Dancer

Get paid to perform. A short career, uneven money, and training that starts long before high school ends.

TYPICAL PAY **$52,000** a year, full time	PAY RANGE **$31k to $109k** starting to experienced	TIME TO QUALIFY **up to 4 years** after high school
DEMAND **Good** job outlook	LICENCE NEEDED **No** anyone can do it	WHERE YOU WORK **Ballet and modern companies, musical theater, cruise ships, film...**

How you get there

1. **Serious training as a teenager** — Ages 8 to 18
   Most professional dancers are in daily technique class well before high school ends. For ballet especially, starting late is very hard to recover from.
2. **Summer intensives and auditions** — Each summer
   Four to six week programs run by companies and schools. They are effectively extended auditions and they are where people get noticed.
3. **Choose a route at 18** — 0 to 4 years
   Either join a company or a second company straight away, or take a college dance degree. Purchase College in New York, for example, runs a four year performance degree with ballet, composition and production tracks.
4. **Audition constantly** — Ongoing
   Open calls, video submissions, agency work. Rejection is routine and not personal, and dancers who last treat auditioning as part of the job.
5. **Plan the second career early** — From day one
   Most performing careers end in the thirties. Teaching, choreography, physical therapy, arts administration and company management are the usual next steps.

Pros and cons

+ You get paid to do the thing you would be doing anyway
+ No degree required and no licensing exam
+ A genuine profession you can enter at 18

– Very few jobs, and hundreds of dancers audition for each one
– Income is seasonal and often below the annual figures above
– Injury can end the career, and most performing careers end by the mid-thirties anyway

Good to know

The federal outlook is growing, from a tiny base
The occupation profile rates dancers as a bright outlook with rapid growth. That growth is a big percentage of a very small number. There are only a few thousand paid dancing jobs in the whole country at an...

The arts are a bigger industry than you think
The National Endowment for the Arts reports that arts and cultural industries contributed about $1.2 trillion to the economy in 2023, roughly 4.2% of national GDP (gross domestic product), with around...

Optional boosts

More than one style. Singing and acting. Pilates or dance teaching certification. Choreography and composition.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Dancers
American Guild of Musical Artists, the performers' union
Purchase College dance conservatory, State University of New York
National Endowment for the Arts

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: https://career.help/us/careers/dancer

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