

Physicist

Work out how matter and energy behave, then build instruments to prove it. The longest science training, and the widest exits.

TYPICAL PAY

\$117,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$73k to \$200k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

8 to 11 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Universities, national labs, defence and space contractors, technolog...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Physics, calculus and advanced functions, plus chemistry. Math matters more than physics class does.
- 2 Bachelor of Science in physics** 4 years
Four years of mechanics, electromagnetism, quantum mechanics, thermodynamics and a lot of math. Research placements in the summers are the single best thing you can do.
- 3 Master's degree** 2 years
Two funded years attached to a research group. Some Canadian programs let strong students go straight into a PhD.
- 4 PhD** 4 to 6 years
Four to six years building and defending original research. This is where you actually become a physicist.
- 5 Postdoctoral research** 2 to 6 years
One or two paid research contracts, often in another country, before a permanent position.

Pros and cons

- + You get paid, modestly, to work on questions nobody has answered
- + Skills transfer into very well paid technical industries
- + International by default, with collaborations everywhere
- Eight to eleven years before a permanent position
- Student income through most of your twenties
- Permanent research jobs are far fewer than the people trained for them

Optional boosts

Medical physics. Optics and photonics. Quantum information. Geophysics and space.

Good to know

A Nobel Prize came out of a Sudbury mine

Art McDonald shared the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physics for showing that neutrinos change type, using a detector built deep underground in a working nickel mine near Sudbury.

Canada runs an underground physics lab

The underground science facility near Sudbury (SNOLAB) sits far below the surface so the rock blocks cosmic rays. Researchers there hunt for dark matter and study rare nuclear events.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Physicist in Canada, wages (updated November 2025)
Canadian Association of Physicists
TRIUMF, Canada's particle accelerator centre
SNOLAB underground physics laboratory, Sudbury

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/physicist>



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