

Mobile App Developer

Build the apps on people's phones. iPhone or Android, one skill set, strong pay.

TYPICAL PAY

\$100,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$62k to \$160k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Software companies, banks, agencies, remote, startups

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Every math you can take, plus computer science if offered. Publish one small app before you graduate. Nothing impresses more.
- 2 Computer science degree or college diploma** 2 to 5 years
 A 4-year degree (Waterloo, Toronto, UBC (University of British Columbia), McGill and many others) or a 2 to 3 year diploma. BCIT (British Columbia Institute of Technology) offers a Web and Mobile Development option in its diploma. Pick a program with co-op.
- 3 Pick a platform** During school
 iOS (Swift) or Android (Kotlin), or a cross-platform tool like React Native or Flutter that builds both. Most developers know one deeply and one loosely.
- 4 Ship apps** During school
 Real apps on the App Store or Google Play, with real users and real reviews, are your portfolio.
- 5 First job** Final year
 New grad hiring happens in the fall for the next summer. Co-op employers often hire their students back.

Pros and cons

- + High pay with no licence and no grad school
- + Your work is on real people's phones
- + Remote and hybrid work are normal
- Apple and Google control the rules and can reject or remove your app
- Annual operating system updates mean constant maintenance
- Junior hiring got harder after 2022

Optional boosts

Both platforms. Back-end and cloud. Security. Performance work.

Good to know

Publishing an app costs less than a video game

A Google Play developer account is a one-time \$25 US. Apple's Developer Program is \$99 US a year. A teenager with a laptop can have an app in front of the world for less than a hundred dollars.

The smartphone was a Canadian story first

Before the iPhone, Waterloo's BlackBerry made the phone everyone in business carried. The company lost the consumer war, but the engineers it trained seeded software companies across the Waterloo...

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Mobile applications developer, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Apple Developer Program: membership fee

Google Play Console: developer registration fee

BCIT: Computer Systems Technology diploma (Web and Mobile option)

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/mobile-app-developer>



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