

Airline Pilot

Fly people across the country for a living. The training bill is big and the seniority ladder is slow.

TYPICAL PAY

\$108,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$50k to \$220k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 7 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Airline flight decks, airports,
regional and international routes**

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
 Math, physics and English. Get a Transport Canada Category 1 medical exam before you spend money on training, because a condition you did not know about can disqualify you.
- 2 Private pilot licence** 6 to 12 months
 The first licence. Minimum age 17. Ground school plus flight training at a flight school or a college aviation program.
- 3 Commercial pilot licence** 1 to 2 years
 Minimum age 18 and at least 200 hours of flight time in aeroplanes, of which 100 must be as pilot in command. Add an instrument rating and a multi-engine rating to be hireable.
- 4 Build hours** 1 to 3 years
 Instruct, fly floatplanes, fly freight or fly small charters. Regional airlines usually want somewhere between 500 and 1,500 hours.
- 5 Airline transport pilot licence** After the hours
 Minimum age 21 and more than 1,500 hours. This is the licence you need to captain an airliner.

Pros and cons

- + The view from the office
- + Pay climbs steadily with seniority
- + Days off come in blocks, not just weekends
- \$80,000 or more of debt before your first real job
- Years of low pay while you build hours
- Nights, early mornings and time away from home

Optional boosts

Instrument rating. Multi-engine rating. Flight instructor rating. Type rating.

Good to know

Almost 4 in 10 are near retirement

Job Bank reports that about 38% of Canada's airline pilots are 50 or older, and flags a strong risk of a pilot shortage through 2033.

The left seat is not about skill alone

Which pilot is captain is decided almost entirely by seniority at that airline. Change companies and you start at the bottom of the list again, no matter how many hours you have.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Airline Pilot in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Airline Pilot, job requirements

Transport Canada: General information on pilot licences and permits

Transport Canada: Standard 421, flight crew permits, licences and ratings

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/airline-pilot>



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