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<http://www.allcriminaljusticeschools.com/faqs/police.php>

## Become a Police Officer:

### Police Training and Careers

Police officers maintain law and order, collect evidence and conduct criminal investigations.

- **Urban police officers** have general law enforcement duties including maintaining regular patrols and responding to calls for service. Many are assigned to patrol a specific area, such as a business district or residential neighborhood.
- **Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs** enforce the law on the county level. Sheriffs, who are elected to their posts, perform duties similar to those of a local or county police chief. A deputy sheriff in a large agency has duties similar to those of officers in urban police departments.
- **Detectives** gather facts and collect evidence for criminal cases. They conduct interviews, examine records, observe the activities of suspects, and participate in raids or arrests.
- **State police officers**, also known as highway patrol officers, arrest criminals statewide and patrol highways to enforce motor vehicle laws and regulations. At the scene of accidents, they may direct traffic, give first aid, and call for emergency equipment.

#### Police Officer: Prerequisites

At minimum, you'll need to be a US citizen over 20 years old, not be a convicted felon, have a GED or high school diploma, and pass several competitive written and physical examinations. Federal and state law enforcement agencies require a college degree.

#### Police Officer: Education & Training

Many law enforcement agencies encourage applicants to complete either a 2-year associate's program or a 4-year bachelor's program in a criminal justice-related area. Knowledge of a foreign language and being physically fit will also help you cultivate a career in law enforcement.

Once you're accepted by a law enforcement agency, you'll receive 12-to-14 weeks of training in a police academy. Training includes classroom instruction in constitutional law and civil rights, state laws and local ordinances, and accident investigation. Recruits also receive training in patrol, traffic control, firearms usage, self-defense, first aid, and emergency response.

Continuing education is a necessary requirement for police officers and detectives. Many agencies pay all or part of the tuition for officers to earn a degree in criminal justice, justice administration or public administration, and pay higher salaries to those who earn such a degree.

## **Police Officer: Career Opportunities**

In a large department, officers may be promoted to detective or to a specialty area of police work, such as juvenile justice administration. Promotions to corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, and captain usually are made according to a candidate's position on a promotion list, depending on your on-the-job performance and examination scores. Many officers retire with a pension after only 20 or 25 years of service, and pursue a second career while still in their 40s.

## **Police Officer: Salary**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, police and sheriff's patrol officers had median annual earnings of \$39,790 in 2000. Police chiefs, deputy chiefs, captains, lieutenants and sergeants earned between \$52,000 and \$78,600 per year. In 2000, detectives and criminal investigators earned between \$37,240 and \$61,750 per year. Competition is keen for the higher paying jobs with state and federal agencies and police departments in more affluent areas.