

Lawyer

Seven years of school, a licensing year, then anything from legal aid to Bay Street.

TYPICAL PAY

\$115,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$60k to \$300k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Law firms, government, corporations, courts

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Strong marks in English, history and any writing-heavy course. No specific requirements.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
 Any subject. Political science, philosophy, history, business and English are common. GPA (grade point average) matters most. Write the LSAT (law school admission test).
- 3 Law school (JD, juris doctor)** 3 years
 Three years at one of about two dozen Canadian law schools. Admission is competitive: a 3.7+ GPA and 160+ LSAT are typical at most schools.
- 4 Licensing** About 1 year
 In Ontario: barrister and solicitor exams plus 8 to 10 months of articling (or the Law Practice Program). Other provinces have similar bar admission programs.
- 5 Called to the bar** Ceremony
 You are sworn in and can practise law in that province.

Pros and cons

- + High earning ceiling
- + Intellectually demanding and varied
- + Many paths: firms, government, business, non-profits, politics
- Long, expensive education and a competitive funnel
- Big-firm hours are punishing, 60+ a week is normal
- Many lawyers earn far less than people assume

Good to know

Canada has two legal systems

Quebec uses civil law, inherited from France. Every other province uses common law, inherited from England. McGill teaches both at once.

Articling is uniquely Canadian

The US has no equivalent. Canadian law grads must spend roughly a year working under a licensed lawyer before they can practise on their own.

Optional boosts

Clerking for a judge. A specialty in demand. An LLM (master of laws). Business or accounting background.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Lawyers and Quebec notaries, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Law Society of Ontario: Becoming a lawyer

Federation of Law Societies of Canada

Law Society of Ontario: Licensing fees (2026)

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/lawyer>



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