

Biologist

Study living things for a government, a university or a consulting firm. The degree is the easy part; the funding is the hard part.

TYPICAL PAY

\$83,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$53k to \$139k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Universities, government labs,
environmental consulting firms, fi...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Biology, chemistry and math. Get outside: volunteer with a naturalist club, a stream team or a shelter.
- 2 Bachelor of Science in biology** 4 years
 Four years. Pick an honours stream with a research thesis if you can. Summer research assistant jobs matter more than your marks.
- 3 First jobs or graduate school** 1 to 2 years
 Either take field and lab technician contracts, or go straight into a funded master's degree.
- 4 Master's degree** 2 years
 Two years, usually paid through teaching and research assistantships. This is the point where you stop being a helper and start designing studies.
- 5 PhD, if you want to lead research** 4 to 6 years
 Four to six more years. Only worth it if you want to run your own research program.

Pros and cons

- + You get paid to answer real questions about living things
- + Field seasons in places most people never see
- + Graduate school is usually funded, not paid for
- Early career is a chain of short seasonal contracts
- Pay lags engineering and computing for the same years of school
- Permanent research positions are scarce and very competitive

Optional boosts

Statistics and the R programming language. Mapping software. Species identification. Boat, first aid and off-road driving tickets.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Biologist in Canada, wages (updated November 2025)
 College of Applied Biologists, British Columbia
 Alberta Society of Professional Biologists
 Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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/biologist>

Good to know

Canada has more lake than anyone

Canada holds roughly a fifth of the world's fresh water and more lakes than every other country combined. Freshwater biology here is not a niche, it is a national industry.

Insulin was found in a Toronto lab

In 1921 Frederick Banting and Charles Best isolated insulin at the University of Toronto. Banting was 32 and is still the youngest person to win the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.



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