

Tool and Die Maker

Build the moulds and dies that stamp and shape every car part. The most precise trade in the shop.

TYPICAL PAY

\$65,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$45k to \$90k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Mould and die shops, auto parts plants, tool rooms

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
 Grade 12 math and any shop or drafting class. OYAP (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program) lets Ontario students start apprentice hours in Grade 11 or 12.
- 2 Find a sponsor** Weeks to months
 Mould shops, die shops and the tool rooms inside auto parts plants, mostly in southern Ontario. A 1-year college tool and die or machining program makes it much easier.
- 3 Register the apprenticeship** Days
 With Skilled Trades Ontario, or your provincial trades authority elsewhere.
- 4 Work and study** About 4 years
 8,000 hours in Ontario: 7,280 on the job plus 720 in school, taken as three college blocks of about 8 weeks. Machining first, then grinding, fitting, heat treating and building complete dies and moulds.
- 5 Certificate of Qualification and Red Seal** After your hours
 Pass the provincial exam and add the Red Seal endorsement. Eight provinces designate this trade for Red Seal, including Ontario, Quebec and BC; Alberta and Saskatchewan do not.

Pros and cons

- + The most respected skill on the shop floor, and rare
- + Steady indoor work with real problem solving, no two dies alike
- + Paid apprenticeship, no debt
- About 4 years to certificate, then years more before you are trusted to build a full die alone
- Tied to the auto industry, which lays people off when car sales fall
- Slow, exacting work that frustrates people who like fast results

Optional boosts

Mould making. CAD and CAM (computer-aided design and manufacturing). CNC (computer numerical control) and wire EDM (electrical discharge machining). Die tryout and troubleshooting.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Tool and die makers, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Red Seal Program: Tool and Die Maker

Skilled Trades Ontario: Tool and Die Maker (430A)

Government of Canada: Canada Apprentice Loan

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/tool-and-die-maker>

Good to know

The die costs more than a house

A set of dies to stamp a car door or hood can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, sometimes over a million. It then runs for years, so a mistake in the steel is a very expensive mistake.

Windsor is the mould capital

Windsor and Essex County have one of the densest clusters of mould and tool shops in North America, built around the Detroit auto industry across the river.



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