

# Surgical Assistants and Technologists

SOC: 29-9093 • Career Profile Report

## ■ Key Facts

**\$62,480**

Median Salary

**141,000**

Employment

**+5.0%**

Growth Rate

## ■ Requirements & Salary Range

**Education:** Postsecondary

## ■ Automation Risk Assessment

**Low Risk** - 8.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

## ■■ Work-Life Balance

**6.8/10** - Good work-life balance

## ■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.4/10	Investigative	8.6/10
Artistic	4.8/10	Social	9.0/10
Enterprising	5.4/10	Conventional	6.2/10

## ■ Top Skills Required

Communication, Detail oriented, Dexterity, Integrity, Listening skills, Physical stamina, Stress-management skills

### ✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

### ■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

## ■ What They Do

Surgical Assistants and Surgical Technologists are essential members of the operating room team who support surgeons by **preparing, assisting, and maintaining sterile surgical environments**. Their work ensures that procedures run smoothly, safely, and efficiently—from the moment a patient enters the operating room through the completion of surgery. This role blends technical skill, precision, and teamwork in high-stakes medical settings.

This career is well suited for individuals who are detail-oriented, calm under pressure, and interested in hands-on healthcare roles that directly support patient outcomes.

## What Do Surgical Assistants and Surgical Technologists Do?

These professionals work closely with surgeons, anesthesiologists, and nurses before, during, and after surgical procedures.

Common responsibilities include:

- Preparing operating rooms with sterile instruments and supplies
- Setting up surgical equipment and verifying functionality
- Assisting surgeons during procedures by passing instruments and supplies
- Maintaining sterile fields and infection-control standards
- Handling specimens for laboratory analysis
- Monitoring supplies and anticipating surgical needs
- Cleaning and restocking operating rooms after procedures

## Surgical Assistants vs. Surgical Technologists

While closely related, these roles differ slightly in scope and responsibility:

- Surgical Technologists: Focus on sterile setup, instrument handling, and intraoperative support.
- Surgical Assistants: May take on advanced duties such as tissue handling, suctioning, or wound closure under supervision.

Both roles are critical to surgical safety and efficiency.

## Skills and Abilities Needed

Surgical assistants and technologists combine technical accuracy with strong situational awareness.

### ***Core Professional Skills***

### ***Personal Qualities That Matter***

## Education and Training Pathway

Entry into this field requires specialized medical training:

- Postsecondary Certificate or Associate Degree: In surgical technology or surgical assisting
- Clinical Training: Supervised experience in operating room settings
- Certification (often required or preferred): National surgical technology or assistant credentials
- On-the-Job Training: Facility-specific procedures and protocols
- Continuing Education: Keeping skills current with evolving surgical techniques

## Where Do Surgical Assistants and Technologists Work?

These professionals work in surgical and procedural settings:

- Hospitals and Medical Centers
- Outpatient Surgery Centers
- Specialty Surgical Clinics
- Physician Offices with Procedural Suites
- Emergency and Trauma Units

Work schedules may include early mornings, evenings, weekends, or on-call shifts.

## How Much Do Surgical Assistants and Technologists Earn?

Earnings vary by role, experience, and setting:

- Surgical Technologists: Typically earn competitive healthcare wages
- Surgical Assistants: Often earn higher pay due to expanded responsibilities
- Specialized Surgical Roles: May earn more in advanced or high-demand specialties

Compensation often includes benefits and shift differentials.

## Is This Career Difficult?

This career is demanding and detail-intensive. Professionals must maintain focus for long procedures, stand for extended periods, and work in high-pressure environments where precision is critical. The challenge lies in sustaining accuracy, teamwork, and composure during complex surgical cases.

## Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Are interested in surgery and medical procedures
- Work well under pressure and in structured environments
- Enjoy hands-on, team-based healthcare roles
- Have strong attention to detail and manual coordination
- Want a direct role in supporting patient care without becoming a surgeon

## How to Prepare Early

- Take biology, anatomy, and health science courses
- Develop strong organizational and focus skills
- Learn about infection control and sterile procedures
- Research accredited surgical technology programs
- Gain exposure through hospital volunteering or healthcare work

**Surgical assistants and technologists are the backbone of the operating room, ensuring that surgical teams can perform safely and efficiently by combining preparation, precision, and unwavering commitment to patient care.**

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*Source: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/surgical-technologists.htm>*