

Astronomer

Study stars, planets and galaxies with telescopes and code. Almost everyone in this job has a doctorate.

TYPICAL PAY

\$117,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$73k to \$200k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

9 to 12 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Universities, observatories,
government research centres, sp...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Physics, calculus and computer science. Grades matter because science programs at big universities are competitive.
- 2 Bachelor of Science (BSc)** 4 years
Physics, astronomy, or astrophysics. Do summer research with a professor every year you can. That is what gets you into graduate school.
- 3 Master's degree** 0 to 2 years
Some schools go straight from a bachelor's degree to a doctorate. Others do a master's first. You are paid a stipend either way.
- 4 Doctorate** 4 to 6 years
Original research, a thesis, and usually a few published papers. You are supervised but you run your own project.
- 5 Postdoctoral jobs** 2 to 6 years
Two or three short research contracts, often in different countries. Most astronomers do this before any permanent job exists.

Pros and cons

- + You work on questions nobody has answered
- + Graduate school is paid, not paid for
- + Skills transfer to very well paid technology jobs
- About a decade of training before any permanent job
- Very few permanent positions, and you move cities for each short contract
- Funding depends on government budgets you do not control

Good to know

Canada once had the biggest telescope on Earth

The Plaskett telescope at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory near Victoria opened in 1918 and was briefly the largest working telescope in the world. It is still used today, and the observatory is ru...

A Canadian instrument aims the Webb telescope

Canada built the fine guidance sensor that keeps the James Webb Space Telescope locked on its target, plus a science camera that flies with it. In exchange, Canadian astronomers get a guaranteed share of...

Optional boosts

Observational astronomy. Theory and simulation. Instrumentation. Planetary science and space missions.

Where these numbers come from

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

Canadian Astronomical Society

National Research Council: Herzberg Astronomy and Astrophysics Research Centre

University of Toronto: Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics

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/astronomer>



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