

**Facts and answers to frequently asked
questions about becoming a peace
officer in Montana**



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Becoming a peace officer is one of the most rewarding and challenging careers you could choose. In an effort to assist you in assessing your qualifications and navigating through the employment process, we'd like to offer our advice, facts, and answers to some frequently asked questions about becoming a peace officer in Montana.

Montana Code Annotated, sections 7-32-301, 302 and 303, outlines the qualifications. By definition, a peace officer is "a deputy sheriff, undersheriff, police officer, highway patrol officer, fish and game warden, park ranger, campus security officer, or airport police officer".

At a minimum, you must;

- 1 – Be at least 18 years of age at the time of application and a United States citizen.
- 2 – Not have been convicted of a felony and be of good moral character (as determined by a thorough background investigation).
- 3 – Be either a high school graduate or have passed the general educational development test (GED) and been issued an equivalency certificate.
- 4 – Successfully pass both a physical and psychological examination.
- 5 – Successfully complete an oral interview conducted by the hiring agency to assess your communication skills, temperament, motivation, and other characteristics necessary to the duties and functions of a peace officer.
- 6 – Possess or be eligible for a Montana Driver's License.
- 7 – Have lived in Montana for 1 year and in the county, you are applying for work 6 months at the time of appointment (residency requirement may be waived by hiring agency).

Other things to consider;

- 1 – A short application is typically required as well as a fee to apply for testing with an agency. Be honest and thorough when completing the application.

2 - Some state and most federal agencies, like MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, have additional educational requirements requiring a bachelor's degree prior to employment. Contact the agency you are applying with for further details.

3 – The initial testing process can be different depending on the agency you are applying with but typically has two parts, written and physical. Some use the Montana Testing Consortium while others have their own. It's important to find out what type of tests you will be taking to be prepared on test day.

4 – Be physically fit. We see good applicants fail to meet the minimum physical fitness requirements as determined by the test. As some tests may occur on short notice and in less than ideal weather conditions it is important to always be fit.

5 – Many agencies have web sites that outline their hiring requirements as well as vision and mission statements, history, and other useful information. Take some time to get to know the agency and what's important to them prior to applying.

6 – Everyone who takes the written and physical tests may not be identified by the agency for further processing, so it is important to test well. If you get the call, chances are you will be asked to complete a detailed personal history statement so a background investigation prior to the job offer can begin. Be thorough and honest in completing the statement and any other documents. Other agency specific tests may occur as well.

Advice from academy staff;

1 – Only meeting the minimum requirements will rarely get you the job. Law enforcement is a competitive occupation, and many agencies look for people with a variety of skills and proven work history. In the event you don't make it the first time you apply, be positive and keep trying, you are not alone.

2 – Law enforcement as a profession is changing. In addition to protecting the public you must be an effective communicator and problem solver capable of enhancing the quality of life within the community they serve.

3 – Do the work for the right reasons. Helping people and speaking for the victims is what we do. It's not about the money or cool gear.

4 – Understand what you are getting yourself in to. Shift work, overtime and tough calls can take its toll on you and your loved ones. Live a healthy lifestyle with hobbies outside of work both you and your family can enjoy. Talk about the good and bad days with them because talking will help you feel better.

5 – Military veterans and college graduates are sought after and may receive preference points in the application process. If you are applying but not getting hired it may be because you haven't had as much work experience as those you are competing for jobs with. Get the experience and apply again.

6 – A college degree is becoming increasingly important. Some agencies will pay you more if you have one and is an important part of the promotional testing process within most organizations.

7 – Contact agencies you are interested in working for and ask if they have ride-a-longs, citizen's academies, or other programs. Participating in these activities will help you gain an understanding of the job and agency. They can also get to know you.

- Public Safety Officers Standards of Training