

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.

*Generated by StartRight • Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics & O*NET*

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