

Choreographer

Make the movement other people perform. Almost everyone in this job danced first.

TYPICAL PAY

\$85,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$46k to \$146k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Dance companies, theatres, film and TV sets, studios, schools

How you get there

- 1 Train and perform as a dancer** 10 years or more
Almost every working choreographer in Canada danced professionally first. You learn what bodies can do by using your own.
- 2 Make small pieces early** From your teens
Student shows, choreographic workshops, festival slots. Nobody needs permission to start making work.
- 3 Dance degree or company mentorship** 2 to 4 years
A university dance program or a company's emerging choreographer program, which gives studio time, dancers and a showing.
- 4 Build a body of work** 3 to 8 years
Pieces that have been performed, filmed and reviewed. This is your portfolio and the only thing commissioners look at.
- 5 Commissions and contracts** Ongoing
Companies, theatres and screen productions hire you by reputation and by who has worked with you.

Pros and cons

- + The work is yours and carries your name
- + It outlasts your own performing career
- + Royalties keep paying when a piece is revived
- Income arrives in lumps with long gaps between
- Much of your time goes to grant writing and budgets
- Work is judged publicly and reviewed harshly

Good to know

Choreography is copyright

A dance work is protected under Canadian copyright law like a piece of music or a script, as long as it is fixed in some form such as notation or video. That is what makes performance royalties possible.

The union covers dance, not just theatre

The Canadian Actors' Equity Association has represented theatre, opera and dance since it became independent in 1976. Choreographers sit inside that agreement alongside performers and...

Optional boosts

Writing grant applications. Working on camera. Movement direction for theatre. Notation or clear filming of your work.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Choreographer in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Canadian Actors' Equity Association
Canada Council for the Arts: grants
DTRC (Dancer Transition Resource Centre)

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/choreographer>



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