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How to Become an FBI Agent

FBI agents play a vital role in protecting the United States and its citizens from a slew of serious crimes.



By Dillon Price, Monster Contributor



The life of an FBI agent isn't quite what you see in the movies. FBI agents don't necessarily jump out of cars at full speed and spin-kick ruthless drug kingpins. But when you learn how to become an FBI agent, you play a vital role in protecting the United States and its citizens from a slew of serious crimes, including trafficking and terrorism.

Monster breaks down the preliminary requirements and key steps you'll need to make it through the FBI's testing and training process.

What Does the FBI Do?

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is the leading federal law enforcement agency for the United States. The agency is committed to halting serious crimes such as drug trafficking, hacking, human trafficking, and terrorism and bringing perpetrators to justice. Working for the FBI requires you to learn how to become an FBI agent—a highly skilled law enforcement officer who investigates a broad range of crimes that occur across state lines.

What Does an FBI Agent Do?

FBI agents enforce a [wide range of federal laws](#) and perform many different investigative tasks. They typically investigate drug trafficking, violent crime, terrorism, counterintelligence,

cybercrime, white-collar crime, organized crime, public corruption, and weapons of mass destruction.

The typical duties of an FBI agent include:

- Interviewing suspects, witnesses, and informants to gather evidence of crimes.
- Using digital tools to gather evidence of cybercrimes.
- Obtaining and executing search warrants.
- Collecting and securing evidence from crime scenes.
- Testifying in federal court.
- Filling out paperwork and creating reports relating to investigations and arrests.
- Taking fingerprints of criminal suspects and keeping records of them.
- Remaining on-call in the event of a national emergency.
- Running community outreach programs through the FBI Citizens Academy.

Types of FBI Careers

"Special agent" might be the coolest job title out there, but it's not the only job within the FBI. After you become a special agent, you can eventually work your way up to FBI profiler (also called a FBI supervisory special agent). FBI profilers specialize in building profiles of unidentified criminals to help law enforcement agents narrow down their search for a suspect.

Other careers within the FBI include:

- **FBI Forensic Accountant:** FBI forensic accountants assist agents with search warrants, evidence gathering, record-keeping, and preparing paperwork such as affidavits. Forensic accountants must go through rigorous screening and complete a five-week training program at the FBI Training Academy.
- **FBI Analyst:** Also called intelligence analysts, FBI analysts examine evidence, make judgments, and provide recommendations to agents to take action. FBI analysts must complete the Intelligence Analyst Selection Process, which is a nine-step screening and testing process.

How to Become an FBI Agent

Joining the FBI takes time and dedication. There are many requirements you must meet before even beginning FBI training. The FBI is looking for the best of the best—candidates who are physically fit, competent problem-solvers, and personable and effective communicators. Because FBI agents are given high clearance to access sensitive government information, only well-vetted candidates who meet the FBI's requirements and make it through the training are eligible to become agents.

Before you can be considered for FBI employment, you must:

- Be 23–36 years old.
- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Hold at least a bachelor's degree.
- Have at least two years of full-time professional work experience with a bachelor's degree (one year with a master's degree).
- Have a valid driver's license and six months of driving experience.
- Be able to report to any of the FBI's 56 field offices during [the Special Agent Selection System](#) (SASS) screening and testing process.

Your FBI training will begin once you pass the SASS. [The FBI National Academy](#), located in Quantico, Virginia, offers training programs that include firearms training, simulated small town training, efficient driving techniques, and basic survival skills in high-risk environments.

How to Fulfill the FBI Education Requirements

Most agents begin their FBI careers with a college degree in criminal justice, cybersecurity, forensic accounting, public safety administration, or psychology. Several [accredited colleges offer degrees](#) that will help you learn how to get into the FBI.

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Want to get your foot in the door early? FBI internships allow you to gain valuable knowledge and experience while working alongside seasoned professionals. The [FBI 10-week Honors](#)

Internship Program is a perfect opportunity for candidates currently pursuing undergrad or graduate degrees.

How to Work for the FBI

The FBI employs the SASS vetting process, which is a mentally and physically challenging nine-step process:

1. Complete the **application and screening**. You must **submit a complete application**. You will then be screened for eligibility and suitability.
2. Take the **Phase I test**. This is a three-hour long exam that assesses candidates for logic-based reasoning, figural reasoning, personality, preferences and interests, and situational judgment. Phase I must be scheduled within 21 days of passing the application and screening process.
3. Submit **required information** such as the Special Agent Physical Fitness Test (SA PFT) self-evaluation and the critical skills and self-reported language sections.
4. Attend a **meet-and-greet session and undergo a review process** with one or more evaluators. Evaluators will review your application and verify the information you submitted is correct.
5. Take the **Phase II test**, which is comprised of a writing assessment and a structured interview with three special agents.
6. Complete the **official physical fitness test (PFT)** at a local field office, which includes sit-ups, sprinting, push-ups, running, and pull-ups. You must take this test within 14 days of passing Phase II.
7. Review the **conditional appointment offer**. You must accept or reject an offer within five days.
8. Undergo a **background investigation**, including a personal security interview, polygraph test, drug test, fingerprinting, medical exam, credit and arrest check, and reference verifications.
9. Take the **basic field training course**, which must be completed within 60 days of arriving at the FBI Academy.

How Much Do FBI Agents Make?

The average FBI agent salary varies by an agent's experience and role. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the **median law enforcement salary in the federal government** is \$74,910 per year.

You can look up the average salary for FBI agents in your location by using the **Monster Salary Guide**.

How to Find FBI Jobs

Now that you have a full understanding of how to become an FBI agent, it's time to spring into action: Pursuing a college degree, getting physically healthy to pass the FBI fitness test, gaining experience through an FBI internship, and mastering communication skills is the perfect way to start.

And once you're ready, you can search Monster for an in-depth list of [FBI agent jobs](#).

FBI jobs may also be found in these [top five states with the most detective and criminal investigator jobs](#):

- [Texas](#)
- [California](#)
- [New York](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Arizona](#)

Also check out these top five U.S. metro areas for detective, criminal investigator, and FBI jobs:

- [New York City](#)
- [Washington, D.C.](#)
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