

Machinist

Cut metal into exact parts on lathes, mills and computer-controlled machines. Indoors, precise, and steady.

TYPICAL PAY

\$60,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$80k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Machine shops, aerospace plants, factories, tool rooms

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Grade 12 math is the one that matters. Shop and drafting classes help. OYAP (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program) lets Ontario students start hours in high school.
- 2 Find an employer to sponsor you** Weeks to months
 Machine shops, aerospace and auto parts plants, mould shops. A 1-year college machining program makes you a much easier hire.
- 3 Register as an apprentice** Days
 Ontario calls the trade General Machinist and registers it with Skilled Trades Ontario. Alberta and BC register through their own trades authorities.
- 4 Work and study** 4 years
 8,000 hours in Ontario: 7,280 on the job plus 720 in school, taken as three college blocks of about 8 weeks. You go from manual lathes and mills to CNC (computer numerical control) setup and programming.
- 5 Certificate of Qualification and Red Seal** After your hours
 Pass the provincial exam. The Red Seal endorsement lets you work in any province.

Pros and cons

- + Indoors, year-round, regular day shifts
- + Real craft: you make the parts everything else is built from
- + Programming skills move you into better pay
- Pay tops out lower than construction and industrial trades
- Standing on concrete all day, coolant and metal dust
- Repetitive when running long batches

Good to know

A hundredth of a millimetre

Machinists routinely work to 0.01 mm, several times thinner than a human hair. Aerospace and medical parts go tighter still.

The machine runs while you sleep

Many CNC (computer numerical control) shops run 'lights out': the machinist sets up and programs during the day and the machine cuts parts all night with nobody there.

Optional boosts

CNC (computer numerical control) programming. CAD and CAM (computer-aided design and manufacturing) software. 5-axis and multi-tasking machines. Tool and die maker as a second ticket.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Machinists, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Red Seal Program: Machinist

Skilled Trades Ontario: General Machinist (429A)

Government of Canada: Canada Apprentice Loan

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/machinist>



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