

Surgical Tech Career Starter Kit

Everything you need to evaluate, plan, and launch a surgical technologist career.

FREE CAREER GUIDE · 2026



\$59K

AVERAGE STARTING SALARY

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026

16 Wks

PROGRAM LENGTH

100% Online, Self-Paced

8,700

NEW JOBS / YEAR

Projected 5-9% Growth

What's Inside

This guide gives career changers everything they need to evaluate the surgical tech career path, get trained, certified, and hired – in one document. All salary data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS May 2026.

\$59K AVG STARTING SALARY

\$59,000

National average before shift differentials

8,700 NEW JOBS / YEAR

8,700

Projected 5-9% growth through 2032-2034

16 WEEKS TO JOB-READY

16 Weeks

Fully online, self-paced program

\$3,450 TOTAL PROGRAM COST

\$3,450

Payment plans from \$265/month

Learn & Get Certified – Start Here

1	Career Switcher Skills Matrix	3
2	Opportunities Matrix	5
3	Top 20 States by Salary	7
4	Career Launch Plan	9
5	Myths & Real Stories	10
6	Frequently Asked Questions	11
7	Enrollment & Pricing	12

SECTION 1 – CAREER SWITCHER SKILLS MATRIX



Your Background Already Opens OR Doors

No healthcare experience required. Surgical Technology rewards precision, composure, and attention to detail.

The skills you've spent years developing in other industries translate directly into the surgical suite. Whether it's the protocol-driven mindset of a veteran or the manual precision of a trade professional, you are closer to the OR than you think.

YOUR BACKGROUND	WHAT TRANSFERS DIRECTLY	OR FIT	HTA CLOSES GAP ON
Military / Veteran	High-pressure performance, protocol discipline, team communication	Excellent	Clinical vocabulary and OR workflow
Dental Assistant	Sterile technique, instrument handling, patient care	Excellent	OR-specific protocols and surgical specialties
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) / Medical Assistant	HIPAA compliance, anatomy basics, patient interaction	Strong	Surgical counts and scrub tech role
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) / Emergency Responder	Rapid decision-making, crisis composure, vitals monitoring	Strong	Sterile field basics and instrumentation
Lab / Phlebotomy Tech	Specimen handling, safety compliance, precision	Strong	OR workflow and perioperative roles
Pharmacy Technician	Medication handling, precision, sterile compounding	Strong	Surgical environment and OR counts
Patient Care Technician	Patient prep, vital signs, clinical environment familiarity	Strong	Sterile technique, surgical specialties
Radiologic Technologist	Imaging knowledge, anatomy, patient positioning	Strong	Scrub tech role, surgical instrumentation
IT / Help Desk / Tech Support	Systems thinking, troubleshooting under pressure	Good	All clinical skills – covered in bootcamp
Software Developer / Engineer	Analytical thinking, precision, documentation	Good	All clinical skills – covered in bootcamp

SURGICAL TECH CAREER STARTER KIT

Data Analyst / Business Analyst	Attention to detail, documentation, structured thinking	Good	Clinical vocabulary and hands-on procedures
Project Manager / Coordinator	Coordination, multi-tasking under pressure	Good	Clinical and anatomical knowledge
Educator / Teacher	Documentation, adaptability, communication	Good	All clinical skills – covered in bootcamp
Retail / Service Industry	Attention to detail, teamwork, multitasking	Good	Medical knowledge – built from ground up
Restaurant / Hospitality	Speed under pressure, cleanliness standards, team collaboration	Good	All clinical skills – covered in bootcamp
Administrative / Office Worker	Record-keeping, organization, compliance	Good	Clinical knowledge, hands-on technique
Supply Chain / Logistics	Inventory management, process discipline, equipment tracking	Good	Clinical skills, sterile field basics
Construction / Trades Worker	Manual dexterity, tool handling, safety protocols	Good	Clinical environment, sterile technique
No Healthcare Background	High motivation and drive to make a difference	Perfect Starting Point	Everything clinical – exactly what bootcamp is for



HTA's Bootcamp is designed for working adults with no prior clinical background. All you need is a high school diploma or GED.

SECTION 2 – OPPORTUNITIES MATRIX



The Market is Big. The Timing is Right

The surgical tech career landscape in 2026 – by salary, setting, certification, and employer type.

NEW ROLES/YEAR

8,700

Projected 5-9% growth; faster than average

EXAM VOUCHER INCLUDED

NRST

Via American Allied Health (AAH)

AVG STARTING SALARY

\$59,000

National average (BLS 2026)

TOTAL COST

\$3,450

Payment plans from \$265/month, zero interest

Average Annual Salary by Work Setting

WORK SETTING	AVG ANNUAL SALARY	NOTES
Hospitals	\$64,650	Highest volume; trauma centers pay premium
Physicians' Offices	\$64,100	Minor procedures; often daytime hours
Outpatient Care Centers	\$63,510	ASCs; high efficiency, growing demand
Dental Offices	\$50,610	Oral surgery; regular hours
Travel/Agency Roles	\$70K-\$110K+	13-week contracts; \$1,400-\$2,800+/week

Top Cities for Surgical Tech Demand

Phoenix, AZ – \$114K median

Fast-growing market; high ASC demand

Los Angeles, CA – \$105K median

Above-average pay; large academic centers

New York, NY – \$101K median

Highest metro volume; top pay rates

Seattle, WA – \$97K median

Strong pay; growing tech-driven health systems

Dallas, TX – \$91,695 median

Major hospital systems; growing ASC market

Houston, TX – \$86K median

High demand; major trauma hubs

Las Vegas, NV – \$77K median

High cost area; premium surgical pay

Miami, FL – \$61K median

High demand; growing outpatient market

Chicago, IL – \$57,933 median

Strong OR job volume; Level I trauma centers

Where Surgical Techs Work

HOSPITAL SETTINGS

- Community & regional hospitals
- Academic medical centers
- Trauma centers (Level I-III)
- Children's hospitals
- Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers

OUTPATIENT & SPECIALTY

- Ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs)
- Physicians' & surgeons' offices
- Dental & oral surgery offices
- Travel / staffing agencies

How HTA Compares to Other Programs

Faster, more affordable, and more supportive than traditional routes.

FEATURE	HTA BOOTCAMP	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	ONLINE COLLEGE
Books & Materials	Included	+\$500-\$2,000	+\$500-\$2,000
Job-Ready Timeline	4-6 months	1-2 years	6 mo-2 years
1-on-1 Coaching	✓	×	×
Total Cost	\$3,450	\$2K-\$10K/yr	\$8K-\$19K/yr
Exam Fees	Included	+\$200-\$500	+\$200-\$500
100% Online	✓	×	✓
Job Placement Assistance	✓	×	×

Ready to Enroll? Start Here →



SECTION 3 – STATE-BY-STATE OPPORTUNITIES

Top 20 States for Aspiring Surgical Techs

Ranked by average annual salary – 2026. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS May 15, 2026.

RANK	STATE	AVG ANNUAL SALARY	TOP 5 JOB ROLES	TOP 5 EMPLOYERS	TOP 5 JOB SETTINGS	TOP 5 SKILLS REQUIRED	REQUIRED CERTIFICATIONS
1	California	\$89,160	Surgical Tech Surgical 1st Asst OR Tech CVOR Tech Neuro Surg Tech	Kaiser Permanente Sutter Health Dignity Health UCLA Health Stanford Health	Hospitals ASCs Academic Centers Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Instrumentation Anatomy CVOR knowledge Team communication	NRST TTS-C
2	Alaska	\$83,700	Surgical Tech OR Tech General Surg Tech Circulator Support Ortho Tech	Providence Alaska Alaska Native Med Ctr Bartlett Regional Mat-Su Regional Fairbanks Memorial	Hospitals Regional Med Centers ASCs Military Facilities Outpatient Centers	Adaptability General surg skills Sterile technique Equipment setup Instrument handling	NRST TTS-C
3	Connecticut	\$83,650	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Ortho Surg Tech Circulator Support	Yale New Haven Health Hartford HealthCare Trinity Health Nuvance Health Stamford Health	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile field Instrument handling OR workflow Documentation Surgical counts	NRST TTS-C
4	Massachusetts	\$82,830	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst CVOR Tech Neuro Surg Tech	Mass General Brigham Beth Israel Deaconess Boston Childrens Tufts Medicine Steward Health	Hospitals Academic Med Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Childrens Hospitals	Advanced surg skills CVOR technique Sterile field OR protocol Anatomy	NRST TTS-C
5	Minnesota	\$82,250	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Ortho Surg Tech Circulator Support	Mayo Clinic Allina Health M Health Fairview Sanford Health HealthPartners	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Ortho skills Instrumentation Surgical counts Team communication	NRST TTS-C
6	Oregon	\$82,210	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Neuro Surg Tech CVOR Tech	OHSU Health Providence Health Legacy Health PeaceHealth Salem Health	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Anatomy Instrumentation Surgical counts Communication	NRST TTS-C
7	New York	\$78,590	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst CVOR Tech Neuro Surg Tech	NYU Langone Northwell Health NYC Health + Hospitals Montefiore Mount Sinai	Hospitals Academic Med Centers ASCs Trauma Centers Childrens Hospitals	Advanced surg CVOR technique Sterile field Anatomy Multi-specialty	NRST TTS-C
8	Washington	\$76,970	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Ortho Surg Tech CVOR Tech	UW Medicine Swedish Health Services Providence Health WA MultiCare Health Virginia Mason	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Instrumentation Ortho skills OR workflow Communication	NRST TTS-C

9	Nevada	\$76,290	Surgical Tech OR Tech Travel Surg Tech Ortho Tech General Surg Tech	HCA Healthcare Dignity Health UMC Las Vegas Renown Health Valley Health System	Hospitals ASCs Trauma Centers Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	General surg Sterile field Trauma support Instrumentation OR efficiency	NRST TTS-C
10	New Jersey	\$73,210	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Ortho Tech Circulator Support	RWJBarnabas Health Hackensack Meridian Atlantic Health System Virtua Health Cooper University	Hospitals ASCs Academic Centers Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile field Instrumentation OR protocol Patient care Documentation	NRST TTS-C
11	Hawaii	\$72,470	Surgical Tech OR Tech General Surg Tech Circulator Support Ortho Tech	Queens Health System Hawaii Pacific Health Kaiser Permanente HI Kapiolani Med Ctr Straub Medical	Hospitals Outpatient Centers ASCs Physician Offices Military Facilities	Sterile technique Patient care Instrumentation OR workflow Adaptability	NRST TTS-C
12	Arizona	\$70,410	Surgical Tech OR Tech Ortho Surg Tech General Surg Tech Travel Surg Tech	Banner Health Dignity Health AZ HonorHealth Mayo Clinic AZ Valleywise Health	Hospitals ASCs Outpatient Centers Trauma Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Ortho skills Instrumentation OR efficiency Trauma support	NRST TTS-C
13	Maryland	\$70,200	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst CVOR Tech Trauma Surg Tech	Johns Hopkins Health MedStar Health UMMS Luminis Health Adventist HealthCare	Hospitals Academic Med Centers Trauma Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers	Trauma support CVOR technique Sterile field Anatomy Advanced instrumentation	NRST TTS-C
14	New Hampshire	\$70,160	Surgical Tech OR Tech Ortho Tech General Surg Tech Circulator Support	Dartmouth Health Concord Hospital Portsmouth Regional Frisbie Memorial Southern NH Medical	Hospitals ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices Regional Med Centers	Sterile technique Instrumentation Surgical counts Patient prep Communication	NRST TTS-C
15	Colorado	\$69,740	Surgical Tech OR Tech Ortho Surg Tech Neuro Surg Tech Travel Surg Tech	UCHealth SCL Health Centura Health Childrens Colorado Denver Health	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Childrens Hospitals	Sterile technique Ortho/neuro skills Instrumentation OR protocol Anatomy	NRST TTS-C
16	Virginia	\$68,870	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Ortho Tech Military Surg Tech	Inova Health System VCU Health Sentara Healthcare Carilion Clinic Bon Secours	Hospitals Military Facilities Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers	Sterile technique Ortho skills Instrumentation OR protocol Patient care	NRST TTS-C
17	Rhode Island	\$68,410	Surgical Tech OR Tech Surgical 1st Asst Circulator Support General Surg Tech	Lifespan Health Care New England South County Health Miriam Hospital Kent Hospital	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile field Instrumentation Documentation OR workflow Communication	NRST TTS-C
18	Wisconsin	\$68,080	Surgical Tech OR Tech Ortho Surg Tech Circulator Support General Surg Tech	UW Health Froedtert Health Ascension Wisconsin Aurora Health Care Marshfield Clinic	Hospitals Academic Centers ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Ortho skills Instrumentation Surgical counts Patient care	NRST TTS-C
19	Texas	\$66,610	Surgical Tech OR Tech Travel Surg Tech Ortho Surg Tech General Surg Tech	HCA Healthcare TX Baylor Scott & White Texas Health Resources UT Southwestern Memorial Hermann	Hospitals ASCs Trauma Centers Outpatient Centers Physician Offices	Sterile technique Instrumentation OR workflow Surgical counts Communication	NRST TTS-C
20	Florida	\$64,360	Surgical Tech OR Tech Travel Surg Tech Ortho Surg Tech General Surg Tech	AdventHealth HCA Healthcare FL BayCare Health Jackson Health System UF Health	Hospitals ASCs Outpatient Centers Physician Offices Travel Roles	Sterile technique Instrumentation OR workflow Surgical counts Patient prep	NRST TTS-C

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS May 15, 2026 (SOC 29-2055). Employer names are representative of major health systems in each state. Salaries reflect state median annual wages. Individual results vary by employer, experience, and specialty.

SECTION 4 – CAREER LAUNCH PLAN

4

Your Milestones. One Clear Path

Use this as your personal checklist – from day 1 of training to your first OR shift. This plan mirrors HTA's own Surgical Tech Training Program structure. HTA is one of the most accessible online Surgical Tech Programs with accredited curriculum, 1-on-1 coaching, and job placement assistance. Enroll in Health Tech Academy's [Surgical Tech Program](#).

PHASE 1 – GET TRAINED

Weeks 1–16 · Self-Paced Online

1 Enroll and Access Your Student Portal

Enroll in the [Surgical Tech Program](#), complete registration, and get your welcome kit within 24 hours

2 Complete Your Orientation Session

Meet your coach, understand your schedule, and support team

3 Course 1 – Introduction to Surgical Technology

History, professional standards, and OR team roles

4 Course 2 – Diagnostics, Infection Control, & Sterilization

Sterile technique, instrument sterilization, and aseptic principles

5 Course 3 – Treating the Surgical Patient

Patient care, vitals monitoring, and OR preparation

6 Course 4 – Surgical Skills

Instrumentation, passing technique, and surgical counts

7 Course 5 & 6 – Surgical Techniques & Specialties

General, orthopaedic, cardiovascular, neuro, OB-GYN, and more

8 Complete Weekly Assessments and Program Final Exam

Unlock your HTA Certificate of Completion

PHASE 2 – GET CERTIFIED

Post-Course · NRST Exam Prep

9 Schedule Your 1-on-1 Certification Coaching Session

Review exam structure and prep plan with your HTA coach

10 Complete Your NRST Practice Exams

Simulate real test conditions – aim for 80%+

11 Complete Your Clinical Skills Checklist

Confirm every required competency is mastered

12 Register for the NRST Exam via the AAH

Exam voucher included – visit [americanalliedhealth.com](#)

13 Sit and Pass the NRST Certification Exam

You are now a nationally certified Surgical Technologist

PHASE 3 – GET HIRED

Post-Certification · Career Services

14 Build Your Surgical Tech-Specific Resume

Highlight NRST certification, program training, and clinical exposure

15 Optimize Your LinkedIn with HTA Career Coaches

Add certification, headline, and connect with OR professionals

16 Research Your Top 10 Target Employers

Hospitals, ASCs, outpatient clinics, and physicians' offices in your area

17 Reach Out to 5 Surgical Techs for Informational Interviews

A 15-min call can unlock referrals that bypass the application queue

18 Submit Targeted Applications

Tailor cover letters to each facility's surgical specialties

19 Prepare for Interviews with HTA's Career Coach

Mock interview – STAR-method answers for sterile technique and OR scenarios

20 Accept Your Offer and Set Your Start Date

You have 6 months of post-program career support

SECTION 5 – MYTHS & REAL STORIES



Don't Let Myths Delay the Career You Want

These are the three things we hear most from people who almost didn't enroll – and the truth behind each one.

MYTH	<i>"I need a 4-year degree to work in the OR."</i>
REALITY	Surgical Techs enter through accredited certificate programs. Your HTA Bootcamp Certificate plus NRST credential is all you need to enter the OR as a Surgical Technologist.
MYTH	<i>"It'll take years before I'm earning real money."</i>
REALITY	HTA students become job-ready in 4-6 months. The program is 16 weeks, and HTA career coaches support your job search for 6 months after graduation.
MYTH	<i>"I'm not a science person - I won't be able to keep up."</i>
REALITY	HTA's curriculum is designed from the ground up for working adults with no prior clinical background. You need a high school diploma or GED – we handle the rest.

What Our Graduates Say

Joining the Surgical Technician Program at Health Tech Academy has been a life-changing experience for me. The lessons were clear, engaging, and really helped me understand what happens inside the operating room. I loved how the program balanced theory with practical, hands-on learning – it gave me the confidence I needed to pursue my certification and start a career I'm proud of.

Cynthia Osvali
HTA Surgical Tech Graduate

As a single mother, who wants to further her career to better her child's life, I'm grateful I found this program! Before I even started attending the program, they were already willing to help accommodate my needs while working graveyard shifts. They were constantly reassuring and willing to help me reschedule my orientation date and time and answered all my questions thoroughly.

Stormy Smith
HTA Surgical Tech Graduate

Health Tech Academy's Surgical Tech Bootcamp has been a great program for me. I came here as a truck driver after leaving the medical field for six years. The content has been very informative, and the price is affordable. The fact that the course content is not time-consuming has been incredible as I can still balance work and family time.

Reno Romeus
HTA Surgical Tech Graduate

Health Tech Academy has been instrumental in guiding me towards a career in surgical technology. The program provided invaluable knowledge and equipped me with the skills needed to excel in this field. The experience has also sparked a passion for furthering my education in nursing. I'm grateful for the support and dedication of the instructors at Health Tech Academy.

Efda Dejoie Thoby
HTA Surgical Tech Graduate

SECTION 6 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

6

Your Questions Answered

Everything you need to know about becoming a surgical technologist in 2026.

Q: What Does a Surgical Technologist Do Day-to-Day?

A Surgical Technologist prepares the operating room, sets up sterile fields, passes instruments to surgeons, performs surgical counts, and assists throughout procedures. Day-to-day responsibilities span pre-op prep, intraoperative scrub duties, and post-op breakdown – across hospital ORs, ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs), and outpatient facilities.

Q: How Long Does it Take to Become a Surgical Tech Online?

HTA's online Surgical Tech Program takes 16 weeks, making you job-ready in 4–6 months from enrollment to first OR shift. Traditional community college surgical tech programs take 1–2 years. The online Surgical Tech Program through HTA is one of the fastest accredited pathways available.

Q: Do Surgical Techs Need a Degree or Just a Certification?

Surgical Techs do not need a 4-year degree. Most hospital systems and ASCs hire on the basis of an accredited surgical tech certificate program plus NRST or TS-C certification. HTA's 16-week Surgical Tech online Program is designed to get you credentialed and hired without a degree.

Q: What Certifications Do Surgical Technologists Need?

The two primary surgical tech certifications are: NRST (Nationally Registered Surgical Technologist) issued by American Allied Health (AAH), and TS-C (Technologist in Surgery – Certified) issued by NBSTSA (National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting). HTA's program includes your NRST exam voucher. Both certifications are recognized by major hospital systems and ASCs nationally.

Q: Is NRST or TS-C Better for Surgical Tech Jobs?

Both are nationally recognized. NRST (via AAH) is widely accepted and included with your HTA enrollment. TS-C (via NBSTSA) is preferred by many major hospital systems and is the standard for higher-acuity settings. HTA prepares you for the NRST exam, with coaching available for TS-C pursuit afterward.

Q: What is the Job Outlook for Surgical Technologists in 2026?

The surgical tech career outlook for 2026 is strong. The BLS projects 5–9% job growth through 2032–2034 – faster than the national average for all occupations – with 8,700 new surgical tech jobs created every year. Growing demand for outpatient and ambulatory surgery is a key driver.

Q: Can I Become a Surgical Tech with No Healthcare Background?

Yes. HTA's Surgical Tech Program is specifically built for people with no healthcare background and no clinical experience. All you need is a high school diploma or GED. The bootcamp covers all clinical skills from the ground up.

Q: What Skills Do You Need to Be a Surgical Technologist?

Core surgical tech skills include: sterile technique and sterile field management, surgical instrumentation and passing technique, surgical counts, anatomy knowledge, OR workflow and protocol, and strong team communication. Specialty skills – CVOR technique, ortho, neuro, and trauma – increase earning potential significantly.

Q: Which States Pay Surgical Techs the Most?

The best states for Surgical Technologists by salary are California (\$89,160), Alaska (\$83,700), Connecticut (\$83,650), Massachusetts (\$82,830), Minnesota (\$82,250), and Oregon (\$82,210). Travel surgical tech roles in any state can reach \$70,000–\$110,000+ annually on 13-week contracts. See the full state-by-state breakdown in Section 2.1.

7

ENROLLMENT & PRICING

Next Orientation Starts Soon. Your Spot is Waiting

16 weeks. Fully online. Career support included.

All you need is a high school diploma or GED. NRST exam voucher and all materials included in both plans.

PAYMENT PLAN

\$265

per month

Deposit \$265 today, then \$265/month for 12 months
Zero interest, no credit checks

- All materials included
- NRST exam voucher included
- 12 customizable payments
- 6-month career support

UPFRONT PAYMENT

BEST VALUE

\$2,900

reg. \$3,450

Use code **HTA550** – save \$550

- Free laptop included
- All materials included
- NRST exam voucher included
- 6-month career support

Your Enrollment is One Click Away

Call: (855) 590-6601 · Email: admissions@healthtechacademy.org · healthtechacademy.org

All salary data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), released May 15, 2026 (SOC 29-2055). Employer names are representative of major health systems in each state. Salaries vary by location, experience, certification, and specialty. HTA program details accurate as of 2026. This program may not be available in all states — refer to [State Restrictions](#) for state availability.