

Bartender

Run the bar, control the room, and get paid in wages plus tips. One short certificate is all the law requires.

TYPICAL PAY

\$42,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$31k to \$62k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Bars, pubs, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, events

How you get there

- 1 Get certified to serve alcohol** 1 day
Smart Serve in Ontario, Serving It Right in British Columbia, ProServe in Alberta. Online, self-paced, a few hours, then a test.
- 2 Get hired anywhere in the building** Weeks
Barback, busser, server or host. Bars promote from inside because they need to trust you with cash and liquor.
- 3 Barback** 6 to 12 months
Stocking, ice, glassware, cutting fruit, watching every drink the bartender makes. This is the apprenticeship.
- 4 Get a bar shift** 1 to 2 years
Usually a quiet weeknight first. You learn speed, pour counts, the point of sale system and how to cut someone off politely.
- 5 Move up** 3 years and up
Head bartender, bar manager, cocktail bar work, brand ambassador for a spirits company, or your own bar.

Pros and cons

- + Highest tips in front of house work
- + Cheap and fast to get into legally
- + Social, skilled and never the same night twice
- You finish at 3am and your friends work days
- Drunk customers, and you are responsible for cutting them off
- Standing on concrete for ten hours

Good to know

The law cares more than your boss does

There is no bartending licence in Canada, but every province requires approved responsible service training before you can pour a drink for money. The course takes an afternoon and costs about \$45 in Ontario.

Quebec pays bartenders the most

Job Bank puts Quebec's median bartender wage at about \$22.44 an hour with highs reaching \$40, the strongest numbers in the country. Manitoba sits lowest at about \$17.

Optional boosts

Cocktail craft. Wine and spirits study. Bar management. Events and festivals.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Bartender in Canada, wages (updated Nov 19, 2025)
Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario: alcohol
Smart Serve Ontario: responsible alcohol service training
Ontario: minimum wage

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/bartender>



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