



California wage and hour cheat sheet

Minimum wage, overtime, breaks, final pay, and record retention on one sheet. Rates verified August 2026.

Minimum wage

\$16.90/hr statewide (effective Jan 1, 2026, indexed annually). Many cities set higher local minimums, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego among them, so check the city where the work happens. No lower tipped wage: tips never count toward the minimum in California.

Overtime

1.5x after 40 straight-time hours in a workweek, layered with the daily rules below. Hours already paid as daily overtime do not also count toward the 40.

Daily overtime

Yes, and it is the rule California is known for: 1.5x past 8 hours in a workday, 2x past 12. On the seventh consecutive day of a workweek, the first 8 hours pay 1.5x and hours past 8 pay 2x. A validly adopted alternative workweek schedule (for example 4/10s) changes the daily thresholds. Time-clock rounding is disfavored here: California courts have rejected rounding in several settings and *Camp v. Home Depot* is under California Supreme Court review as of August 2026, so exact-minute records are the safe practice.

Meal break

A 30-minute unpaid meal period must start by the end of the 5th hour of work, and a second by the end of the 10th. A missed or late meal period owes one extra hour of pay at the regular rate for that day (Labor Code 512, 226.7).

Rest break

A paid 10-minute rest break for every 4 hours worked or major fraction of it, counted as hours worked. A missed rest break owes one extra hour of pay for that day. Reporting-time pay also applies: an employee who reports as scheduled and is sent home early is owed half the scheduled shift, at least 2 and at most 4 hours, with exceptions for acts of God and utility failures.

Final paycheck

Immediately on discharge. On quitting without notice, within 72 hours. Late final wages accrue waiting-time penalties of a full day's wages per day, up to 30 days (Labor Code 201 to 203). Keep payroll records 3 years (Labor Code 1174) and personnel records 4 years (SB 807).

How long to keep time records

Federal law requires keeping time cards 2 years and payroll records 3 years, and some states go longer. California requires 3 years for payroll records and 4 years for personnel records. Keep the records where you can produce them; a wage claim is decided on whoever has the better records.



California wage and hour cheat sheet (continued)

Rates verified August 2026. The state minimum wage adjusts each January 1 and many cities adjust their own rates on January 1 or July 1, so confirm the local rate for the city where the work happens. The calculator assumes a standard workweek and non-exempt hourly work; a validly adopted alternative workweek schedule changes the daily thresholds. This is general information, not legal or payroll advice. Check the California labor department for the current rules, and talk to a professional for your situation.

Primary source: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/>. Full list of sources: getclox.com/blog/california-time-tracking.