

Orthodontist

A dentist who went back to school to straighten teeth. One of the best-paid jobs in Canada, and one of the longest roads.

TYPICAL PAY

\$350,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$250k to \$500k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

9 to 11 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Private orthodontic clinics, dental schools, hospitals

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, chemistry, physics, math and English with top marks.
- 2 University, then the DAT (dental aptitude test)** 2 to 4 years
2 to 4 years of science courses, then the dental admission test.
- 3 Dental school** 4 years
4 years for a DDS (doctor of dental surgery) or DMD (doctor of dental medicine). You graduate as a general dentist.
- 4 Orthodontic residency** 2 to 3 years, plus any practice years
2 to 3 years at a dental school, usually with a master's degree attached. Only a handful of seats per program. Most programs prefer applicants with a year or two of dental practice first.
- 5 Specialty exam and licence** A few months
Pass the NDSE (National Dental Specialty Examination), then register as a specialist with your provincial dental college.

Pros and cons

- + Among the highest pay of any job in Canada
- + Daytime hours, no nights or on-call
- + Patients are mostly healthy kids and teens
- 10 to 11 years of school, and residency charges tuition
- Residency seats are extremely scarce
- Repetitive: the same adjustments hundreds of times a week

Good to know

Braces are a two-year purchase

A full course of braces or aligners in Canada costs several thousand dollars and usually takes around 2 years. Provincial health plans do not cover it, and most dental insurance covers only part.

More adults than ever

A large and growing share of orthodontic patients are adults. Clear aligners made treatment invisible enough that grown-ups sign up.

Optional boosts

Owning more than one clinic. Clear aligners. Surgical cases. Teaching and research.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Orthodontists, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Canadian Association of Orthodontists
Royal College of Dentists of Canada
National Dental Specialty Examination: fees

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/orthodontist>



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