

What some fastest-growing jobs pay

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Sure, a career isn't supposed to be all about the money. Everyone has different criteria for what makes a good job. For some, it's the challenge; for others, it's a sense of fulfillment.

Regardless of the reasons why we chose our career, we do it to bring in a paycheck -- and a high salary is always a selling point. It's also smart to invest your training and educational dollars into a career with stability and good growth prospects. (After all, what good is a potential job if you can never get hired?)

Perhaps that's why these jobs are expected to be so popular in upcoming years. **The following jobs are growing so quickly that all 10 made the Bureau of Labor Statistics' list of the 30 fastest-growing jobs through 2014.** But just as importantly, they topped the fastest-growing list in terms of salary. Here are the best of the best:

1. Computer systems software engineer -- \$81,140*

Computer systems software engineers work to coordinate a company's computer needs and maintain its computer systems. They may also set up a company's intranets to ease communication between the various departments. Most jobs require a bachelor's degree in computer science or computer information systems.

2. Computer applications software engineer -- \$76,310

Computer applications software engineers use programming languages such as C++ and Java to design, construct and maintain general computer applications software. Most jobs require at least a bachelor's degree, but some more complex jobs require a graduate degree.

3. Biomedical engineer -- \$70,520

Biomedical engineers combine biology, medicine and engineering to develop ways to solve medical and health-related problems. For example, they may research and develop artificial organs or prostheses. Employers usually require a graduate degree -- even for entry-level jobs.

4. Physician assistant -- \$69,250

Physician assistants provide diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive healthcare services. They examine, diagnose, treat

and write prescriptions for patients, but their work is done under a doctor's supervision. Most programs require at least a bachelor's degree and graduation from a formal physician assistant education program.

5. Environmental engineer -- \$67,620

Environmental engineers work to combat environmental damage by researching and developing solutions to problems like pollution control, ozone depletion and wildlife protection. Most jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.

6. Computer systems analyst -- \$67,520

Computer systems analysts help an organization get the most for their technology investment dollars by solving computer problems and planning and developing new computer systems. Educational requirements vary by the employer and job complexity, ranging from a two-year degree to a graduate degree, and may include continuing education and certification.

7. Database administrator -- \$61,950

Database administrators ensure system performance by setting up computer databases, testing and coordinating modifications to computer systems, identifying user requirements and adding new users to the system. Employers prefer candidates with technical degrees, but the specific level of education and type of training required depends on the complexity of the job and employers' needs.

8. Physical therapist -- \$61,560

Physical therapists help patients suffering from injuries or disease to restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain and prevent or limit permanent disabilities. Aspiring therapists must graduate from an accredited physical therapist educational program and pass a licensure exam.

9. Network systems and data communication analyst -- \$61,250

Network systems and data communication analysts are responsible for keeping electronic communications like Internet, voice mail and e-mail up and running. They spend much of their days testing and evaluating systems including local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs) and intranets.

Depending on employer and complexity of the job, educational requirements range from an associate's degree to a computers-related bachelor's degree.


10. Hydrologist -- \$60,880

Hydrologists study water -- its quantity, distribution, circulation, and physical properties both above and underground. Their work is particularly useful to environmental preservation and flood control efforts. A bachelor's degree is a must, but employers are increasingly interested in master's degrees for entry-level positions.

**Median annual salary, according to November 2004 BLS data.*

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