

SPECIAL AGENT FAQs

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How do I apply to become a Special Agent?

After carefully reading and ensuring you meet the preliminary standards, the next step towards becoming an FBI Special Agent is to complete the online application. Your processing field office is determined by the zip code (your residence, place of education, and/or place of employment) you provide when you apply via fbijobs.gov and the zip code query. You must process through the FBI office nearest your current residence, place of education, or place of employment.

What are the preliminary standards for the Special Agent position?

To be considered for the Special Agent position, you must (a) be a U.S. citizen (b) be 23 to 36 1/2 years old (c) possess a bachelor's degree (d) have 3 years of full-time work experience (e) meet residency requirements (f) possess a valid driver's license and (g) be completely available for assignment anywhere in the FBI's jurisdiction. View [Eligibility for a full explanation of waivers to these requirements](#).

Are waivers available for applicants 37 and older?

Per Public Law 93-350, enacted July 12, 1974, the Attorney General and the Office of Personnel Management set the date immediately preceding one's 37th birthday as the last date for original entry on duty as a law enforcement officer in the Department of Justice. Age waivers are available for preference-eligible veterans. Waivers will only be obtained after a preference eligible applicant passes both Phase I and Phase II of the Special Agent Selection System (SASS). See [Military Applicants](#) for more information on preference eligibility.

Is there a waiver of the bachelor's degree if an applicant has military service?

No. All Special Agent applicants must have a bachelor's degree to apply.

Will having uncorrected vision or laser surgery disqualify me from applying for the Special Agent position?

Special Agent applicants need to have at least 20/20 vision in one eye and not worse than 20/40 vision in the other eye. If an individual has a satisfactory history of soft contact lens wear for more than one year and is able to meet correction to 20/20 in one eye and no worse than 20/40 in the other eye, safety concerns are considered mitigated and applicant processing may continue.

If an applicant has had laser eye corrective surgery, a six-month waiting period is required prior to beginning New Agents' Training. Applicants must also provide evidence of complete healing by an ophthalmological clinical evaluation.

Policy for color vision allows continuation of applicant processing if those who fail initial color vision screening are able to successfully complete the Farnsworth D-15 color vision test.

How long does the FBI Special Agent application process take?

The Special Agent application process can take as little as six months or as long as several years, depending on annual federal funding levels and hiring goals.

The Special Agent Selection System (Phase I and Phase II Testing) is based on an applicant's individual competitiveness. The more

specialized skills an applicant has, the more likely he/she will move quickly through the testing process. If an applicant does not meet any of the FBI's current needs, it may take months or longer to be scheduled for testing. See Current FBI Skill Needs.

In addition to the Phase I and II testing process, the physical fitness test, background investigation, and medical evaluation will affect the length of the application process. Each of these items can take a considerable amount of time to complete if an applicant has lived in several areas, has extensive foreign travel, or has held several jobs. For more information, see Selection System.

What kind of training do FBI Special Agents receive?

All Special Agents begin the first 21 weeks of their career at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, where they participate in intensive training. During their time at the FBI Academy, trainees live on-campus, participate in a variety of training activities, and study a wide variety of academic subjects. The FBI Academy curriculum also includes intensive training in physical fitness, defensive tactics, practical application exercises, and the use of firearms.

Over the course of an Agent's career, the FBI provides additional training opportunities to keep him/her updated on the latest developments in the respective specialty fields.

Do I need to have a law enforcement or military background to apply to become an FBI Special Agent?

No! Because of the breadth and scope of the FBI's mission, the FBI seeks recruits with a wide variety of backgrounds, not just law enforcement or military experience. The FBI seeks Special Agents with degrees/expertise in physical sciences, computer science, engineering, architecture, law, accounting, and other disciplines that require logical analysis and critical thinking. We are also actively seeking Special Agents who are fluent in critical foreign languages, as well as those with experience in intelligence and counterterrorism work.

Do I have to know how to shoot a gun to apply to be an FBI Special Agent?

No, it is not necessary to have prior experience with firearms. All Special Agent trainees receive extensive training in the use and maintenance of firearms and related equipment. In many cases, the best Agent trainees are those with no prior firearms experience (since they do not have any ingrained bad habits).

What are the physical fitness requirements to become an FBI Special Agent?

Serving as an FBI Special Agent is a demanding job. A Special Agent is often placed in situations that test a person's physical capabilities. Therefore, all applicants for the SA position must be in excellent physical condition with no disabilities that could interfere in firearm use, raids, or defensive tactics. Learn more by viewing Physical Requirements.

Are there different physical fitness requirements for women and men?

Although female applicants/trainees take exactly the same Physical Fitness Test as their male counterparts, the scoring scale for each event is slightly different in order to account for physiological differences. Learn more by viewing Physical Requirements.

Do certain degrees provide a more desirable educational background for the Special Agent position?

The FBI seeks applicants with a broad range of backgrounds to support our diverse and complex caseload. The FBI does not recommend particular courses, schools or degrees (although your college or university must be U.S. Department of Education accredited.) Study a field you enjoy and thereafter, obtain experiences that will demonstrate your ability to master the Special Agent core competencies, specifically:

1. Leadership
2. Oral Communication
3. Initiative and Motivation
4. Adaptability and Flexibility
5. Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing
6. Interpersonal Skills
7. Evaluating Information and Making Decisions
8. Writing

Learn more by viewing Current FBI Skill Needs

How are Special Agents assigned to offices and how often are Special Agents rotated in their assignments?

Newly appointed Special Agents are assigned to one of the FBI's 56 field offices based on the Bureau's current staffing and/or critical specialty needs. New Agents are given the opportunity to rank their desired locations. While consideration is given to these preferences, first office assignment is based upon the staffing needs of the FBI. All Special Agents are subject to transfer at any time to meet the organizational and program needs of the FBI. Special Agents accept the possibility of transfer as a condition of their employment.

New Agents initially assigned to a small- or medium-sized field office are normally transferred to a large field office at the end of their third or fourth year. New Agents initially assigned to a large field office will generally not be transferred unless they apply for management positions, are eligible for a voluntary transfer, or the needs of the FBI dictate otherwise. Be sure your family understands this requirement and is accepting of a move.

What is a typical day like for a Special Agent of the FBI?

There is no such thing as a typical day for a Special Agent. One day you could be executing a search warrant and making an arrest, while

the next you could be testifying in federal court. Your morning could entail catching up on paperwork in the office, while the afternoon could bring a meeting with a high-level source. No two days are ever the same for an FBI Special Agent.

How does the background investigation process work?

Due to the sensitive nature of the FBI's missions, all FBI positions require a Top Secret (TS) Security Clearance. Before employees can start work with the FBI, they must undergo an intensive background investigation that includes a polygraph, a test for illegal drugs, credit and records checks, and extensive interviews with former and current colleagues, neighbors, friends, professors, etc. at least ten years back.

Are there any automatic disqualifiers?

Applicants with a felony and/or domestic violence misdemeanor conviction, who have engaged in acts designed to overthrow the U.S. government, who have failed to pay court ordered child support or alimony payments, who currently have a federally funded student loan in default, who failed to file federal, state, or local income tax returns, or who are found in violation of the FBI's drug policy will be immediately discontinued and ineligible for future FBI employment. Learn more here: [FBI Automatic Disqualifiers](#).

How much are FBI Special Agents paid?

While at the Academy, Special Agent trainees are paid at the GS-10, step 1 level (on the federal government's General Schedule salary table) and receive the Quantico, Virginia, locality adjustment (17.50% as of 2010).

Upon graduation from the Academy and assignment to their first field office, Special Agents are paid as GS-10, step 1 plus availability pay (overtime pay) which is approximately 25% of your base pay, plus locality pay (which, as of 2010 figures, ranges from 12.5% to 28.7% of base salary depending upon office assignment).

In their first office of assignment, Special Agents earn \$61,100 or more, depending upon the region of the country to which they are assigned (based on OPM's Law Enforcement Officer [LEO] salary table).

As an FBI employee, a Special Agent is also entitled to a variety of benefits, including group health and life insurance programs, vacation and sick pay, and a full retirement plan.

Visit [OPM.gov](http://www.OPM.gov) (<http://www.OPM.gov>) for up-to-date salary tables and to determine the locality pay for your area.

What types of employee benefits are available?

FBI employees are entitled to a variety of benefits, including group health and life insurance programs, vacation and sick pay, and a full retirement plan.

How will having a family affect my career as an FBI Special Agent?

The FBI has several programs designed to help employees meet both their family and career goals. In addition to our normal annual and sick leave benefits, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act permits employees to take up to twelve weeks of leave without pay for medical exigencies, including the birth or adoption of a child.

The FBI also offers a part-time program for Special Agents (Agents must have completed the probationary period). This program allows an Agent to work between 16 and 32 hours a week, providing extra flexibility to parents. In most instances, the part-time Agent's revised work assignment will be determined in such a manner that appropriate consideration is given by the Division Head, to the Agent's level of investigative experience, specialized assignments, GS grade, other pertinent skills, and the needs of the division.

What are the opportunities for promotions and pay increases?

Special Agents enter as GS-10 employees on the law enforcement government pay scale and can advance to the GS-13 grade level in a field, non-supervisory role. Special Agents can thereafter qualify for promotion to supervisory, management, and executive positions to grades GS-14 and GS-15, as well as to the FBI Senior Executive Service.

I want to be an FBI "Profiler." Where do I begin the application process?

The FBI does not have a job called "Profiler." Supervisory Special Agents assigned to the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) at Quantico, Virginia, perform the tasks commonly associated with "profiling." Despite popular depictions, these FBI Special Agents do not get "vibes" or experience "psychic flashes" while walking around fresh crime scenes. In reality, it is an exciting world of investigation and research—a world of inductive and deductive reasoning, crime-solving experience, and knowledge of criminal behavior, facts, and statistical probabilities.

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