

Forensic Scientist

Analyse evidence in a government lab and defend the result in court. Very few jobs, and they go to chemists and biologists.

TYPICAL PAY**\$80,000**

a year, full time

PAY RANGE**\$50k to \$137k**

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY**4 to 6 years**

after high school

DEMAND**Limited**

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED**No**

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK**Government forensic laboratories, police services, coroner and medi...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Chemistry, biology and math. A clean record matters, because every job needs a security clearance.
- 2 Science degree** 4 years
Chemistry, biochemistry or biology, or a dedicated forensic science degree that still has a strong chemistry or biology core. Ontario Tech University runs one of the better known forensic science programs, and a few other Ontario and Quebec schools have them too.
- 3 Master's degree** 2 years
Not always required, but competitive hires often have one. It also gives you the instrument experience labs want.
- 4 Apply and wait** 1 to 3 years
Openings are posted rarely and draw hundreds of applicants. Many people work in an environmental or testing lab while applying.
- 5 In-house training and court qualification** 1 to 2 years
Once hired you train on the lab's own methods, pass competency tests, then do mock court before you testify for real.

Pros and cons

- + Your work decides real cases and can clear the innocent
- + Government employment with a pension and stable hours
- + Deep expertise in one discipline over a career
- Very few positions in Canada, and hiring is slow and sporadic
- Casework backlogs create constant pressure
- Cross-examination is designed to make you look wrong

Good to know

Ontario's lab is one of the biggest in North America

The Centre of Forensic Sciences runs labs in Toronto and Sault Ste. Marie and has been accredited since 1993, covering biology, chemistry, documents, firearms and toxicology.

The crime show effect is real enough to have a name

Lawyers and researchers describe juries expecting flawless forensic evidence in every case because of television. Real labs report probabilities and limits, not certainties.

Optional boosts

Biology and genetic evidence. Toxicology. Drug chemistry. Firearms and trace evidence.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Forensic Chemist in Canada, wages (updated November 2025)

Ontario Centre of Forensic Sciences

Canadian Society of Forensic Science

Ontario Tech University: undergraduate programs, including Forensic Science

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/forensic-scientist>



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