

Tool and Die Maker

Build the precision tools that stamp, cut and mold every mass-produced part in the country.

TYPICAL PAY

\$64,050

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$45k to \$93k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Tool rooms, stamping plants, mold shops, auto and aerospace suppli...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or an equivalency certificate** Grade 12
 Take every math and shop class offered. Geometry and trigonometry are used daily, not theoretically.
- 2 Get into a shop** Weeks to months
 Apply to a registered apprenticeship at a manufacturer, or start as a machine operator and ask to move into the tool room.
- 3 Technical college, if you go that route** 2 years
 A two year associate degree in machine tool or precision machining technology. Programs cover manual milling and turning, measurement, CNC (computer numerical control) machining, CAD (computer aided design) and CAM (computer aided manufacturing) software, mold an...
- 4 Paid work plus classroom training** 4 to 5 years
 A registered apprenticeship in this trade normally runs about 8,000 hours of paid work, which is roughly four years, plus a few hundred hours of related instruction.
- 5 Journeyman toolmaker** After the hours
 You work unsupervised, quote jobs and fix dies that nobody else can. Stack credentials from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills as you go.

Pros and cons

- + Highest paid job in the machining family
- + Paid apprenticeship, no student debt
- + Indoors, climate controlled, no weather days
- Employment in the trade is projected to shrink
- Jobs cluster in the Midwest, so you may have to move
- Noisy, oily and hard on hearing without protection

Optional boosts

Mold making. EDM (electrical discharge machining). CNC (computer numerical control) programming. Metrology and quality.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Tool and Die Makers
 National Institute for Metalworking Skills, the credentialing body for the trade
 Dunwoody College of Technology: Machine Tool Technology
 Apprenticeship.gov, the federal Registered Apprenticeship site

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/tool-and-die-maker>

Good to know

You measure in ten thousandths of an inch

Working tolerance in a tool room is often 0.0001 of an inch, which is about a quarter of the thickness of a human hair. Steel grows enough when you warm it in your hand to matter, so precision shops are tem...

Almost every metal object you own was made by a die

Soda cans, car body panels, laptop hinges, coins, key blanks, the contacts in a phone charger. None of those are machined one at a time. They are stamped or molded by a tool that a tool and die make...



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