

Metal and Plastic Machine Workers

SOC: 51-4021 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$46,800

Median Salary

74,500

Employment

-7.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: See Requirements (BLS)

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Medium Risk - 38.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job has some routine elements but still requires human judgment and interaction.

■■ Work-Life Balance

3.3/10 - Challenging work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	8.4/10	Investigative	5.0/10
Artistic	3.8/10	Social	4.6/10
Enterprising	4.0/10	Conventional	8.0/10

■ Top Skills Required

Computer skills, Mechanical skills, Physical stamina, Physical strength

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Metal and Plastic Machine Workers operate and maintain **machines that cut, shape, and form metal or plastic parts**. They produce precision components used in manufacturing, construction, and consumer products. Their work is critical in industrial production, quality control, and mechanical fabrication.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy hands-on technical work, precision, and mechanical problem-solving.

What Do Metal and Plastic Machine Workers Do?

These workers set up, operate, and monitor machinery to produce metal and plastic products according to specifications.

Common responsibilities include:

- Setting up machines based on work orders and blueprints
- Operating lathes, milling machines, grinders, or plastic molding equipment
- Monitoring machine performance and adjusting settings as needed
- Inspecting finished parts for accuracy and quality
- Performing routine maintenance and troubleshooting
- Recording production data and maintaining logs
- Adhering to safety standards and company procedures

Key Areas of Metal and Plastic Machining

Workers may specialize in specific processes or materials:

- Metal Fabrication: Cutting, shaping, and forming metal components
- Plastic Molding and Machining: Producing plastic parts using molds and machines
- CNC Operation: Programming and operating computer-controlled machinery
- Quality Control: Inspecting and testing parts for specifications
- Maintenance and Safety: Ensuring machines operate safely and efficiently

Skills and Abilities Needed

Metal and plastic machine workers combine technical knowledge with precision and problem-solving skills.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires vocational training or on-the-job experience:

- High School Diploma or GED (minimum): Basic math, science, and technical skills
- Vocational or Technical Training: Programs in machining, manufacturing, or industrial technology
- On-the-Job Training: Learning machine operation, safety procedures, and quality standards
- Continuous Learning: Staying current with machining technology, tools, and industry standards

Where Do Metal and Plastic Machine Workers Work?

They are employed in industries that produce metal and plastic components:

- Manufacturing and Industrial Companies
- Metal Fabrication Shops
- Plastics and Polymer Production Facilities
- Automotive and Aerospace Manufacturing
- Tool and Die Shops

Work environments include factories, workshops, and production floors.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires technical knowledge, precision, and physical stamina. Workers must manage machinery safely, produce accurate parts, and troubleshoot mechanical issues.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy working with machinery and tools
- Are detail-oriented and mechanically skilled
- Have patience and problem-solving ability
- Can follow specifications and maintain quality standards
- Want a career in manufacturing, fabrication, or production

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in industrial technology, manufacturing, or mechanical systems
- Gain experience through vocational programs, internships, or workshops
- Develop skills in blueprint reading, measurement, and machine operation
- Practice attention to detail and safety procedures
- Stay informed on new machining technologies and techniques

Metal and plastic machine workers produce precise components, operating and maintaining machinery to support manufacturing and industrial production.

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

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/production/metal-and-plastic-machine-workers.htm>