

Industrial Designer

Design the objects people buy: products, furniture, vehicles. A 4-year degree and a portfolio. A small market in Canada, a big one in the US.

TYPICAL PAY

\$75,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$48k to \$103k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Product companies, design consultancies, furniture makers, v...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Visual arts, physics and technological design. Start sketching products and taking things apart.
- 2 Degree** 4 years
 A 4-year industrial design degree. Carleton in Ottawa, OCAD University (formerly the Ontario College of Art and Design) and Humber in Toronto, Emily Carr University in Vancouver, Université de Montréal, Alberta. Most ask for a portfolio.
- 3 Internships** During school
 One or two placements at a studio or product company during school. This is where your portfolio gets real projects.
- 4 Portfolio and first job** After graduation
 A website of 6 to 10 projects that show process, not just pretty renders. Expect contracts and freelance early on.

Pros and cons

- + You make real objects people hold and use
- + Huge range: toys, medical devices, furniture, snowmobiles
- + No licence or exam
- Few jobs in Canada; you may have to move
- The portfolio arms race never ends
- Cost and manufacturing beat good ideas most of the time

Good to know

The snowmobile is from Quebec

Joseph-Armand Bombardier built the first Ski-Doo in Valcourt, Quebec, in 1959. BRP (Bombardier Recreational Products) still designs snowmobiles there.

The Muskoka chair is American

The slanted wooden chair on every Ontario dock was designed in 1903 by Thomas Lee in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Canadians just renamed it.

Optional boosts

CAD (computer-aided design) mastery. Interaction design. Manufacturing knowledge. Rendering and visualization.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Industrial designers, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 Royal Architectural Institute of Canada

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/industrial-designer>



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