

Drone Pilot

Cheap and fast to get certified. Turning it into a full-time income is the hard part.

TYPICAL PAY**\$60,000**

a year, full time

PAY RANGE**\$38k to \$95k**

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**Construction sites, farms, film sets,
power lines, survey work**

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
Not legally required for the certificate, but employers and clients ask for it.
- 2 Register the drone and pass the basic exam** Days
Transport Canada runs an online small basic operations exam. Pass it and you hold a basic operations certificate.
- 3 Get the advanced certificate** Weeks
Pass the advanced operations exam, complete an in-person flight review with an approved reviewer, then apply. Advanced lets you fly near people and in controlled airspace.
- 4 Learn the software** Months
Photogrammetry, mapping and video editing. This is where the money actually is.
- 5 Build a portfolio and find contracts** 6 to 18 months
Construction progress photos, roof and tower inspections, crop mapping, real estate and film work.

Pros and cons

- + Cheap and fast to get certified
- + Works as a side business while you study or work
- + Combines well with several other careers
- Few full-time jobs are advertised as drone pilot
- You usually have to supply your own equipment
- Weather cancels work with no notice

Optional boosts

Survey and mapping. Infrastructure inspection. Agriculture. Film and broadcast.

Good to know

Your certificate does not expire

Transport Canada says drone pilot certificates for basic and advanced operations do not expire. You do have to keep your knowledge current, but there is no renewal exam every few years.

The exam is online, the flight review is not

Both the basic and advanced exams are written online. The advanced certificate also needs an in-person flight review with an approved reviewer before Transport Canada will issue it.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Drone Pilot in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Transport Canada: Drone pilot licensing

Transport Canada: Getting your drone pilot certificate

Transport Canada: Learn the rules before you fly your drone

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/drone-pilot>



Scan for the full clicker