

Nail Technician

Manicures, gel, acrylics and nail art. A short course, cheap to start, and your regulars are your paycheque.

TYPICAL PAY

\$42,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$31k to \$62k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Nail salons, spas, home studios,
mobile service**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
Grade 12 is expected by most schools. Some high schools offer cosmetology.
- 2 Nail course** Weeks to months
A nail-only course at a private beauty school, for example the part-time Nail Studio program at Blanche Macdonald in Vancouver, or nails as part of a full esthetics program.
- 3 Licence, where required** Weeks
Nova Scotia licenses nail technicians through its Cosmetology Association. Manitoba has a compulsory nail technician apprenticeship stream. Saskatchewan has a voluntary Esthetician-Nail Technician trade. Ontario, BC, Alberta and Quebec have no licence.
- 4 First salon job** First year
Speed comes with volume. A busy salon teaches you to do a clean set in under an hour.
- 5 Build regulars** 1 to 3 years
Fills every 2 to 3 weeks mean a loyal client comes back all year. A full book takes 1 to 3 years.

Pros and cons

- + Cheapest and fastest beauty trade to start
- + Creative, and clients love the result
- + Easy to run from home or part time
- Low pay unless you build a strong book
- Neck, back and wrist strain from hunching
- Dust and chemical fumes, masks needed

Optional boosts

Hand-painted nail art and 3D work. Structured gel and builder gel. E-file skill. Pedicures and foot care.

Good to know

Counted with estheticians

Statistics Canada groups nail technicians with estheticians, electrologists and tattoo artists in one occupation code, about 71,300 workers. Job Bank's wage page for nail care technicians uses that po...

Ventilation is a safety issue

Acrylic monomer and filing dust are the main health hazards in nail salons. Good salons use extraction fans at the table and masks. Ask about ventilation before you take a job.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Nail care technician, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Estheticians and nail technicians, requirements by province

Saskatchewan Apprenticeship: designated trades

Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia

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/nail-technician>



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