

Day trader

Buy and sell stocks, options or futures within the same day, with your own money. Most people who try lose it.

TYPICAL INCOME

\$0

a year, varies widely

INCOME RANGE

\$0 to \$60k

most to the successful few

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Home, with a laptop or a desk of screens and a brokerage account

How you get there

- 1 Learn how markets work** 2 to 3 months
Orders, spreads, margin, options and tax, from free broker and regulator material before any paid course.
- 2 Practise with fake money** 3 to 6 months
Use a practice account and write down every trade and why you made it.
- 3 Trade very small with real money** 6 to 12 months
Tiny positions in a regular cash account, so mistakes cost little and you keep your tax-sheltered accounts out of it.
- 4 Keep a full record** 1 to 2 years
A journal of every trade, fee and result. If it does not show a profit after costs for a year or more, you do not have an edge yet.
- 5 Only then think about scaling up** Years
Most traders who succeed kept a job until their record covered several years and their savings could cover a year of losses.

Pros and cons

- + No boss, no diploma and no licence needed
- + You can start small and learn with fake money for free
- + Work from anywhere with a good connection
- Most people who try lose money
- No paycheque, benefits or pension
- Profits can be fully taxed as business income

Good to know

\$15,000 in, \$617,000 out, then taxed

One trader put \$5,000 a year into his TFSA (Tax-Free Savings Account) from 2009 to 2011 and day traded it to \$617,317. The Tax Court ruled the account was running a business, so the gains were ta...

Less than a bank teller

In the Brazilian study of almost 20,000 day traders, only 0.5% of those who kept going for over 300 days earned more than a bank teller's starting salary.

Optional boosts

Risk a tiny slice per trade. Stick to one market and one method. Measure everything. Stop trading on bad days.

Where these numbers come from

Chague, De-Losso and Giovannetti (2020): Day Trading for a Living?
Barber, Lee, Liu, Odean and Zhang (2020): Learning, Fast or Slow, Review of Asset Pricing Studies
Tax Court of Canada: Canadian Western Trust Company (Ahamed TFSA) v. The King, 2023 TCC 17
Canada Revenue Agency: Tax-Free Savings Account

Numbers checked October 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/day-trader>



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