

Oceanographer

Measure the ocean: its currents, chemistry, life and ice. Often from a ship, in bad weather.

TYPICAL PAY

\$104,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$64k to \$208k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Research ships, federal ocean
institutes, universities, coastal co...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Physics, chemistry, biology and calculus. Oceanography uses all four, which is unusual.
- 2 Bachelor of Science (BSc)** 4 years
Ocean sciences if your university offers it, otherwise physics, chemistry, biology or earth science with ocean courses.
- 3 Sea-going experience** Summers
Summer work on a survey vessel, at a marine station or in a lab. Employers want to know you can function on a ship.
- 4 Master's degree** 2 years
This is the normal entry point for real oceanography work. You pick one of the four branches here.
- 5 Doctorate, if you want to run research** 4 to 5 years
Needed for professor and lead scientist roles, not for technical and monitoring jobs.

Pros and cons

- + Real fieldwork in the Arctic and on both coasts
- + Work that feeds directly into climate and fisheries decisions
- + Funded graduate school
- Weeks away at sea, in rough weather, with no way off
- Early career is often term contracts, not permanent jobs
- Most jobs are in a handful of coastal cities

Good to know

Canada touches three oceans

The Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic all border Canada, giving it the longest coastline of any country in the world at about 243,000 kilometres. That is why federal ocean science is split across institutes on both c...

There are observatories on the sea floor

Ocean Networks Canada, run by the University of Victoria, operates cabled observatories off British Columbia that stream live data from instruments sitting on the bottom of the ocean. Anyone can watch th...

Optional boosts

Programming and data analysis. Instrument work. Small boat and dive tickets. Acoustics.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Oceanographer in Canada, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Dalhousie University: Department of Oceanography
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society

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/oceanographer>



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