# SURGICAL TECHNOLOGISTS

## What is a surgical technologist?

A surgical technologist is a person, regardless of title, who performs tasks in a surgical setting under the supervision and delegation of authority of a physician, physician’s assistant, osteopathic physician, osteopathic physician’s assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, podiatrist, dentist, physician’s assistant surgical assistant, or naturopathic physician acting within the scope of his or her license.[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Must surgical technologists be registered?

Yes. Anyone representing himself or herself as a surgical technologist by title or by description as a person who performs tasks in the surgical setting under the delegation of authority of a licensed health care practitioner must register with the Department of Health as a surgical technologist.[[2]](#footnote-2) Registered nurses, practical nurses, and other credentialed providers acting within the scope of their license or credential do not need to register as surgical technologists.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Can appropriate military training or experience be used to satisfy the requirements to be a surgical technologist?

Yes. Military training or experience which is substantially equivalent to state standards satisfies the requirements to be a surgical technologist.[[4]](#footnote-4)

## What tasks do surgical technologists typically perform?

Surgical technologists perform tasks that typically consist of, but are not limited to, the following tasks in a surgical setting:[[5]](#footnote-5)

* Prepare basic sterile packs and trays.
* Assist with physical preparation of the operating room, creating the sterile field, and maintaining sterile technique.
* Identify and select appropriate packs, trays and accessory/specialty equipment for each surgery.
* Prepare supplies and instruments for a sterile field.
* Assist with the count of instruments, sponges, needles, and other surgical items.
* Pass correct instruments, supplies and sutures as needed by the surgeon.
* Sponge or suction the operative site, retract tissue for exposure, and assist with irrigation of the operative site under direct supervision.
* Cut sutures placed by a licensed health care provider.
* Prepare specimens for submission to pathology.
* Fire an automatic staple gun as directed by a licensed health care provider for skin stapling. Deep tissue stapling is not permitted.
* Move drugs to the sterile field.

## Are there tasks that a surgical technologist is not allowed to do?

Yes. A surgical technologist is not allowed to dispense medications or to do activities that constitute the practice of medicine including:[[6]](#footnote-6)

* Prescribing or administering.
* Penetrating or severing tissue, including but not limited to, suturing, cutting and incisions, regardless of instrumentality.
* Dispensing medications.

1. RCW 18.215.010, WAC 246-939-010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. RCW 18.215.020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. RCW 18.215.030, WAC 246-939-030(4). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. RCW 18.215.090. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. WAC 246-939-030. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. WAC 246-939-050. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)