

Deckhand

The entry door to working at sea. A short safety course, a medical, and you can be on a boat this season.

TYPICAL PAY

\$58,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$37k to \$89k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Tugs, ferries, Great Lakes
freighters, fishing boats, barges, w...**

How you get there

- 1 Be 16 to 18 and reasonably fit** Now
Minimum ages vary by vessel type and employer, and the work is physical.
- 2 Transport Canada marine medical** One appointment
An approved doctor confirms you are fit for sea service. You cannot work commercially without it.
- 3 Safety training** A few days to two weeks
Marine Emergency Duties training plus marine basic first aid. Which level you need depends on the size of vessel and how far offshore it goes.
- 4 Get hired** Weeks to months
Apply to tug, ferry, barge and tour operators, or sign on at a union hiring hall. Willingness to start as a casual is the fastest way in.
- 5 Build sea time** Ongoing
Logged sea service counts toward a bridge watch rating and, later, officer certificates.

Pros and cons

- + You can be working within a month and a few hundred dollars
- + Meals and a bunk come with the job
- + Long blocks of time off between rotations
- Cold, wet, heavy work with real injury risk
- Six on, six off wrecks your sleep
- A lot of the work is seasonal or casual at first

Optional boosts

Bridge watch rating. Small Vessel Operator Proficiency. Advanced firefighting and survival craft. Crane, forklift or tanker familiarization.

Good to know

Some vessels hire only through a union hall

Seaspan, one of the largest marine operators on the west coast, states that its seagoing staff must be members in good standing of the relevant union, and directs deckhand applicants to the union rath...

Safety training is scaled to the voyage

Transport Canada sets different levels of Marine Emergency Duties training. A small commercial vessel working within 25 nautical miles of shore has a lighter requirement than a ship crossing an ocean.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Deckhand, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Transport Canada: Seafarer certification
Transport Canada: Marine transportation
Seaspan: Marine careers and union hiring halls

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/deckhand>



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