

# Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists

## Summary



### What Barbers, Hairdressers, & Cosmetologists Do

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists wash, color, and dry hair.

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists provide hair styling and beauty services.

### Duties

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists typically do the following:

- Inspect hair, face, and scalp, to recommend treatment
- Discuss hairstyle options
- Wash, color, and condition hair
- Cut or trim, dry, and style hair
- Receive payments from clients
- Clean and sanitize all tools and work areas

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists focus on providing hair and beauty services to enhance clients' appearance. Those who operate their own barbershops or salons have managerial duties that may include hiring, supervising, and firing workers, as well as keeping business and inventory records, ordering supplies, and arranging for advertising.

**Barbers** cut, trim, shampoo, and style hair, mostly for male clients. They also may fit hairpieces and offer facial shaving. In every state, barbers are licensed to color, bleach, and highlight hair and to offer permanent-wave services. Common tools include combs, scissors, and clippers.

### Quick Facts: Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists

What Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists Do; Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists provide hair styling and beauty services.

<b>2010 Median Pay</b> Cosmetologist & Barbers	\$22,500 per year \$10.82 per hour
<b>Work Environment</b>	<i>Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists mostly work in a barbershop or salon. Physical stamina is important, because workers are on their feet for most of their shift. Many work part time, and nearly half were self-employed in 2010.</i>
<b>Entry-Level Education; How to Become a Barber, Hairdresser or Cosmetologist</b>	<i>All states require barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists to be licensed, with the exception of shampooers. To qualify for a license, candidates must graduate from a state-approved cosmetology program.</i>
<b>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</b>	None
<b>Job Outlook</b>	<i>Overall employment of barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists is expected to grow 14 percent from 2010 to 2020, as fast as the average for all occupations. Most job openings will result from the need to replace workers who leave the occupation.</i>
<b>Number of Jobs, 2010</b>	712,200
<b>Similar Occupations</b>	<b>Manicurists &amp; Pedicurists:</b> <i>Manicurists and pedicurists clean, shape, and beautify fingernails and toenails. 2010 Median Pay. \$19,650</i> <b>Skincare Specialist:</b> <i>Skincare specialists cleanse and beautify the face and body to enhance a person's appearance. 2010 Median Pay \$28,920</i>
<b>Job Outlook, 2010-20</b>	14% (About as fast as average)
<b>Employment Change, 2010-20</b>	100,900

**Hairdressers, or hairstylists,** offer a wide range of hair services, such as shampooing, cutting, coloring, and styling. They often advise clients, both male and female, on how to care for their hair at home. They also keep records of products and services provided to clients, such as hair color, shampoo, conditioner, and hair treatment used. Tools include hairbrushes, scissors, blow dryers, and curling irons.

**Cosmetologists** provide scalp and facial treatments and makeup analysis. Some also clean and style wigs and hairpieces. A growing number actively sell skin care products.

**Shampooers** wash and rinse customers' hair so a hairstylist can cut and style it.



## Work Environment

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists work in salons or spas, and often stand for long periods.

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists held about 712,200 jobs in 2010. Nearly half were self-employed.

Employment in the detailed occupations that make up barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists was distributed as follows:

Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	627,700
Barbers	62,200
Shampooers	22,300

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists work mostly in a barbershop or salon, although some work in a spa, hotel, or resort. Some lease booth space in other people's salons. Some manage salons or open their own after several years of experience.

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists usually work in pleasant surroundings with good lighting. Physical stamina is important, because they are on their feet for most of their shift. Prolonged exposure to some chemicals may cause irritation, so they might wear protective clothing, such as disposable gloves or aprons.

## Work Schedules

Many barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists work part time. However, some self-employed workers may have long hours. Work schedules often include evenings and weekends—the times when barbershops and beauty salons are busiest. Those who are self-employed usually determine their own schedules.

## How to Become a Barber, Hairdresser, or Cosmetologist

Workers must obtain a license through a state-approved barber or cosmetology program.

All states require barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists to be licensed. To qualify for a license, candidates are required to graduate from a state-approved cosmetology program. Shampooers do not need a license.



## Education and Training

A high school diploma or equivalent is required for some positions. In addition, every state requires that barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists complete a program in a state-licensed barber or cosmetology school. Programs in hairstyling, skin care, and other personal appearance services are available both in high schools and in public or private postsecondary vocational schools.

Full-time programs in barbering and cosmetology usually last at least 9 months and may lead to an associate's degree. Most of these workers take advanced courses in hairstyling or in other personal appearance services to keep up with the latest trends. Those who want to open their own business also may take courses in sales and marketing.

Shampooers do not need formal training. Some short-term on-the-job training under the supervision of a hairstylist or a more experienced shampooer is sufficient.

## Licenses

All states require barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists to be licensed. Qualifications for a license vary by state; but generally, a person must have a high school diploma or equivalent, be at least 16 years old, and have graduated from a state-licensed barber or cosmetology school. After graduating from a state-approved training program, students take a state licensing exam. The exam includes a written test and, in some cases, a practical test of styling skills or an oral exam.

In many states, cosmetology training may be credited toward a barbering license, and vice versa, and a few states combine the two licenses. A fee is usually required to apply for a license, and periodic license renewals may be necessary.

Some states have reciprocity agreements that allow licensed barbers and cosmetologists to get a license in another state without needing additional formal training, but such agreements are uncommon. Consequently, people who want to work in a particular state should review the laws of that state before entering a training program.

## Important Qualities

**Creativity.** Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must keep up with the latest trends and be able to try new hairstyles for their clients.

**Customer-service skills.** To help retain clients, barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must be pleasant, friendly, and able to interact with customers.

**Listening skills.** Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists should be good listeners. They must listen carefully to what the client wants to make sure the client is happy with the result.

**Stamina.** Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must be able to stand on their feet for long periods of time.

**Time-management skills.** Time management skills are important when scheduling appointments and providing services. For example, routine haircuts and trims do not require the precise timing of some other services, such as applying neutralizer after a permanent wave. Clients who receive timely hair care service are more likely to return.

In addition, barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must keep a neat personal appearance and must keep their work area clean and sanitary. This is necessary for the health and safety of their clients, as well as to make clients comfortable enough to want to return.

## Pay - Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists

Median hourly wages, May 2010

### Total, All Occupations

\$16.27

### Barbers

\$11.45

### Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists

\$10.94

### Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists

\$10.82

### Shampoosers

\$8.78

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

The median hourly wage of barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists was \$10.82 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less.

Median hourly wages for occupational specialties in May 2010 were as follows:

- \$11.45 for barbers
- \$10.94 for hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists
- \$8.78 for shampoosers

Many barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists work part time. However, some self-employed workers have long hours. Work schedules often include evenings and weekends—the times when beauty salons and barbershops are busiest. Those who are self-employed usually determine their own schedules.

## Job Outlook - Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists

Percent change in employment, projected 2010-20

### Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists

16%

### Total, All Occupations

14%

### Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists

14%

### Barbers

7%

### Shampoosers

-9%

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Overall employment of barbers, hairdressers, cosmetologists, and shampoosers is expected to grow 14 percent from 2010 to 2020, as fast as the average for all occupations. Growth rates will vary by specialty.

Employment of barbers is projected to grow 7 percent, slower than the average for all occupations. The need for barbers will stem primarily from an increasing population, which will lead to greater demand for basic hair-care services.

Employment of hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists is projected to grow 16 percent, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Demand for hair coloring, hair straightening, and other advanced hair treatments has increased in recent years, a trend that is expected to continue over the coming decade.

Employment of shampoosers is projected to decline 9 percent as more barbers, hairdressers, and hairstylists perform shampooing services themselves.

## Job Prospects

Overall job opportunities for barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists are expected to be good. A large number of job openings will stem from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations, retire, or leave the occupations for other reasons. However, workers should expect stiff competition for jobs and clients at higher paying salons, of which there are relatively few and for which applicants must compete with a large pool of experienced hairdressers and cosmetologists.

Because employment of shampoosers is expected to decline, job opportunities should be somewhat limited, available only from the need to replace those who leave the occupation.

## Employment projections data for barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists, 2010-20

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2010	Projected Employment, 2020	Change, 2010-20	
				%	#
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program					
Barbers, Hairdressers, & Cosmetologists	—	712,200	813,000	14	100,900
Barbers	39-5011	62,200	66,700	7	4,500
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	39-5012	627,700	726,100	16	98,400
Shampoosers	39-5093	22,300	20,300	-9	-2,000

For more information about barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists, including training, visit  
[American Association of Cosmetology Schools](#) • [Professional Beauty Association](#) • [National Association of Barber Boards of America](#)