

Drone Pilot

A drone pilot flies unmanned aircraft to capture images, collect data, inspect equipment, and support important missions. Using cameras, sensors, GPS, and remote controls, drone pilots work across industries including agriculture, public safety, filmmaking, environmental conservation, government, and the military. Some specialize in aerial photography, mapping and surveying, crop monitoring, search and rescue, infrastructure inspections, package delivery, or emergency response, using drones to solve real-world problems.

► School to Career Pathway

- Must be 16 years of age.
- Must be able to read, write, and speak English.
- Must learn airspace classifications, weather patterns, emergency procedures, and radio communications.
- Must pass the FAA Part 107 Airman Knowledge Testing exam at an approved testing center.
- Must receive a drone piloting license by passing a background check and submitting an application to the FAA.

► Durable Skills

As a drone pilot, you need:

- Time management skills to plan flights efficiently, complete missions on schedule, and meet deadlines.
- Be adaptable to changing weather conditions, new technologies, different working conditions and unexpected drone issues.
- Strong communication skills to clearly share flight plans, findings to team members before and after a mission, and safety information.

► Paycheck Peek

\$62.94 hourly, \$130,916 annually

*Note that annual wages vary by location (state, city, or work setting)



Core Duties

Plan Safe Flights

Review weather conditions, airspace rules, and flight paths to make sure each mission can be completed safely.

Operate the Drone

Fly the drone using remote controls and onboard technology to capture images, video, or other important data.

Collect and Analyze Data

Use cameras and sensors to gather information that can help inspect buildings, monitor crops, create maps, or study the environment.

Inspect and Maintain Equipment

Check the drone before and after each flight, replace damaged parts, and keep batteries and equipment in good working condition.

Follow Safety and Aviation Rules

Operate the drone according to aviation regulations and maintain records of flights to ensure safe and legal operations.



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Could This Be Your Thing?

- Does the idea of working with a drone sound interesting to you?
- Do you like learning how machines work and building and repairing your own machines?
- Do you have strong hand-eye coordination like those needed to play video games?
- Can you say that you like being outdoors and working in different locations?
- Are you able to stay calm and focused for long periods of time?

Explore Similar Career Pathways

- airline pilot
- aviation inspector
- helicopter pilot
- wildfire aeronautics researcher

Dig Deeper Here

Find out more about all careers at: [US Bureau of Labor Statistics Student's Desk](#)

Find out more about STEM careers at: [Careers with STEM: Science](#)

Find out more about the careers above:

- [O*NET Online: Commercial Pilot](#)
- [O*NET Online: Aviation Inspector](#)
- [NASA-Surprisingly STEM: Wildfire Aeronautics Researcher](#)