



NCARB



**DESTINATION**  
**ARCHITECT**

[ncarb.org/destination-architect](https://ncarb.org/destination-architect)



# YOUR GUIDE TO BECOMING AN ARCHITECT

To be an architect, you'll have to earn a license from your local architecture board. To earn a license, you'll need to meet the specific education, experience, and examination requirements of the state (often called a "jurisdiction") where you want to work.

The road ahead may seem complicated, but it's simpler than you think. NCARB is here to help turn your goals into reality with the guidance and resources you need to advance from student to practicing architect.

The path to licensure is designed to ensure you have the knowledge and skills you need to succeed safely and independently. Read on to learn how to become an architect.

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# WHY ARCHITECTURE

As an architect, you'll play an important role in shaping the built environment. Whether you're an artist, a visionary, or a problem-solver, the architecture profession offers a variety of career opportunities to put your skills to use as you design the spaces where people live, work, and play. From history and art to science and critical thinking, becoming a licensed architect will prepare you for a future as dynamic as you are.



# GETTING STARTED

Before you begin the licensure process, there's one key thing you should think about:

## Where do you want to practice?

Each jurisdiction sets its own requirements for becoming an architect, and they might vary from state to state.

Check your board's latest local requirements at

[www.ncarb.org/requirements](http://www.ncarb.org/requirements).

NCARB doesn't issue your license, but we do work with boards and practicing architects to develop the programs you'll need to earn a license, like the Architectural Experience Program® (AXP®) and the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®). You'll also need an NCARB Record—an online account that tracks your professional history—to earn a license.

If you have questions about the path to licensure, give us a call at **202-879-0520** or find us online at [www.ncarb.org/contact](http://www.ncarb.org/contact) for personalized help.



## EARN A DEGREE

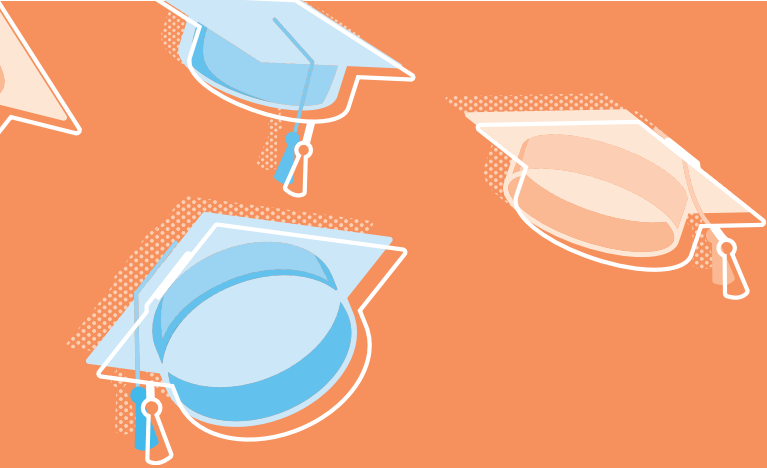
For many individuals working to become architects, the first step is graduating from an accredited architecture program.

In most of the 55 U.S. jurisdictions, candidates pursuing an architecture license must have **a degree from a program accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)**. If you didn't attend a NAAB-accredited



### DESTINATION TIP

Not sure if your architecture program is NAAB-accredited? Find out by visiting [www.naab.org](http://www.naab.org)!



program, you can still pursue your first license in nearly a third of U.S. jurisdictions.

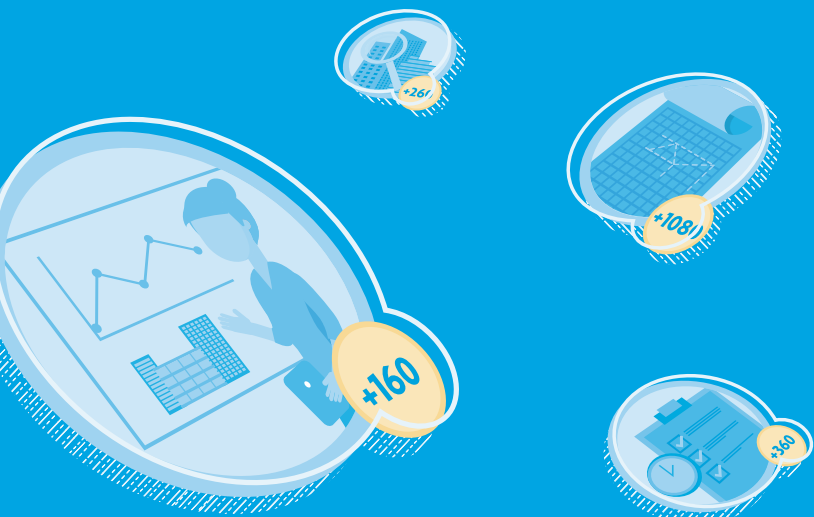
While you're in school, you can start working on another important part of the licensure process: earning experience. Reporting summer internship work, volunteering for your local Freedom by Design™ project, and participating in design competitions are all great ways to start earning real-world experience before you graduate.

To report your experience for credit toward the licensure process, you'll need to create an NCARB Record—start yours at [my.ncarb.org](https://my.ncarb.org). To learn more about reporting experience, see **Gain Experience**.

# GAIN EXPERIENCE

To earn a license and become an architect, **you'll need to document real-world experience through the AXP.**

The AXP provides a framework to guide you through earning and reporting your professional experience. As you progress, you'll build up competency in the knowledge and skills you need to practice architecture safely.



To complete the AXP, you'll need to document **3,740 hours** across **six experience areas** that mirror the progression of a typical architecture project.

**You have to earn nearly half (1,860) of your 3,740 hours while working under the supervision of an architect** licensed in the U.S. and employed by a firm legally practicing architecture. Some jurisdictions require additional experience beyond the AXP. Find out if yours is one of them at [www.ncarb.org/requirements](http://www.ncarb.org/requirements).



### DESTINATION TIP

Report your hours early and often to earn full AXP credit for your experience! Once you begin earning experience, start your Record at [my.ncarb.org](http://my.ncarb.org). With your NCARB Record—accessible from your desktop or mobile device—you can create, submit, and view your hourly experience reports wherever you are.



The six AXP experience areas are:

- Practice Management
- Project Management
- Programming & Analysis
- Project Planning & Design
- Project Development & Documentation
- Construction & Evaluation

Work with your **AXP supervisor** to develop competency in the areas identified in the AXP.

Report hours of experience in your **NCARB Record**—a detailed online account of your professional history that you'll use to complete the AXP, take the ARE, and earn your license to practice.

For more information on gaining experience visit [www.ncarb.org/gain-axp-experience](http://www.ncarb.org/gain-axp-experience).



## FIND YOUR LICENSING ADVISOR!

Need help navigating the path to licensure? Each NAAB-accredited program and most local American Institute of Architects (AIA) chapters have an architect licensing advisor—a volunteer who's familiar with NCARB's programs and your local requirements.

To get personalized help from your licensing advisor, visit [www.ncarb.org/advisors](http://www.ncarb.org/advisors).

# PASS THE EXAM

To earn your architecture license, **you'll need to take and pass the ARE**, which is required in all 55 U.S. jurisdictions.

The current version of the exam, ARE 5.0, is a multi-part test made up of **six divisions**—each division corresponds to one of the six AXP experience areas:

- Practice Management
- Project Management
- Programming & Analysis
- Project Planning & Design
- Project Development & Documentation
- Construction & Evaluation



PA

PDD

PPD

CE



Like the experience areas, the divisions of ARE 5.0 are organized around the progression of a typical architecture project and the management of an architecture firm. By passing the ARE, you'll show that you have the knowledge and skills necessary in areas of health, safety, and welfare.

**The divisions can be taken in the order that suits you best**, whether that means taking each division as you gain work experience in that area or taking all six in a row.



### DESTINATION TIP

In most states, you can overlap gaining experience and taking the exam, which can help shorten your time to licensure!

Each division features a variety of question (or item) types, including multiple choice, check-all-that-apply, and hotspots. Plus, you'll see case studies—groups of questions regarding a single architectural scenario that mimic real-world practice.

When you're ready to test, you'll have the option to take the exam online or at a physical test center.

For more information on passing the exam visit [www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are](http://www.ncarb.org/pass-the-are).



## LOOKING FOR STUDY MATERIALS?

We offer a number of free tools and resources—including a free practice exam for each division, video tutorials, and more. Plus, join the ARE 5.0 Community to chat with NCARB's exam experts.

For everything you need to study for the ARE,  
visit [www.ncarb.org/are5-prep](http://www.ncarb.org/are5-prep).

# GET LICENSED

Once you've earned a degree, gained experience, and passed the exam, **you'll need to meet any additional requirements in your jurisdiction.**

Some boards require additional experience or a location-specific quiz before you can become an architect. You'll also need to fill out the board's **initial licensure application** and pay any required fees.



When you've met all requirements for your jurisdiction, NCARB will evaluate your Record and send (or transmit) it to your jurisdiction's board.



### DESTINATION TIP

Finished your education, experience, and examination requirements and not sure what your next step is? Give us a call at **202-879-0520** or find us online at [www.ncarb.org/contact](http://www.ncarb.org/contact) for personalized help.



## Why Earn a License?

The reasons to earn a license to practice architecture are as varied and personal as your path to get there—here are just a few benefits of licensure:

- **Title:** Once you've earned a license, you can officially call yourself an architect.
- **Trust:** Your license gives firms, clients, and the public confidence in your skills and ability to protect their health, safety, and welfare.
- **Skills:** Completing your education, experience, and examination requirements helps guide you through continuing your professional growth and development.
- **Advancement:** Having a license provides you with greater career opportunities, including the ability to work on your own.

For more information on licensing requirements, visit [www.ncarb.org/become-architect](http://www.ncarb.org/become-architect).



## CURIOUS ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS IN YOUR JURISDICTION?

Use our interactive map to compare licensure requirements across the United States.

Try the tool by visiting [www.ncarb.org/requirements](http://www.ncarb.org/requirements).

An illustration of a hand holding a pen, poised to sign a blueprint. The background is a vibrant blue with abstract geometric shapes and patterns, including a grid of small white dots in the upper right corner.

## BECOME NCARB-CERTIFIED

Once you've earned a license, take the next step and become **NCARB-certified**.

The NCARB Certificate is a professional credential that can help you advance your career through exclusive benefits like license mobility, free continuing education, and more.

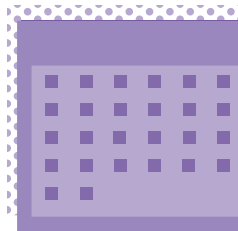
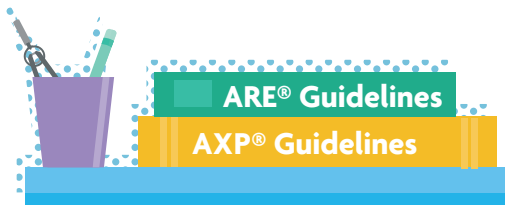
**Being certified makes it simpler for you to earn a license to practice in additional jurisdictions**—and in several international locations, like Canada, Mexico, Australia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.



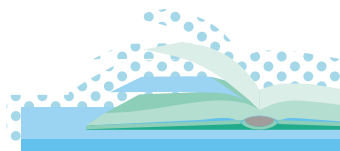
If you keep your NCARB Record active throughout your licensure process, NCARB will:

- Waive your Certificate application fee
- Offer you one free year of being a Certificate holder

For more information on becoming NCARB-certified, visit [www.ncarb.org/certificate](http://www.ncarb.org/certificate).



## RESOURCES



Ready to get started? These free tools and resources will help you navigate the licensure process.

**NCARB Blog:** Wherever you are in your licensure process, our blog features career tips, success stories, how-tos, and more. Visit [www.ncarb.org/blog](http://www.ncarb.org/blog) for more!

**AXP Guidelines:** This document is essential reading for all candidates completing the experience program, with details on the program's rules and requirements, available at [www.ncarb.org/axp-guidelines](http://www.ncarb.org/axp-guidelines).



**ARE 5.0 Guidelines:** Learn everything you need to know about scheduling a division, preparing for test day, and other important examination policies, available at [www.ncarb.org/are5-guidelines](http://www.ncarb.org/are5-guidelines).

**ARE 5.0 Community:** Through the community, you'll have access to advice from NCARB experts, stories and tips from fellow test-takers, and more. Find it at [www.ncarb.org/are5community](http://www.ncarb.org/are5community).

# FAQ

## **What is NCARB?**

NCARB is a nonprofit organization made up of the architectural licensing boards of the 55 U.S. states and territories. We develop and administer the national programs for licensure that individual boards use to regulate architecture within their jurisdiction.

## **What is an NCARB Record?**

Your NCARB Record is a detailed, verified account of your education, experience, and examination history—you'll need it to complete the AXP and take the ARE. At your request, NCARB can also transmit your Record to a jurisdiction to facilitate reciprocal licensure.

Sign up at [my.ncarb.org](https://my.ncarb.org).

## **How much does an NCARB Record cost?**

Learn more about fees for your initial application and NCARB Record renewals at [www.ncarb.org/fees](https://www.ncarb.org/fees).

## **When can I start earning experience?**

You can start earning AXP experience after you graduate from high school (or the established equivalent).

## **How do I start the AXP?**

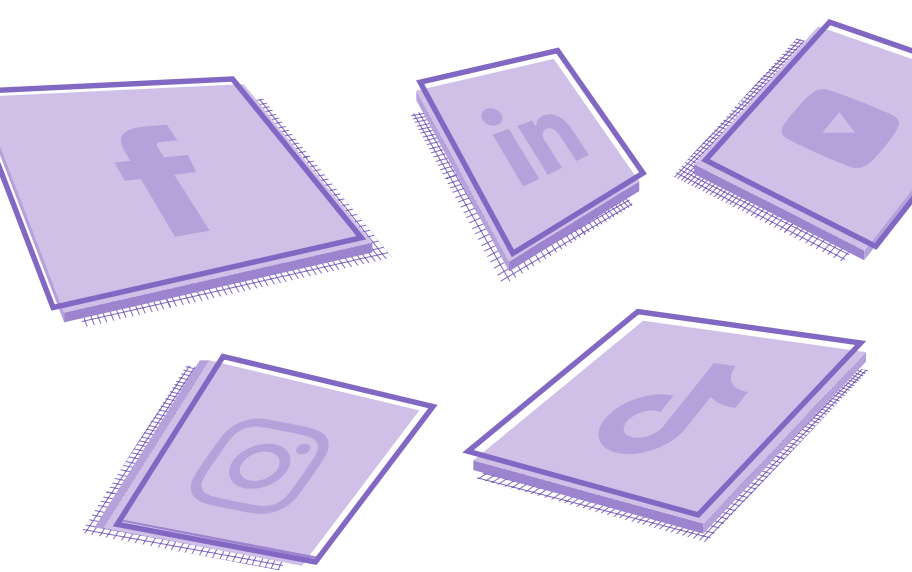
Before you can start reporting AXP experience, you'll need an NCARB Record and an experience opportunity that qualifies for the AXP—learn more at [www.ncarb.org/axp](http://www.ncarb.org/axp).

## **Does it cost money to take the exam?**

Yes, NCARB charges a fee for each division of ARE 5.0, which covers the cost of administering the exam and contributes to the cost of the exam development. You can view the latest fees at [www.ncarb.org/fees](http://www.ncarb.org/fees).

## **How do I start testing?**

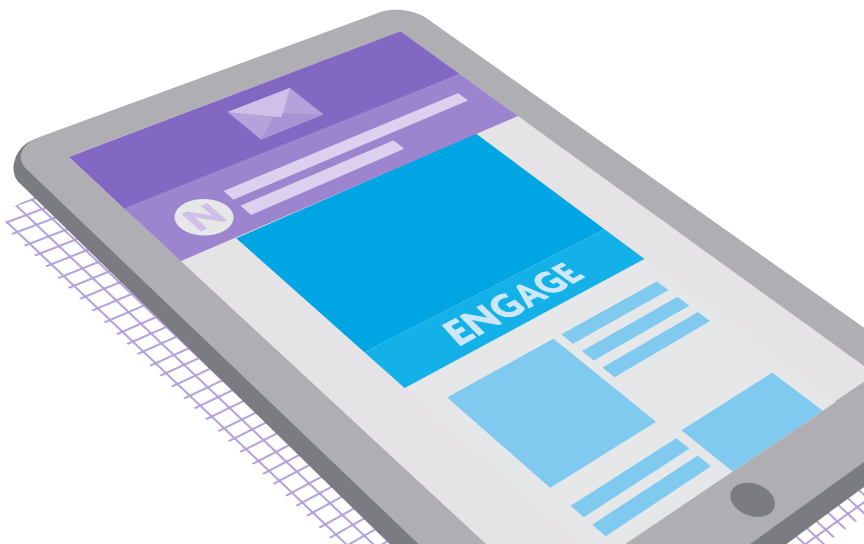
Before you can schedule an ARE division, you will need to be approved to test by your local board and receive your exam eligibilities. Once you meet your jurisdiction's requirements, you can easily request eligibility through your NCARB Record.



## FOLLOW & SUBSCRIBE!

Stay connected and share your own journey to licensure by tagging **@ncarb** on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

Want the latest information on NCARB's programs?  
Sign up for our newsletters at [www.ncarb.org/subscribe!](http://www.ncarb.org/subscribe!)



The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, in collaboration with licensing boards, facilitates the licensure and credentialing of architects to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

[WWW.NCARB.ORG](http://WWW.NCARB.ORG)