

If you're thinking of pursuing a career in welding, you're in good company. [According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), there are approximately 425,000 welders and related workers in the United States.

You probably have a general idea of what welders do--use tools to join different materials through welding techniques--but you might not have such a clear-cut idea of what the industry is like and whether it's a promising career path.

Here, we'll answer the frequently asked question: "is welding a good career path?"

We'll share salary numbers, job advantages and some of the downsides to consider with the goal of helping you decide whether a welding career is the right choice for you.

Welding is an easy career to get into

One of the aspects that prompts many people to initially start looking at a career in welding is that there are very few barriers to entry--meaning you can get into it with little experience and you don't have to have any advanced education credentials right out of the gate.

Many new welders have a background working in machine shops, auto body repair, manufacturing or other similar jobs. These kinds of jobs, either full- or part-time, are a great way to familiarize yourself with different tools and terminology while trying your hand at entry-level welding tasks.

If you don't have on-the-job experience, most community colleges and vocational schools [offer welding programs](#) that will help you gain both classroom hours and hands-on experience.

Entry-level welding positions often call for either a vocational certificate or 1 to 3 years experience working in a related field, so either of these is a good path to start on if you want to become a welder.

Welding is in high demand

Right now, there are more welders leaving the field than entering it. [According to the American Welding Society](#) (AWS), there will be a shortage of more than 375,000 welders by 2023.

In addition to attrition---people retiring or leaving the field--the shortage is due to the fact that more young people are choosing to head to universities after high school than to

trade schools, as they did in the past. This is a good thing for new welders, as it creates [incredible job security](#).

Certain portions of the industry are growing particularly quickly, like the field of robotic welding. According to [one global analysis](#), the global robotic welding market was valued at about \$5.5 billion in 2018 and is projected to reach \$10.8 billion by 2026, a growth rate of close to 9% annually. Robotic welding automates the welding process, improving speed and efficiency while reducing costs and lowering the risk of work-related injuries.

Welders are also in demand in the aerospace world. Even in the midst of the global pandemic, for example, [SpaceX announced](#) a call for skilled welders to fill hundreds of job openings related to its Starship Mars exploration program.

Career advancement is surprisingly feasible

In the welding field, climbing the ranks to higher levels of pay and seniority is highly achievable for someone with a strong work ethic. The field has a very straightforward [certification system](#) for career advancement, via which workers can pursue and obtain credentials for increasing levels of skills and responsibility. Most jobs in the field, in turn, are directly tied to one or more of these certifications.

Welding inspector job listings, for example, typically call for [AWS Certified Welding Inspector](#) (CWI) certification. The same goes for jobs like welding engineers and welding supervisors. For each of these credentials, AWS outlines specific requirements for education and experience along with all the resources you need to prepare for and pass the relevant exam.

Welding jobs pay well

The [average base pay](#) for welders in the United States is around \$18 an hour, or about \$35,100 a year. Once you begin obtaining increasing levels of certification, however, your earning potential multiples significantly. Welding inspectors, for example, [earn an average](#) of \$61,500, while the [average salary for robotic welders](#) is \$75,500. The top tier of earners in the welding field bring in six figures or more.

For a more detailed breakdown of how much welders make based on job type and location, check out our comprehensive guide to [welding salaries here](#). (Link to [previous piece on welding salary](#) when published)

It's a very mobile career

Do you get bored staying in one place for too long? Welding will arm you with skills you can leverage to get a job nearly anywhere in the world. Because there are so many industries that require welders--transportation, manufacturing, infrastructure and energy, to name a few--you'll find welding job listings pretty much anywhere that has a developed economy.

The U.S. military is also a big employer of welders. In addition to frequent travel, military jobs come with [a number of lucrative benefits](#) like tax-free housing, tuition assistance and great healthcare, along with the ability to receive training on the job.

Your workload is flexible

Welding jobs offer you the ability to scale your work volume up or down depending how much you want to make and how many hours you have available.

With contract jobs, for example, you might work a three-month stint on one project and then take a few weeks off before starting another project. Other welding work, like offshore, is usually seasonal, which means you might earn your entire year's salary during a six-month window, leaving the rest of the year free to travel or pursue other gigs to increase your earnings.

If you prefer the stability of a full-time welding job, you can still take advantage of flexibility in the form of nonstandard shifts. Working the overnight shift in a manufacturing job, for example, leaves you with more free daytime hours than a normal 9-to-5, which can be great for those with families or those with other commitments outside of work.

You can start your own business

Prefer the appeal of being your own boss? Welding can help make that happen. From opening your own welding shop to offering specialized services as a welding inspector or acting as a consultant for other companies, there are endless business opportunities for welders with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Additionally, there are a number of parallel fields where your welding expertise can come in handy. [Welding Sales Representatives](#), for example, help manufacturers purchase and adopt new technologies that will expand their capabilities, while [Welding](#)

[Educators](#) train and evaluate the next generation of welding professionals. Both of these paths also lend themselves to starting your own business.

Welding skills can be used outside of work

Not all of the benefits of a welding career are purely practical; some are just plain enjoyable, like the ability to use your welding skills outside of work.

Welding comes in handy for [endless do-it-yourself projects](#), from firepits to furniture, which can then be used in your home or sold as a side hustle. There's also the rewarding feeling of being able to do things yourself, like fix a banged-up bumper or repair a tool, rather than having to pay someone else to do it. Your friends and family will no doubt be thankful for your expertise in these areas, too.

Disadvantages to a welding career

WELDING CAN BE DANGEROUS

Welding, like any career, isn't without its downsides. One of the main disadvantages that deters some would-be welders are the [on-the-job hazards](#). These include explosions, burns, electric shock, and exposure to harmful gases, in addition to the inherent dangers that come with working in and around heavy machinery, like falls and other injuries.

Thankfully, the industry places a heavy [emphasis on safety](#), with [strict standards](#) governing the safety requirements for every aspect of welding. There are also [courses from organizations like AWS](#) that will help you expand your safety knowledge while obtaining professional development credits in the process.

IT REQUIRES RIGOROUS PHYSICAL WORK

If you don't like to get your hands dirty, welding isn't for you. The job is physically demanding, frequently requiring you to lift and carry heavy loads and be on your feet for hours at a time. Many welding jobs also involve stooping, kneeling, crawling and generally squeezing into tight spaces, often in warm temperatures or outdoors while exposed to the elements.

JOB ENVIRONMENTS VARY WIDELY IN QUALITY

Another challenge of welding jobs is that it's tough to get a handle on the work environment before you're actually employed somewhere, and this can make or break

your level of job satisfaction. Having a supervisor who values safety and training, for example, will minimize the hazards mentioned above and facilitate a workplace that's generally more enjoyable than one where such guidelines aren't prioritized.

Your best bet is to do your due diligence when applying for any welding job--you're assessing them as much as they are assessing you. Ask questions about safety protocols and training opportunities, and see if you can speak with would-be colleagues who are on the same level as you to get their input on what it's really like to work there.

Get started with a welding career

Start finding welding jobs today by registering for a free [Surehand](#) profile. Surehand connects skilled workers like welders with job opportunities that are tailored to their skills and preferences.

We cut out the middleman, connecting you directly with hiring managers who are interested in your profile, and eliminate the need to fill out job applications over and over. Surehand is free for workers and only takes a few minutes to get up and running. [Create your worker profile](#) now and get started down the path to a lucrative and rewarding career in welding.