

# What's this job all about?

If you enjoy working with your hands, carpentry is a trade worth considering. Carpenters cut, fit, and assemble wood and other materials to construct buildings. There are several different types of carpenters that specialize in different things. A carpenter might specialize in foundations or finish work. A carpenter who works for a general contractor often has to do a wide range of tasks involved in new construction.

If you choose to be a carpenter you'll have to work outside and in Alaska that can sometimes mean uncomfortable conditions. Rain, cold, bugs and more can come with the job. But for many people who choose this field, working outdoors is a part of what they enjoy about the job. You'll also probably need to travel and relocate to take available jobs. When there's a big building job going on in a community, you might travel there to work during the week or for several weeks at a time. You have to be in good health, and you have to be fairly strong and agile. Carpenters need good hand-eye coordination as well. Many people who choose this field say they really enjoy the feeling they get knowing that they were a part of building something new.

### Here's what Carpenters do:

- Refer to blueprints and receive instructions from supervisors.
- Figure out the right dimensions of the building and the materials to be used.
- Layout, measure, and mark the wood or other materials, using measuring tapes and squares.
- Cut or shape the wood, using hand and power tools.
- Join and assemble the materials using nails, screws, staples, or glue.
- Check their work for accuracy, using levels or framing squares.
- Follow safety rules and regulations.
- Keep the work site clean to avoid accidents or inspection violations.
- Build forms for concrete foundations.
- Examine structural supports for decay and replace them.
- Install or repair siding.
- Build, install, or repair wood fixtures such as cabinets.
- Install components, such as floors, stairs, or wall panels that were built off-site.
- Build components from scratch.
- Carpenter supervisors sometimes estimate the amount and type of materials needed for a job. They order materials and have them delivered before workers arrive on the job. They may also make arrangements with subcontractors, such as plumbers and electricians.

### How much money can I make?

**Median wage: \$25.55 per hour.**

In Alaska, the median wage for carpenters is \$4,429 per month. Hours spent on the job can be cut back because of bad weather or downturns in construction activity, so your overall earnings may be lower. Union workers often earn higher wages. Apprentices generally earn about half the wage of skilled carpenters and as they gain experience and skills, they receive higher pay. Full-time carpenters may receive benefits like paid vacation, sick leave, and health insurance. Self-employed carpenters must provide their own insurance.

## HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work as a carpenter. You need courses in English, math, science, and social studies, physical education, health, and applied art or second language. Here is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you:

### **Business**

Introduction to Business, business accounting and computer classes

### **Construction Trades**

Exploration of Construction Careers  
Construction  
Carpentry, Framing Carpentry  
Woodworking, Cabinetmaking  
Construction Trades Work Experience

### **Drafting**

Drafting, Architectural  
Blueprint Reading

### **Health and Safety Education**

Safety and First Aid

### **Industrial and Technology Education**

Exploration of Careers  
General Industrial Arts  
Industrial Safety and First Aid  
Equipment Maintenance and Repair  
Industrial and Technology Education Work Experience

### **Mathematics**

Integrated Math, General Math  
Applied Math, Pre-Algebra  
Algebra, Business Math

### **Physical Education**

Physical Education, Fitness and Conditioning Activities

## **How long does it take to receive training?**

There are several pathways to becoming a carpenter. You can become an apprentice through a union if you are 18 years old, have a high school diploma or a GED, and are accepted. It takes about four years and requires about 6,000 to 7,000 hours of on-the-job training and an average of seven weeks of classroom instruction per year to become a journeyman. You can also train through non-union programs requiring a four-year apprenticeship and a minimum of 8,000 hours on-the-job-training plus related instruction. Vocational and technical colleges and universities also provide training programs.

## **When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?**

In Alaska, there are about 4,855 carpenters. And there are more than 1.3 million carpenters nationwide. The outlook for this field through 2014 is excellent. Most openings are a result of average growth and replacing those who retire.

*Please see the Training Programs section of this booklet to find out more about training in these career fields in Alaska.*

