

Hairstylist

Cut, colour and style hair. Licensed in about 2 years, then it takes years more to build a clientele.

TYPICAL PAY

\$40,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$30k to \$70k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Salons, barbershops, spas, your own chair

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12. Many high schools offer cosmetology courses with a working salon. OYAP (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program) can count your hours.
- 2 Choose a route** Months
Private academy (6 to 12 months, \$10,000 to \$20,000) then work as an apprentice, or find a salon that sponsors you from day one and take school blocks at a college. Both lead to the same exam.
- 3 Register the apprenticeship** Days
With Skilled Trades Ontario (trade code 332A), Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training, or your province's authority.
- 4 Work and study** 2 years
Ontario requires about 3,500 hours: 3,020 on the salon floor plus 480 in school. Roughly 2 years.
- 5 Certificate of Qualification** After your hours
Pass the provincial exam. Hairstylist is a Red Seal trade nationally, though Ontario issues a provincial certificate rather than the Red Seal endorsement.

Pros and cons

- + Creative, social, hands-on
- + Licensed in about 2 years
- + Flexible hours once you have clients
- Low pay for the first few years
- Feet, back, hands and wrists take a beating
- Evenings and Saturdays

Good to know

Your clientele is the asset

Stylists who move salons take their clients with them. Building a full book takes 2 to 5 years, and once you have it, you can rent a chair almost anywhere.

Ontario licences hair like electricians

Hairstylist is one of Ontario's compulsory trades, on the same list as electrician and plumber. Cutting hair for money there without registration or a licence is illegal.

Optional boosts

Colour specialist. Barbering. Extensions and keratin treatments. Editorial, film and TV work.

Where these numbers come from

Skilled Trades Ontario: Hairstylist

Red Seal: Hairstylist

Job Bank: Hairstylists and barbers, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training

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/hairstylist>



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