



# Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada



## MECHANICAL CONTRACTING CAREERS

### PLUMBER

Are you looking for on-the-job variety? Do you like working with your hands and machines? Are you disciplined and precise? Can you visualize detailed structures from drawings? Do you like dealing with people? Then Plumber could be the career for you!

#### Also known as

- Maintenance Plumber
- Plumber Apprentice
- Plumbing Mechanic

#### What the work is like

Plumbers install, repair and maintain pipes, fixtures and other plumbing equipment used for water distribution and waste water disposal in residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

They are employed by construction companies, plumbing contractors and maintenance departments, or they may also be self-employed.

Plumbers work mostly in the New Home Building and Renovation, and Institutional and Commercial construction sectors. To learn more about the construction sectors, check out [Inside the industry](#).

#### Your duties

Plumbers usually specialize in either residential or commercial and institutional work.

As a Plumber, your duties may include the following:

- installing, repairing and maintaining domestic, commercial or industrial plumbing systems
- marking positions for pipe connections and fixtures in walls and floors
- cutting openings in walls and floors to accommodate pipes and pipe fittings
- measuring, cutting, bending and installing pipes using hand and power tools
- joining pipes using clamps, screws, bolts or cement
- welding pipes
- testing pipes for leaks
- preparing cost estimates
- reading and interpreting blueprints

## **Work conditions**

The standard work week for plumbers is 40 hours (8 hours a day, 5 days a week). As with many careers in construction, there are peak periods that will require you to work overtime. The number of additional hours you work each week depends on the construction sector and region you work in, and will vary from one job to the next.

As a Plumber, you may work outdoors and indoors, alone or with a team of other construction professionals. The work can be physically demanding – you may have to stand or crouch for long periods of time, and you may have to lift heavy materials.

As with all careers in the construction industry, safety is the top priority. Plumbers are trained to work safely and take special precautions to protect themselves from injury.

## **Essential Skills**

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has identified nine Essential Skills that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. These skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills and apply to most construction careers. Best of all, you can learn and improve on these skills in school, on the job and during your everyday life.

The most important Essential Skills for plumbers are the following:

- Numeracy – working with numbers to perform calculations
- Significant Use of Memory – performing tasks that call upon greater memory use than most jobs
- Working with Others – interacting with co-workers to get the job done

[Click here](#) to see how these skills are applied on the job. You can also [click here](#) to learn more about Essential Skills.

## **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship is one way of starting out in the construction industry. It involves both classroom studies and on-the-job training under the supervision of a certified Plumber, called a journeyman.

As an apprentice, you earn while you learn and are paid by the hour while working on the job site. Wages start at about 50% of a journeyman's hourly rate and increase during your apprenticeship until you reach the full rate.

## **Entering an apprenticeship program**

Requirements for plumber apprenticeship programs vary across Canada. In most provinces and territories, you must be at least 16 years old and have a Grade 12 education or equivalent to enter the program. You must also have courses in math.

Some provinces and territories offer secondary school apprenticeship programs that allow high school students to work towards a career as a Plumber.

For more information, check out the [Apprenticeship](#) section.

## Program length

Apprenticeship training programs for plumbers vary across Canada, but generally involve four 12-month periods, including at least 6,000 hours of on-the-job training, four eight-week blocks of technical training and a final certificate exam.

Related work experience or completion of a plumber program at a college or technical institute can reduce the time required to complete your apprenticeship.

## Certification

Certification is required in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and Quebec. It is available but voluntary in Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Where certification is not available, it may be possible to study as an apprentice through your local labour organization. Check out [Related links](#) to find out who to contact. Even where certification is voluntary, it is still recommended. Certification tells employers and other workers that you are a skilled professional. It also helps you get jobs.

To be certified as a Plumber, you usually need to complete a four-year apprenticeship program. Once you successfully complete the required on-the-job training, technical training and exams, you are awarded a journeyperson certificate.

You may be eligible for certification in some provinces and territories if you have more than five years of construction experience and some high school, college or industry courses in plumbing.

As a certified Plumber, you may attempt the Interprovincial Exam to qualify for the Interprovincial Standards' Red Seal. With a Red Seal, you can work as a Plumber anywhere in Canada.

To keep your skills current, you have to keep up with new technological developments by reading and talking with other plumbers.

## Where to study in Canada

In addition to the Canadian schools listed below, many employer and labour organizations offer training. For more information, check out [Related links](#).

### Alberta

[Medicine Hat College](#)  
[Northern Alberta Institute of Technology](#)  
[Red Deer College](#)  
[Southern Alberta Institute of Technology](#)

### British Columbia

[British Columbia Institute of Technology](#)  
[Camosun College](#)  
[North Island College](#)  
[Pacific Vocational College](#)  
[Piping Industry Apprenticeship Board & UA Trade School](#)  
[Thompson Rivers University](#)

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### Manitoba

[Assiniboine Community College](#)  
[Red River College](#)

### Nunavut

[Nunavut Arctic College](#)

### Ontario

[Algonquin College](#)  
[Conestoga College](#)  
[Durham College](#)  
[Fanshawe College](#)  
[George Brown College](#)  
[Humber College](#)  
[La Cité collégiale](#)  
[Lambton College](#)  
[Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology](#)  
[Northern College](#)  
[Sault College](#)  
[St. Lawrence College](#)

### Prince Edward Island

[Holland College](#)

**New Brunswick**[New Brunswick Community College](#)**Newfoundland and Labrador**[College of the North Atlantic](#)**Northwest Territories**[Aurora College](#)**Nova Scotia**[Nova Scotia Community College](#)**Saskatchewan**[Carlton Trail Regional College](#)[Great Plains College](#)[Northlands College](#)[Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology](#)**Yukon**[Yukon College](#)**Specialty programs**

In addition to the schools listed above, Aboriginal Canadians, new Canadians and women can enrol in one of several specialty programs.

For Aboriginal Canadians, [Northern College](#) offers a Native Residential Construction Worker Apprenticeship Program and [Red River College](#) offers an introductory program called ACCESS.

For new Canadians with experience as plumbers, [NorQuest College](#) offers a program called Transitions to Technical and Trades Careers.

For women, [Lambton College](#), [Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology](#) and [Red River College](#) offer integrated programs. The [Piping Industry Apprenticeship Board & UA Trade School](#) offers a six-week introductory Piping Opportunities for Women (POW) course.

**Salary ranges**

Plumber hourly wages vary depending on the contract, the company, collective agreements, and local and national economic conditions. Typical hourly wage ranges for plumbers (based on national or regional averages) are as follows:

**Junior apprentices**

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$12-\$18
Atlantic Canada	\$10-\$12
Ontario and Quebec	\$14-\$17
Western Canada	\$14-\$24

Based on national averages, junior apprentices can earn annual salaries ranging from \$25,000 to \$37,000 per year, not including overtime.

## Journeypersons

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$18-\$25
Atlantic Canada	\$15-\$22
Ontario and Quebec	\$22-\$25
Western Canada	\$19-\$54

Based on national averages, journeypersons can earn annual salaries ranging from \$37,000 to \$52,000 per year, not including overtime.

## Highly experienced journeypersons

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$26-\$34
Atlantic Canada	\$25-\$32
Ontario and Quebec	\$32-\$35
Western Canada	\$26-\$59

Based on national averages, highly experienced journeypersons can earn annual salaries ranging from \$54,000 to \$71,000 per year, not including overtime.

Construction work can involve overtime, so your total annual salary will vary depending on the number of overtime hours you work.

In addition to the hourly rate, many construction workers receive statutory holiday and vacation pay. Depending on the contract, you may also receive benefits such as group insurance for health, dental, and vision care, as well as retirement packages and training benefits up to 30% of your hourly rate. If you are self-employed, it is up to you to arrange your own benefits.

## Building your career

With experience and additional training, you can move into more senior positions, including supervisory roles such as foreman or estimator. You can also transfer your skills to other construction trades, such as Steamfitter/Pipefitter or Gasfitter. Another option is to become self-employed and start your own contracting business.

As with most careers in the construction industry, your skills are portable. If you want to move, you can take your skills with you.

## Job prospects

Construction careers across Canada are booming! To learn about the forecast for plumbers, check out [Job prospects](#). There you'll find information on their expected demand by province for the next nine years.