

Dancer

Ballet, contemporary, musicals, commercial work. The training starts as a child and the career ends early.

TYPICAL PAY

\$69,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$104k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Dance companies, theatres, cruise ships, studios, film and TV sets

How you get there

- 1 Studio training as a child** Ages 5 to 14
Ballet technique underneath whatever style you love. Several classes a week by age 12.
- 2 Pre-professional training** Ages 12 to 18
A residential or intensive program such as Canada's National Ballet School in Toronto, which combines full-time ballet training with academics and takes students by audition.
- 3 Audition for companies** Ages 17 to 22
Company auditions and apprenticeships, often in several cities and countries. A university dance degree, such as the Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance at Toronto Metropolitan University, is the other route in.
- 4 Perform** 10 to 20 years
Apprentice, then corps, then soloist if you get there. Contemporary dancers work project to project instead.
- 5 Plan the second career** From your late 20s
Teaching, choreography, physiotherapy, arts administration, something else entirely. Start before your body decides for you.

Pros and cons

- + You do the thing you love every day, not in your spare time
- + Company rates are decent and often union protected
- + Touring takes you across Canada and abroad
- The performing career usually ends in your 30s
- Injury can end it much sooner
- Very few contracts compared to the number of trained dancers

Optional boosts

More than one style. Singing and acting. Partnering. Choreographing.

Good to know

Canada built a charity just for retiring dancers

The DTRC (Dancer Transition Resource Centre) has supported thousands of dancers since 1985 with counselling and retraining grants. Few other careers admit so openly that they end early.

Class never stops

Professional dancers take a technique class almost every working day of their lives, the same kind of class they took at 14. Nobody graduates out of the basics.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Dancer in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Canadian Actors' Equity Association
Canada's National Ballet School
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/dancer>



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