

Musician

Play or sing for money. Almost everyone does it by stacking gigs, teaching and session work together.

TYPICAL PAY

\$33,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$33k to \$75k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Venues and festivals, recording studios, orchestras and pit bands,...

How you get there

- 1 Start early** Age 6 to 14
Serious players usually begin lessons well before high school. Classical and jazz paths in particular are hard to start late.
- 2 High school** Grades 9 to 12
Music every year, school ensembles, youth orchestra or a band. Play in front of people constantly.
- 3 Training** 0 to 4 years
A university music degree, a college performance diploma, private study with a strong teacher, or the band-and-basement route. All of these produce working musicians.
- 4 Build a working life** 2 to 5 years
Take every gig, teach, record with other people, get known as reliable. Reliability gets more calls than brilliance.
- 5 Specialize or diversify** Ongoing
Audition for orchestras, chase session work, build your own act, or combine teaching with performing. Most people do the last one.

Pros and cons

- + You get paid to do the thing you would do anyway
- + No licence, no exam and no required degree
- + Many ways to build income: performing, teaching, recording, writing
- Low and unpredictable income, with no benefits or pension unless you build them yourself
- Nights, weekends and driving, permanently
- Very few salaried positions, and they are won by audition

Optional boosts

Teaching. Multiple instruments. Reading music well. Producing and recording.

Good to know

One Canadian organization represents 185,000 music crea...

SOCAN (Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada) serves more than 185,000 songwriters, composers and publishers, licensing their music and paying out royalties when it is p...

Orchestra jobs are won behind a screen

Professional orchestra auditions are usually blind: you play behind a curtain so the panel cannot see who you are. The practice spread after it was shown to change who got hired.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Musician in Canada, wages (updated November 2025)
SOCAN, Canadian music rights organization
Canadian Federation of Musicians
FACTOR, the Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent on Recordings

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/musician>



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