

Commonly Asked Questions

How do I become a Police Officer in Texas

So You Wish to Become a Police Officer?

There are lots of people aspiring to become police officer, beginning from the time they were young and watching Cops & The X-Files on TV every weeknight. Learning **how to become a police officer** isn't easy, especially since competition is fierce and the physical/emotional demands are rigorous, which is why proper preparation is crucial to landing a job as an officer of the law.

Starting a career as a police officer can be very rewarding in many different ways. Financially speaking, cops can make a very competitive salary with a top-notch retirement package. Emotionally speaking, officers can experience the joy of saving a person's life and making the community a safer place. Physically speaking, they are forced to stay fit and conditioned, which leads to a healthier life. While policemen may face high levels of stress and danger at times, the pros most definitely outweigh the cons, assuming this is your career of choice.

The purpose of this booklet is to serve as a guide and resource in assisting those who wish to learn *how to become a police officer*. Each outline box contains important information regarding things you can start doing now in order to stand out from the rest and shine come interview time. These guidelines can also be applied to other similar jobs, such as firefighters, federal agents, security guards, etc.

Importance of Community Involvement

When candidates are being interviewed for employment as police officers, questions regarding community interaction and community service will surely come up. You may be asked some of the ways you have helped contribute to your community and how the community plays a role in your life. This should not come as a surprise to you, as police officers are paid to serve and protect the community.

What You Can Do:

- Participate in various forms of community service
- Attend city council meetings regarding community issues
- Volunteer for community events where needed
- Be familiar with the area and learn the major streets/highways
- Participate in Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts (if under 18)
- Attain the rank of Eagle (males)

Education Tips for Police Officers

As with most jobs, the higher the education level, the better; especially in terms of money and promotions. The same can be applied to law enforcement agencies and most police departments require a certain amount of college credits (usually around 40-60 minimum) before anyone can even apply. In order to be ahead of the crowd, or at least on par, strive for a bachelor's degree of any kind, preferably in the field of criminal justice or public relations.

What You Can Do:

- Attain a bachelor's degree [Criminal justice, psychology, & criminology are good ones]
- Take at least one criminal justice course
- Take a foreign language class - being bilingual is always a plus
- Take a psychology/public relations class
- Practice working in groups and develop teamwork skills
- Learn all about the police department you are applying for (ie. motto, statistics, history, goals, etc.)

Experience is Essential

Sometimes considered to be even more important than education by some businesses, experience is key to setting yourself apart from the other applicants. Extensive job experience lets the employer know that you are aware of what you are getting yourself into and that you are as ready as you can be to start working. A variety of experience is always better than the same kind of experience for many years. Do your best to take advantage of some of the ideas listed below.

What You Can Do:

- Get a job working some form of security
- Work part time as a community service officer, public aide, or cadet
- Serve in the military and gain invaluable leadership/tactical experience
- Go on at least 1 ride-along with a police officer
- Tour the police department and become familiar with it
- Learn the basics about firearms and practice your shooting skills
- Talk with a police officer and learn as much as you can from him/her

Physical Training Recommendations

If you are serious about becoming a police officer then you will be serious about getting into shape and hitting the weights. Much of a police officer's labors involve some form of physical activity, whether it be running after a suspect, wrestling a perpetrator to the ground, or racing to save someone's life. If you have any hope of becoming a police officer and making the final cut, then it is imperative you start getting in shape now so you can finish the physical agility tests ahead of everyone else

What You Can Do:

- Run a few miles 2-3 times each week and time yourself; aim to improve each time
- Be able to run 2 miles with at least an average time of 8 minutes per mile
- Lift weights. Make sure you can bench your own weight and properly work out your main muscle groups
- Hire a personal trainer and he will ensure you maximize performance
- Practice climbing over an 8-10 ft. wall
- Be able to drag or carry a 150 lb. body
- Join a sports team, whether it be football, soccer, basketball, or tennis - pick one
- Learn the importance of proper stretching and apply it

Useful Skills for Police Officers

There is much more to being a cop than running around chasing bad guys with a pistol. In order to be an effective police officer, one must develop certain skills which are used on a daily basis. Officers are heavily involved in listening (to victims and superiors), writing (reports, tickets, etc.), snap-judgments (whether or not to use deadly force), among other things, and will need to polish these skills if they wish to perform at an optimal level. Such skills may not be needed for admission to the police academy, but they will come in handy sooner or later in this field of employment.

What You Can Do:

- Learn basic fighting/disarmament techniques, such as jiu-jitsu
- Develop good communication skills (speech, listening, & writing)
- Take a college course in public speaking and/or communication
- Learn a foreign language, particularly one used in your location
- Learn how to be a good driver and keep your record clean
- Learn basic first-aid & CPR
- Learn basic computer skills (MS word, email, typing, etc.) for generating reports and such
- Strive to have a typing speed of 60+ WPM

Connections: An Added Bonus

They say "It's not what you know, it's who you know" that ultimately gets people the job they seek. More often than not, this is the case, especially when you consider the fact that over 80% of jobs are acquired via networking. Obviously, the best people to know in the company are the ones higher up on the "food-chain", but knowing anyone will give you an edge. The trick to this job-acquiring technique is how you go about doing it.

What You Can Do:

- Ask around (friends, coworkers, etc) if they know any police officers and try to befriend them
- Tour the police department and become acquainted with some of the officers
- Volunteer to assist police officers (there are times when police officers need volunteers to role play)
- Ask officers for tips on how to become a police officer - they can offer great advice

Perfect Records are a Plus

There are few things that can keep you from getting a job as a police officer, and among those things are felony convictions, domestic violence, and racism, such as hate crimes. Having a clean record is a major plus when applying for a job as a police officer, so make sure you make smart decisions on a daily basis. Since each applicant's record is carefully scrutinized, don't even think about trying to hide any kind of charge or conviction - they will find out everything about your past. The hiring staff is also very weary of hiring anyone that may have potential drug or drinking problems, so it's best to just leave those things alone.

What You Can Do:

- Abstain from illicit drugs
- Don't drink; if you do, drink in moderation (don't get plastered or a DUI)
- Don't smoke; quit if you do
- Make sure you have not been convicted of ANY felonies (automatic rejection if so)
- Avoid any kind hate crimes
- No domestic violence charges at all
- Seek to expunge/repair any crimes committed
- Establish a clean and professional job history

Cops Must Possess Integrity

Probably one of the harder traits to attain in life is having a good sense of morality and ethics. This is an important trait to have because police officers are entrusted with a great power to uphold the law by almost any means necessary. Police also deal with a lot of contraband and officers need to be able to resist any kind of temptation to keep such items for themselves.

When it comes time for interviews and background checks, police employers do not mess around. They will dig as far back to the day you were born to see if what you tell them is accurate and honest. While being interviewed, they may ask you some tough or embarrassing questions and you may feel inclined to lie about these things; do not. They are mainly questions about honesty and integrity to see if you would be a trustworthy officer.

What You Can Do:

- Be honest, especially when answering questions by the hiring board (they will find out if you are lying and dismiss you)
- Develop and establish a code of moral ethics
- Practice doing what's right instead of what's easiest
- Listen to your conscience (the little white angel that flies around and whispers in your ear)

Passion to Become a Police Officer

One trick to successfully becoming a police officer is to show and convince the hiring staff that you have had a life-long passion to become an officer of the law. Why would they look for such a person you might ask? Simple; training new officers is a lengthy and costly process. When the police department hires someone, they are hoping this person will be sticking around for at least 10 years, hopefully the full 30. The way they try and decipher if you really are passionate about becoming a cop is by asking those closest to you (friends and family) how long you have wanted to be a police officer for and why they think you would be a good fit.

What You Can Do:

- Express enthusiasm to friends and family about how you wish to become a police officer
- Build a strong resume by pursuing things that would make you a better cop
- Be persistent, prompt, and enthused when applying
- When being interviewed, show up in a nice-looking suit clean-shaven and show them you want the job

Preparation for the Police Interview

The interview for any job is one of the most critical moments that can make (or break) your chances at acquiring the job. There are some imperative Do's and Don'ts for having a successful police interview, so make sure you perfect these things before blowing your big chance.

What You Must Do:

- Dress to impress. Wear a dark suit with an unobtrusive tie
- Get a haircut and be clean-shaven
- Don't use any strong colognes or perfumes
- Make sure your car is clean, inside and out (some places check your car to see if you are a neat/organized person)
- Act enthusiastic and smile when greeted
- Tell the truth - they will find out one way or the other if you don't
- Bring multiple copies of your resume (1 for each interviewer)
- Rehearse answering potential questions and do your best to relax
- Ask the interviewers 2-3 questions (it shows you are interested)
- Be on time

Cool Police Equipment



Benefits of Becoming a Police Officer

Aside from being able to serve and protect the community, becoming a police officer may be more rewarding than you think, financially speaking. Depending on the state, county, and length of time working as a police officer, some salaries can reach the six-figure mark (\$100,000+/year). Take a look at some of the many benefits of being an officer of the law:

- Decent salary pay while attending the police academy
- Starting salary range of \$25-80k per year, depending on location
- Excellent medical & dental coverage
- Potential 4 day work week
- 80-180 hours of paid vacation annually
- Up to 96 hours of paid sick leave annually
- Almost full salary pension with 30 years of service + annual cost of living increase
- Off-duty employment [which may pay more]
- Bonus for being bilingual
- Potential earlier retirement for military personnel
- Holiday bonus pay

Become a Tomball Police Officer

In addition to hoping that every applicant walks in to an entry level applicant testing process with all the attributes listed in each information box, the Tomball Police Department sets minimum application requirements based on the following:

- A posting for an available position has been placed on the City of Tomball website at www.cityoftomball.com
- Applicants have a current and valid TCLEOSE License
 - *If you are not aware of what this requirement is, it is likely that you are not eligible for the police officer position
 - *You must have graduated from a Law Enforcement Academy or challenged TCLEOSE test due to Military or other state Law Enforcement Experience
- Must not have been terminated from a Law Enforcement Agency while under Internal Investigation or other than Honorable Discharge from Military Service.
- Use of any misdemeanor drug since reaching 18th birthday is cause for rejection
- Must not have used any physical enhancement drug other than for experimental purposes
- Must not have used a felony drug while an adult, unless prescribed by a physician
- Use of marihuana in experimental basis only and not in past 12 months