

Locomotive Engineer

Run freight and passenger trains across the country. The railway hires you first, then trains you.

TYPICAL PAY

\$104,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$69k to \$143k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

3 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Locomotive cabs, rail yards, terminals, away-from-home rest...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12 is the normal requirement. You also need to be 18 or older and pass a medical, hearing, vision and drug screen.
- 2 Get hired as a conductor** Months of waiting is normal
Almost everyone enters the running trades as a conductor first. Postings go up at the big freight railways, short lines and passenger operators.
- 3 Conductor training and qualifying** About 5 to 8 months
Paid classroom and on-the-job training, then a certification exam. The federal rules set a pass mark of 80% in the required subjects.
- 4 Work the road as a conductor** 2 to 5 years, sometimes longer
You build seniority. Promotion to engineer depends on how busy your terminal is, which can be a couple of years or many.
- 5 Locomotive engineer training** About 6 months
Classroom, simulator and supervised time at the controls, signed off by an examiner. Then you are certified to run the train.

Pros and cons

- + Six-figure potential with no tuition and no debt
- + A real pension and strong union protection
- + You are trusted with several thousand tonnes of moving equipment
- Life on a call board wrecks sleep and plans
- Long stretches away from home, in bunkhouses
- Junior crews get the worst calls for years

Optional boosts

Qualifying on more territory. Dangerous goods training. Locomotive engineer instructor or examiner. Moving into management or rules.

Good to know

Canada runs on about 43,000 km of track

The Railway Association of Canada puts the national network at close to 43,000 kilometres. A single crew can cover several hundred kilometres of it in one shift.

You get re-tested for your whole career

Federal regulation makes engineers and conductors sit a re-examination at least every three years, at a pass mark of 80%. Twenty years in the seat does not exempt you.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Locomotive Engineer, Railway, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Railway Employee Qualification Standards Regulations
Transport Canada: Rail transportation
Railway Association 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/locomotive-engineer>



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