

# Interior Designer

Plan the inside of buildings so they work, pass code and look right. A 4-year degree, two years of practice and a national exam. Not decorating.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$62,000**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$45k to \$92k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**6 to 8 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Moderate**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**No**

anyone can do it

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Design firms, architecture firms,  
furniture dealers, corporate real e...**

## How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12  
 Visual arts, technological design and math. Build a portfolio; most programs ask for one.
- 2 Degree** 4 years  
 A 4-year interior design degree accredited by CIDA (Council for Interior Design Accreditation). TMU (Toronto Metropolitan University, formerly Ryerson), Humber, Sheridan, Algonquin, Kwantlen Polytechnic University in BC, Mount Royal University in Calgary, Manitoba.
- 3 Supervised work** 2 years  
 About 2 years of full-time work under a registered interior designer or architect, logged in set categories. This is a normal paid job.
- 4 NCIDQ (the national interior design exam)** 1 to 2 years  
 Three sections: fundamentals, professional practice and an implementation section (called the practicum until 2026) where you solve code and space-planning problems on screen.
- 5 Registration** After the exam  
 Join ARIDO (Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario) or your provincial association. Now you can use the registered title.

## Pros and cons

- + Spaces you can walk into and photograph
- + Commercial work is steady and technical
- + Shorter path than architecture
- Pay is low for a 4-year degree
- People will call you a decorator for your whole career
- Clients change their minds and you eat the hours

## Good to know

### One exam for two countries

The NCIDQ (the national interior design exam) is written by an American council and accepted across Canada and the US. Pass it once and you can register in most provinces and states.

### The exam has a drawing part

The implementation section (the old practicum) hands you floor plans and asks you to solve code, accessibility and space-planning problems on a computer, against the clock.

## Optional boosts

Revit and BIM (building information modelling). Healthcare design. LEED (a green building rating system) or WELL (a building wellness standard). Lighting design.

### Where these numbers come from

Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario

Job Bank: Interior designers and interior decorators, wages (updated Nov 2025)

CIDQ: NCIDQ exam eligibility and fees

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/interior-designer>



Scan for the full clicker