

How Do You Become a Licensed Professional Engineer (PE)?

If you're not in the engineering world, you might not know what's behind the PE stamp. Here's a quick breakdown—and why it matters:

1. Education — ABET-Accredited Degree Required

- ◆ Start with a bachelor's degree from an ABET-accredited engineering program.

ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) sets the national standard for technical rigor and real-world readiness in engineering education.

2. Exams — Two Big Milestones

- ◆ FE Exam (Fundamentals of Engineering): Usually taken near graduation. Passing earns you the title EIT (Engineer-in-Training).
- ◆ PE Exam (Principles and Practice): Taken later, this tests your technical depth, ethics, and ability to practice independently.

3. Experience — 4 Years of Verified Engineering Work

- ◆ You need four full years of progressive, post-degree engineering experience.

Your work must:

Involve real engineering (not just support tasks), Show increasing responsibility, and Be verified by a licensed PE who has firsthand knowledge of your work.

4. Licensure — Controlled by Each U.S. State

There's no national PE license. Each state regulates licensure individually. You must be licensed in each state where you offer services. Some allow reciprocity, but it's not automatic.

5. Cost and Commitment

Expect to spend \$1,000–\$3,000+ on exam fees, prep courses, and applications. The process takes years—but opens doors to leadership, authority, and public trust.

6. "Engineer" Is a Protected Title

Only licensed professionals may legally use the PE title, sign plans, or offer engineering services to the public. While titles like "Software Engineer" or "Sales Engineer" are common in industry, they don't grant legal authority.

7. Penalties Are Real and Serious

Falsely claiming to be a PE can lead to:

\$1,000–\$10,000+ fines per violation (sometimes per day),

Misdemeanor or felony charges, Jail time, Permanent disqualification from licensure.

Each misused document, title, or signature can be counted separately—and the consequences can escalate fast.

Why It Matters

PEs are entrusted with designing and approving the systems we all rely on—bridges, power grids, buildings, water systems, and more. Licensure is more than a credential. It's a public responsibility grounded in competence, safety, and ethics.



