

Surgical Technologist



WHAT MAKES MY JOB HOT?

You can get a well-paying, entry-level job with two years or less of training:

- Surgical technologists typically need to have a high school diploma or HSE *and* a certificate of completion or an associate's degree from a surgical technology program.
- Community colleges, hospitals, universities, technical schools, and the military offer training. Students learn through a mix of classroom and clinical training where they practice skills by observing and working with staff in a hospital or other facility.

Job growth:

- In New York City, this job is expected to grow 4.4% from 2010-2020.

Great pay & benefits (New York City Region, 2013 figures):

- Typical entry pay: \$35,020/yr.
- Median pay: \$47,570/yr.
- Experienced pay: \$56,470/yr.
- Common benefits for full-time work include health insurance, sick leave, and vacation.



WHAT I DO: I assist in surgical operations by preparing operating rooms, arranging equipment, and helping doctors and nurses during surgeries.

My tasks include:

- Preparing operating rooms for surgery (e.g., by setting up surgical instruments and equipment, and making sure that they are working properly)
- Sterilizing equipment (to prevent the risk of infection during surgery) and making sure that there are enough supplies for surgery (e.g., by counting sponges, needles, and instruments)
- Preparing patients for surgery (e.g., by washing and disinfecting incision sites, positioning patients on the operating table, and covering them with sterile drapes)
- Scrubbing arms and hands and helping the surgical team to scrub and put on sterile gowns, gloves, and masks
- Helping surgeons and nurses during surgery by passing them instruments and other sterile supplies; holding retractors (instruments that hold back the edges of a wound); cutting sutures (stitches); adjusting lights; and applying surgical dressings

My job is a good fit for you if you:

- ✓ like working with your hands
- ✓ would be able to work much of your time on your feet and help lift/move patients
- ✓ would be comfortable working very closely to others
- ✓ can tolerate unpleasant sights, odors, and materials

For more information:

Go to www.careeronestop.org and search for "Surgical Technologists." For a *related occupation* that requires shorter training and offers \$34,590/year as typical entry pay in New York City, search for "Medical Equipment Preparers."

Getting a Foot in the Door: What Employers are Looking For



Typical work settings: Most surgical technologists work in hospital operating rooms, delivery rooms, cast rooms, emergency departments, ambulatory care units, and central supply departments. They may also work in clinics and physicians' and dentists' offices.

Employers may also refer to me as a(n):

- Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) (if you're certified)
- Operating Room Technician (OR Tech)
- Surgical Technician
- Surgical Scrub Technician
- Surgical Scrub Nurse
- Scrub (*yes, really!*)

Employers in the NYC Region include:

- Maimonides Medical Center
- New York Methodist Hospital
- Kings County Hospital Center
- Lutheran Medical Center
- Beth Israel Medical Center
- NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center
- NYU Langone Medical Center

Things to Consider When Applying for a Surgical Technologist Job

<p>Academic/ training & other credentials:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers typically require a certificate of completion (for example, from a community college or hospital-based program) or an associate's degree. In addition, many employers prefer job applicants who have passed the national certification exam, meaning that they have a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential from the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA). If you recently graduated from an accredited surgical technology program but don't yet have the CST credential, a health care facility can hire you to work as an entry-level surgical tech; <i>however</i>, by the one-year anniversary of your graduation date, you <i>must</i> have the credential to continue working as a surgical tech. • New York law requires graduation from a CAAHEP- or ABHES-accredited surgical technology program; maintenance of the CST credential; and 15 hours of continuing education per year for all practicing surgical techs.
<p>Other employer requirements/ preferences <i>may</i> include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background check, drug test, immunizations, US citizenship, résumé with proof of credentials (NBSTSA #), and proof of experience (clinical case list). • Some employers will hire new surgical tech graduates for entry-level jobs, but others require or prefer at least one year of work experience (if you don't have much work experience in the field, see tips in the next section).
<p>Tips to help you prepare for, land, and succeed in a surgical technology career:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes in biology and anatomy & physiology can familiarize you with some of the concepts in surgical technology. • Surgical technologists are in demand in NYC and should continue to be, in part due to the need to fill the jobs left vacant by surgical techs who retire. At the same time, finding a job can sometimes be a very competitive process, so it's critical that you stand out as a student and when you apply for work. If you don't have much work experience as a surgical tech, you need to do things that will make employers notice you. It will be much more difficult to get a job if you don't. Ways to stand out include: 1) leaving a great impression on the people you meet during clinical training (showing up on time, always working hard, being polite, getting to know as many people as possible at your clinical site, sending a thank you note to your clinical instructor and the site's human resources department, etc.); 2) creating a solid résumé (no typos, good grammar, nice format, easy to read, customized to the specific job and employer, etc.); and 3) standing out in an interview (by doing some research on the employer beforehand, speaking well/formally, showing passion for the work, etc.). • Another tip for connecting with employers who may be able to hire you is to network by attending as many surgical technology conferences/events as possible, including ones outside of NYC (e.g., in NJ or CT). People who do this make important connections in the field and may have a less difficult time finding work. • You may also want to consider moving to another state (for example, NJ or CT) if there are more job openings for recent graduates with very limited work experience. Remember that NBSTSA certification is national so it's portable (recognized in all states). • Most surgical techs work full time (e.g., from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.), but some work shifts lasting longer than 8 hours (10- or 12-hour shifts). Most surgery is performed during the day, but many hospitals require 24-hour coverage. If you work in a hospital, you may work or be on call during nights, weekends, and holidays, and have opportunities to work overtime. If you are new to the job, you often need to be flexible; you may get the less desirable shifts at first. Once you have more experience, you can usually stick to one consistent schedule. • The work environment is relatively quiet, clean, cool, and brightly lit, and you'll be required to wear scrubs. • Hospitals in NYC tend to pay more than in surrounding areas, but you have to consider the time and costs of travel if your job isn't near home (e.g., subway fares, bridge tolls, gas).

Skills & Abilities that Employers Typically Seek:

- Professionalism; ability to work well in a team; strong time management, communication, and people skills
- Ability to remain alert during operations; follow instructions well; anticipate a surgeon's needs; and provide equipment needed quickly
- Ability to hold your arm and hand in one position, to hold your hand steady while moving your arm, and to hold/move items with your hands
- Ability to work well under pressure (working in an operating room can be stressful); can't have a bad temper (sometimes you will be in tense situations in which patients, surgeons, and others might be unpleasant or angry)

Getting a Credential that Can Help You Land a Job



SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAM Kingsborough Community College of CUNY

2001 Oriental Blvd., M-401, Brooklyn, NY 11235 • Richard Fruscione, Program Director, 718-368-5522, rfruscione@kbcc.cuny.edu

Note: The program information below was collected in Sept. 2013; it is subject to change over time.

STEP 1: Learn about the program and make sure it's a good fit for your interests, goals, needs, and schedule.

- Kingsborough's accredited, full-time surgical technology program is 22 months long. You attend 3-4 days per week for 5 semesters, including one 6-week winter session. Its typical schedule consists of lecture/classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and clinicals on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Typically, you'd begin at Kingsborough in the fall so you have your first semester to work on pre-requisites to be eligible to apply to the program. Students who are admitted into the program (20 per year) begin in the spring semester.
- When you successfully complete the program, you receive an *Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) Degree in Surgical Technology* and are eligible to be nationally certified by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA).

STEP 2: Find out the cost of the program and make sure it's a good fit for your wallet.

- **\$9,940 for the entire program**, which consists of tuition, fees (including a \$120.00/year student activity fee and a \$200.00/year technology fee), and books and supplies (approximately \$800.00 for the entire program, which includes student membership with the Association of Surgical Technologists, malpractice insurance, the school patch for the uniform, and the cost of the national certification exam).

STEP 3: Apply to the college (including paying the application fee) and complete all admissions requirements for the college and program, including:

- Contact the Admissions Information Center (718-368-4600) to learn about admissions requirements, which will include showing proof of a high school diploma or HSE and passing the CUNY/ACT in Reading and Writing and the COMPASS Math test. If you don't pass one or more of these tests, you will have to take one or more developmental courses to build up your skills. These courses cost money but don't give you college credit — they don't count towards the degree in surgical technology. You must successfully complete all developmental courses to qualify for the surgical technology program. *The highest level of math used in the program is basic algebra.*
- Show documentation of legal status by the U.S. government in one of these categories: U.S. citizenship; permanent residency; international student with F1 status; or granted asylum, refugee status, temporary protected status, withholding of removal, or deferred action status.
- Pre-requisite courses: Complete ENG 12 and BIO11; 2.5 minimum GPA; and receive a grade of "C" or higher in all courses required for the program. You must also complete one "Writing Intensive" course.

CONGRATULATIONS – YOU'VE BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE PROGRAM!

STEP 4: Successfully complete all courses and other program requirements, and take advantage of the program's support services. This 64-credit program requires that you complete some general education courses, an elective course, and the following departmental courses (a mix of classroom, lab, and actual clinical settings): Surgical Pharmacology; Surgical Technology I, II, and III, Surgical Procedures, and Advanced Surgical Procedures; Practicums I, II, III, and IV (clinicals where you practice in hospitals); and Professional Strategies for the Surgical Technologist. Lateness and attendance are monitored. To stay in the program, you must receive no more than 2 grades below "C" in any of the pre- or co-requisite courses and earn a minimum grade of "C" in all Surgical Technology courses (if you earn less than a "C", you may repeat the course once but have to earn a "B" to pass). You must also complete your clinicals at a satisfactory level. Prior to registration in the first clinical course, you must obtain: health clearance from the college (annual physical exam, immunizations, tuberculosis testing, etc.); malpractice insurance valid for the entire semester; and CPR certification. **The sites where you do your clinical training may require a background check.** If drug use is suspected, they may also require a drug test. In the final semester, you'll take a course to review all of the knowledge you gained throughout the program and you'll do some test prep for the certification exam, which you'll take before you graduate.

Kingsborough provides very strong and comprehensive support services to help you enter and successfully complete the program, including: an Academic Advisement Center for Health Careers; The College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment (COPE) Program, which provides assistance with course registration and scheduling, personal and academic counseling, advisement on income support issues, assistance with locating child care, domestic violence assistance, and referrals to tutoring, counseling, housing, and job search/placement; and Single Stop, which provides *free services* including benefits screening (to see which public benefits you qualify for in case you need help with groceries, rent, etc.), tax preparation, financial counseling, and legal services.

CONGRATULATIONS – YOU'VE EARNED AN A.A.S. DEGREE IN SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY!

STEP 5: Take the national certification exam to become a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST). When you complete the program, you are eligible to take the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) certification exam. Under New York state law, you can work as a surgical technologist if you recently graduated from an accredited program but haven't yet passed the certification exam; *however*, it's better if you do pass the exam (and therefore have a Certified Surgical Technologist credential) by the time you apply for jobs because by the one-year anniversary of your graduation date, you must pass the exam to continue working as a surgical technologist.

STEP 6: Use your A.A.S. degree to start working and/or continue your studies. There are lots of paths you can take. Land a job as an entry-level surgical technologist *and/or* continue your studies to earn higher credentials. Some surgical technologists go on to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing or for physician assistant, while some go for a bachelor's degree in business to work in surgical sales or consulting. Others teach, go to medical school, or eventually pursue a master's degree in public health, business, or to be a physician assistant.

Other Surgical Technology Programs in New York: LIU Brooklyn's Certificate Program and Nassau Community College's A.A.S. Degree Program

Moving on Up!: Grow Your Career and Your Paycheck

The roadmap below shows *one* way that you can move up in your career as a surgical technologist, advancing from an entry-level position to positions with higher levels of pay, skill, and responsibility in surgical technology and beyond. Each stop on the road contains position-specific information on the education level, professional certification, and/or work experience that NYC employers often seek in job applicants, plus typical pay in the NYC Region (based on conversations with employers and surgical technologists in 2013). Think of each stop as a toll where you must pay your dues to move higher up the road. Regardless of the path you take, it really pays to move up!

Sample Career Roadmap for a Surgical Technologist

Hospital Manager

(Central Supply & Materials Manager

or
General Hospital Manager)

- Bachelor's degree required; master's degree in health administration preferred
- 3-10 yrs. of work experience preferred
- Typical starting pay: \$65,000 - \$80,000/year

Surgical Supply Sales Representative or Surgical Consultant

- Anything from an occupational certificate of completion to a master's degree
- 3-5 yrs. minimum of surgical tech work experience; previous sales experience preferred
- Typical average pay: \$75,000/year plus commission

Lead Surgical Technologist / Surgical Tech Team Leader

- Certificate of completion or associate's degree from an accredited surgical tech program, plus CST credential
- 3-6 yrs. of work experience preferred
- Typical starting pay: \$26 - \$28/hour based on a 37.5-hour work week

Surgical First Assistant

- Graduate of an accredited surgical assisting program with a Certified Surgical Technologist / Certified Surgical First Assistant (CST/CSFA) or CSFA credential. To apply for this kind of program, often 10 to 22 months long, you typically need at least an associate's degree in allied health, 3 years of operating room scrub experience, and a CST credential.
- Surgical assisting programs are offered in states *outside of* New York.
- Typical annual pay in the U.S. (*not in the NYC Region*):
 - Average starting pay: \$55,000/year
 - Average pay: \$75,000/year
 - Experienced pay: \$120,000 - \$200,000/year

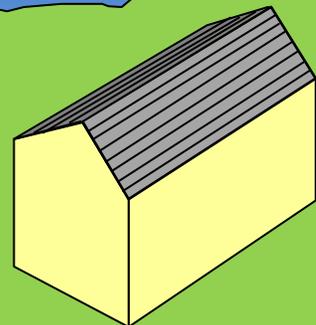
Surgical Technologist III / Advanced Surgical Technologist

- Certificate of completion or associate's degree from an accredited surgical tech program, plus CST credential
- 2-5 yrs. of work experience preferred
- Typical starting pay: \$24 - \$26/hour based on a 37.5-hour work week

START HERE

Surgical Technologist I or II

- Certificate of completion or associate's degree from an accredited surgical technology program
- Certified as a surgical technologist, meaning that you have a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential from the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA)
- Typical starting pay: \$21/hour based on a 37.5-hour work week
- Some employers require that a Surgical Technologist II have 1-2 years of work experience



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE