

Preschool Teachers

Summary



Preschool teachers educate and care for children, younger than the age of 5, who have not yet entered kindergarten.

Quick Facts: Preschool Teachers

2014 Median Pay	\$28,120 per year \$13.52 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	Associate's degree
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2014	441,000
Job Outlook, 2014-24	7% (As fast as average)
Employment Change, 2014-24	29,600

What Preschool Teachers Do

Preschool teachers educate and care for children younger than age 5 who have not yet entered kindergarten. They teach reading, writing, science, and other subjects in a way that young children can understand.

Work Environment

Preschool teachers work in public and private schools, childcare centers, and charitable organizations. Many work the traditional 10-month school year, but some work the full year.

How to Become a Preschool Teacher

Education and training requirements vary based on settings and state regulations. They range from a high school diploma and certification to a college degree.

Pay

The median annual wage for preschool teachers was \$28,120 in May 2014.

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Job Outlook

Employment of preschool teachers is projected to grow 7 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Growth is expected due to a continued focus on the importance of early childhood education.

State & Area Data

Explore resources for employment and wages by state and area for preschool teachers.

Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of preschool teachers with similar occupations.

More Information, Including Links to O*NET

Learn more about preschool teachers by visiting additional resources, including O*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

What Preschool Teachers Do



Preschool teachers use play to teach children about the world.

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Duties

Preschool teachers typically do the following:

- Teach children basic skills such as color, shape, number, and letter recognition
- Work with children in groups or one on one, depending on the needs of children and the subject matter
- Plan and carry out a curriculum that targets different areas of child development, such as language, motor, and social skills
- Organize activities so children can learn about the world, explore interests, and develop skills
- Develop schedules and routines to ensure children have enough physical activity, rest, and playtime
- Watch for signs of emotional or developmental problems in children and bring them to the attention of the parents

- Keep records of the students' progress, routines, and interests, and inform parents about their child's development

Young children learn from playing, problem solving, questioning, and experimenting. Preschool teachers use play and other instructional techniques to teach children about the world. For example, they use storytelling and rhyming games to teach language and vocabulary. They may help improve children's social skills by having them work together to build a neighborhood in a sandbox or teach math by having children count when building with blocks.

Preschool teachers work with children from different ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Teachers include topics in their lessons to teach children to respect people of different backgrounds and cultures.

Work Environment



Preschool teachers usually work in public schools, private schools, and childcare centers that have preschool programs.

Preschool teachers held about 441,000 jobs in 2014. The industries that employed the most preschool teachers were as follows:

Child day care services	55%
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	19
Elementary and secondary schools; state, local, and private	17
Individual and family services	3

Many preschool teachers work in public and private schools or in formal childcare centers that have preschool classrooms. Others work for charitable or religious organizations that have preschool programs or Head Start programs. Head Start programs receive federal funding in order to provide educational courses for low-income families and their children from birth to age 5.

Seeing children develop new skills and gain an appreciation of knowledge and learning can be very rewarding. However, it can also be tiring to work with young, active children all day.

Work Schedules

Preschool teachers in public schools generally work during school hours. Many work the traditional 10-month school year and have a 2-month break during the summer. Some preschool teachers may teach in summer programs.

Teachers in districts with a year-round schedule typically work 8 weeks in a row then have a break for 1 week before starting a new school session. They also have a 5-week midwinter break.

Those working in day care settings may work longer hours and often work the whole year.

How to Become a Preschool Teacher



Preschool teachers must plan lessons that engage young students and must also adapt their lessons to suit different learning styles.

Education and training requirements vary based on settings and state regulations. They range from a high school diploma and certification to a college degree.

Education

In childcare centers, preschool teachers generally are required to have at least a high school diploma and a certification in early childhood education. However, employers may prefer to hire workers with at least some postsecondary education in early childhood education.

Preschool teachers in Head Start programs are required to have at least an associate's degree. However, at least 50 percent of all preschool teachers in Head Start programs nationwide must have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Those with a degree in a related field must have experience teaching preschool-age children.

In public schools, preschool teachers are generally required to have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Bachelor's degree programs teach students about children's development, strategies to teach young children, and how to observe and document children's progress.

Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

Some states require preschool teachers to obtain the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential offered by the [Council for Professional Recognition](#). Obtaining the CDA credential requires coursework, experience in the field, a written exam, and observation of the candidate working with children. The CDA credential is valid for three years and requires renewal.

Some states recognize the Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) designation offered by the [National Early Childhood Program Accreditation](#). Some of the requirements needed to obtain the CCP include that the candidate must be 18 years old, have a high school diploma, have experience in the field, take courses in early childhood education, and pass an exam. The CCP accreditation requires renewal every two years through the CCP maintenance process.

In public schools, preschool teachers must be licensed to teach early childhood education, which covers preschool through third grade. Requirements vary by state, but they generally require a bachelor's degree and passing an exam to demonstrate competency. Most states require teachers to complete continuing education credits to maintain their license.

Other Experience

A few states require preschool teachers to have some work experience in a childcare setting. The amount of experience necessary varies by state. In these cases, preschool teachers often start out as [childcare workers](#) or [teacher assistants](#).

Important Qualities

Communication skills. Preschool teachers need good communication skills to talk to parents and colleagues about students’ progress. They need good writing and speaking skills to convey this information effectively. They must also be able to communicate well with small children.

Creativity. Preschool teachers must plan lessons that engage young students. In addition, they need to adapt their lessons to suit different learning styles.

Interpersonal skills. Preschool teachers must understand children’s emotional needs and be able to develop good relationships with parents, children, and colleagues.

Organizational skills. Teachers need to be organized to plan lessons and keep records of their students.

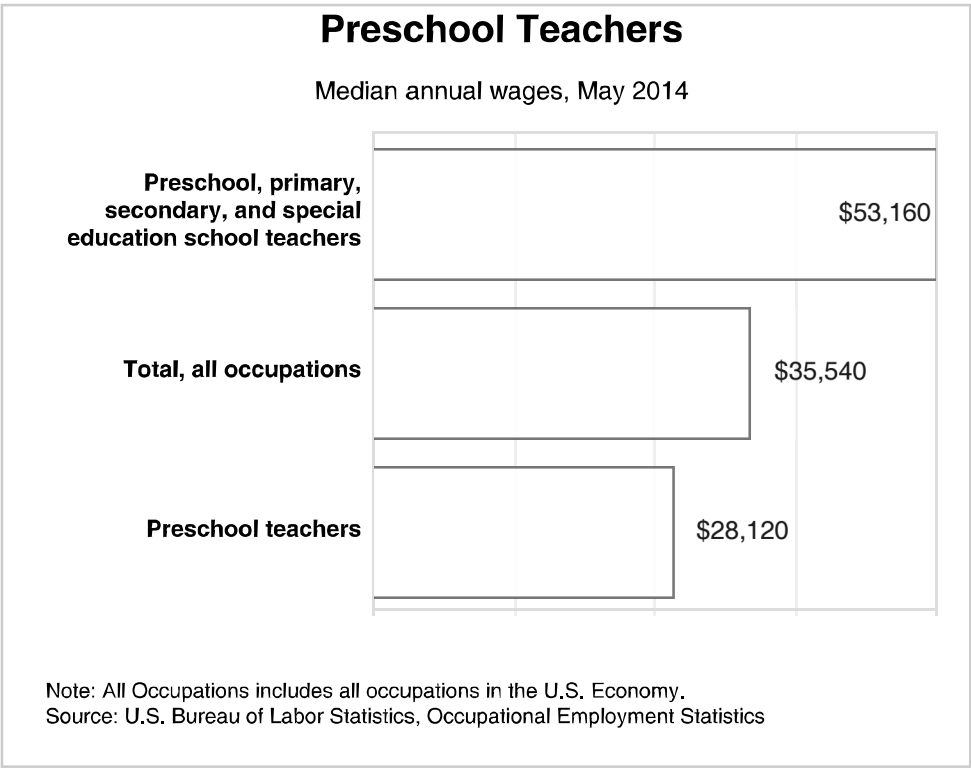
Patience. Working with children can be frustrating, and preschool teachers should be able to respond calmly to overwhelming and difficult situations.

Physical stamina. Working with children can be physically taxing, so preschool teachers should have a lot of energy.

Advancement

Experienced preschool teachers can advance to become the director of a preschool or childcare center or a lead teacher, who may be responsible for the instruction of several classes. Those with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education frequently are qualified to teach kindergarten through grade 3, in addition to preschool. Teaching positions at these higher grades typically pay more. For more information, see the profiles on [preschool and childcare center directors](#) and [kindergarten and elementary school teachers](#).

Pay



The median annual wage for preschool teachers was \$28,120 in May 2014. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$18,680, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$50,880.

In May 2014, the median annual wages for preschool teachers in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

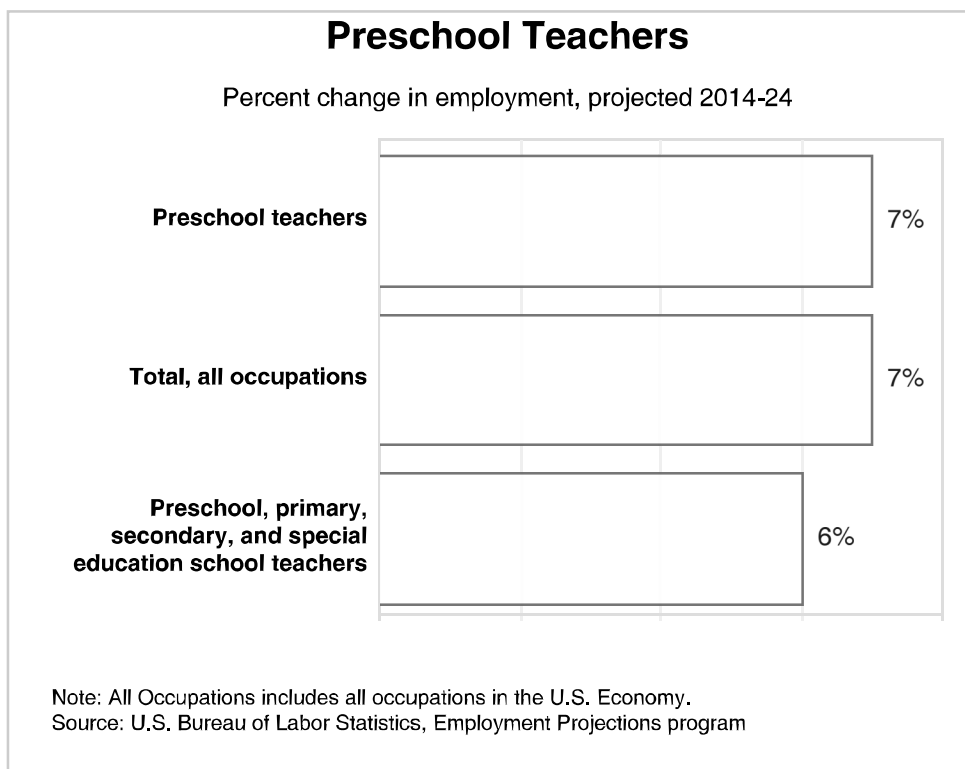
Elementary and secondary schools; state, local, and private	\$42,580
Individual and family services	30,150
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	28,500

Preschool teachers in public schools generally work during school hours. Many work the traditional 10-month school year and a 2-month break during the summer. Some preschool teachers may teach in summer programs.

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Those working in day care settings may work longer hours and often work the whole year.

Job Outlook



Employment of preschool teachers is projected to grow 7 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations.

The number of preschool-aged children is expected to increase; however, their share of the overall population should remain constant.

Early childhood education is important for a child's short- and long-term intellectual and social development. More preschool teachers should be needed as a result of the increasing demand for early childhood education. In addition, some parents are starting to enroll children as young as infants in preschool because of the educational benefit.

Job Prospects

Workers who have postsecondary education, particularly those with a bachelor's degree, should have better job prospects than those with less education. In addition, those with previous experience working with preschool-aged children will have better opportunities finding a job.

Employment projections data for preschool teachers, 2014-24

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2014	Projected Employment, 2024	Change, 2014-24		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Preschool teachers, except special education	25-2011	441,000	470,600	7	29,600	[XLSX]

State & Area Data

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

The [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (OES) program produces employment and wage estimates annually for over 800 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The link(s) below go to OES data maps for employment and wages by state and area.

- [Preschool teachers, except special education](#)

Projections Central




Occupational employment projections are developed for all states by Labor Market Information (LMI) or individual state Employment Projections offices. All state projections data are available at www.projectionscentral.com. Information on this site allows projected employment growth for an occupation to be compared among states or to be compared within one state. In addition, states may produce projections for areas; there are links to each state's websites where these data may be retrieved.




Career InfoNet

America's Career InfoNet includes hundreds of [occupational profiles](#) with data available by state and metro area. There are links in the left-hand side menu to compare occupational employment by state and occupational wages by local area or metro area. There is also a [salary info tool](#) to search for wages by zip code.

Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of preschool teachers.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2014 MEDIAN PAY
	Childcare Workers	Childcare workers provide care for children when parents and other family members are unavailable. They attend to children's basic needs, such as bathing and feeding. In addition, some help children prepare for kindergarten or help older children with homework.	High school diploma or equivalent	\$19,730
	High School Teachers	High school teachers help prepare students for life after graduation. They teach academic lessons and various skills that students will need to attend college and to enter the job market.	Bachelor's degree	\$56,310
	Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers	Kindergarten and elementary school teachers prepare younger students for future schooling by teaching them basic subjects such as math	Bachelor's degree	\$53,760

	<u>Middle School Teachers</u>	<p>and reading.</p> <p>Middle school teachers educate students, typically in sixth through eighth grades. Middle school teachers help students build on the fundamentals they learned in elementary school and prepare them for the more difficult curriculum they will face in high school.</p>	Bachelor's degree	\$54,940
	<u>Preschool and Childcare Center Directors</u>	<p>Preschool and childcare center directors supervise and lead staffs, oversee daily activities, design curriculums, and prepare budgets. They are responsible for all aspects of their center's program.</p>	Bachelor's degree	\$45,260
	<u>Special Education Teachers</u>	<p>Special education teachers work with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. They adapt general education lessons and teach various subjects, such as reading, writing, and math, to students with mild and moderate disabilities. They also teach basic skills, such as literacy and communication techniques, to students with severe disabilities.</p>	Bachelor's degree	\$55,980
	<u>Teacher Assistants</u>	<p>Teacher assistants work under a teacher's supervision to give students additional attention and instruction.</p>	Some college, no degree	\$24,430

Contacts for More Information

For more information about early childhood education, visit

[National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

For more information about professional credentials, visit

[Council for Professional Recognition](#)

[Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education](#)

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