opportunities to learn more:

- The **Colorado Rural Teaching Fellowship** offers \$10,000 of financial assistance to future educators in the final year of teacher preparation who commit to teaching in a rural school district.
- The value of the **Colorado Rural Teaching Stipend** is up to \$4,000 for the semester of student teaching. Stipend recipients are expected to complete student teaching in a Colorado rural school district and then apply to and work in a rural school district.
- The **Rural Alternative Licensure Stipend (RALS)** provides recipients with up to \$6,000 to pay for a variety of program-related costs (e.g., Alternative Licensure program, Praxis, Alternative License, Initial License, technology and travel costs).
- You may also be eligible for 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**.

# 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 Colorado, 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 Colorado Community Colleges. Explore an Early Childhood Education Certificate, a Career and Technical Education Authorization or the Bridge to Bachelor's program. <https://colorado.teach.org/colorado-community-college-pathways-0>

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

## Graduate and alternative programs with licensure

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 license.

- Alternative 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 TEACH Colorado Alternative Licensure page to learn more <https://colorado.teach.org/teach-without-license>, or head over to the TEACH Colorado programs page and search for "licensure only" programs <https://colorado.teach.org/programs-search>.
- Are you a tradesperson?** If you have vocational experience, you may be qualified to 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 [https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/cte\\_generalinfo#01](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/cte_generalinfo#01).
- Are you a military veteran?** Colorado students need veterans to serve again as their teachers. Check out **our veteran resources page** for opportunities and support available for veterans interested in teaching <https://colorado.teach.org/colorado-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. Head over to the TEACH Colorado programs page and search for "master's and licensure" programs <https://colorado.teach.org/programs-search>.



## Pass Colorado licensure 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, Colorado uses the Praxis test for teacher candidates. Your teaching program will determine the timing of when you will take the Praxis.

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

## 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 Colorado or elsewhere—your next step is to learn more about your eligibility for licensure by reviewing the **Colorado Department of Education** licensure page.

These resources will help determine your pathway to Colorado licensure if you are:

- An out-of-state or international educator looking to teach in Colorado.
- A licensed Colorado educator interested in renewing or advancing your licensure.
- A licensed Colorado educator wanting to add additional teaching areas to your license or earn an administrator license.

Check out the licensure site at [https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/licensure\\_authorization\\_landing](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/licensure_authorization_landing) and look for the checklist that matches your situation.

### Are you an international educator?

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

**To learn more:** Check out the Department Education page for beginning, out-of-state and international teachers at [https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/licensure\\_outstate\\_faq](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/licensure_outstate_faq).





## 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 Colorado.

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: \$90
- Out-of-state initial educator license: \$110
- 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 Colorado's future teachers.

**To learn more:** Check out the TEACH Colorado Financial Aid & Scholarships page at <https://colorado.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-need subjects and specialties, like math, trades, bilingual education, and special education.

2

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

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

3

### Pass Colorado licensure exams.

You may 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 Colorado 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.