

Carpenters & Cabinetmakers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



1. What Would I Do?.....	2
2. Am I Suited For This Job?	3
3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?	4
4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?.....	5
5. How Do I Become A Carpenter or Cabinetmaker?	8
6. How Do I Find A Job?	9
7. Applying for a Job.....	12
8. Where Can This Job Lead?.....	12
9. Where Can I Find More Information?	12

Carpenters [NOC 2021: 72310 / NOC 2016: 7271] and Cabinetmakers [NOC 2021: 72311 / NOC 2016: 7272]

Carpenters may also be called:

- apprentice carpenter
- carpenter-joiner
- finish carpenter
- journeyman/woman carpenter
- maintenance carpenter
- rough carpenter
- stair builder-carpenter

Cabinetmakers may also be called

- cabinetmaker apprentice
- custom wood furniture maker
- furniture cabinetmaker
- joiner

1. What Would I Do?

As a ***carpenter***, you construct, install, maintain and repair structures and components of structures made of wood, wood substitutes, lightweight steel and other materials.

As a ***cabinetmaker***, you use a variety of woods and laminates to construct and repair wooden cabinets, furniture, fixtures and related products.

As a **carpenter**, your duties can include:

- read blueprints, sketches and drawings to lay out the project
- measure and cut lengths of wood, wood substitutes, lightweight steel and other materials
- assemble the frames of buildings using nail guns
- build foundations, install floor beams, lay sub-flooring and erect walls and roof systems
- fit and install trim items, such as doors, stairs, moulding and hardware

As a **cabinetmaker** your duties can include:

- read drawings and specifications, and prepare patterns and layouts
- operate woodworking machines, such as power saws, jointers, mortisers and shapers, and use hand tools to cut, shape and form parts and components
- trim joints and fit parts together to form a complete unit using glue and clamps and reinforce joints using nails, screws or other fasteners
- sand wooden surfaces and apply veneer, stain or polish to finished products

More information:

- **WorkBC Career Profiles:**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- **Career Cruising** (profiles for 'carpenter' and 'cabinetmaker')
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

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2. Am I Suited For This Job?

Carpenters and cabinetmakers:

- *are able to work well with their hands*
- *solve math problems quickly and accurately*
- *must be physically fit*
- *must have good hand-eye coordination, and communication skills*

Cabinetmakers *also need a good eye for selecting and joining materials and be able to visualize a pleasing finished product*

Carpenters may work indoors or outdoors; the environment is often noisy or dirty. You must take appropriate safety precautions when lifting materials, working from heights and working with equipment and tools.

Cabinetmakers work indoors in factories or woodworking shops; these are usually dusty and noisy and expose workers to wood finishing products and glues that may contain dangerous chemicals and fumes.

Sources: Work BC Career Profiles & Career Cruising

3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

In British Columbia, the median annual salary for carpenters is \$57,354 and for cabinetmakers is \$45,883.

This amount will increase if you can find year-round, full-time work. Your wages are affected by location, employer, and the amount of work you can find each year, your level of skill and qualifications. Wages are higher in some areas of the country than in others.

In BC's regions, **carpenters** can expect to make:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	19.00	28.00	36.00
Cariboo Region	20.00	31.00	40.00
Kootenay Region	19.00	28.00	36.00
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	19.00	28.85	36.00
Nechako Region	20.00	29.00	43.00
North Coast Region	20.00	29.00	43.00
Northeast Region	22.00	30.00	41.00
Thompson–Okanagan Region	19.00	29.00	35.00
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	20.00	26.50	35.00

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Table from Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Cabinetmakers can expect to make:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	17.50	24.00	32.00
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	17.50	24.00	31.99
Thompson–Okanagan Region	19.00	24.00	31.00
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	17.00	24.00	32.00

Table from Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Wages and benefits for **unionized carpenters** are negotiated by union representatives. Benefits may include paid sick days, vacation time, and dental coverage. Full-time **cabinetmakers** usually receive benefits such as paid sick days, vacation time, and dental coverage. Self-employed cabinetmakers must provide their own benefits.

Sources: WorkBC Career Profiles & Career Crusing

4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

BuildForce Canada (the Canadian Construction Sector Council) predicts the construction sector will require 27,630 workers in British Columbia in the next 5 years. Many of these jobs are due to retirements.

JobBank Canada forecasts that the employment outlook will be fair for **Carpenters** and limited for **Cabinetmakers** in British Columbia for the 2021-2023 period.

Employment Outlook for Carpenters and Cabinetmakers

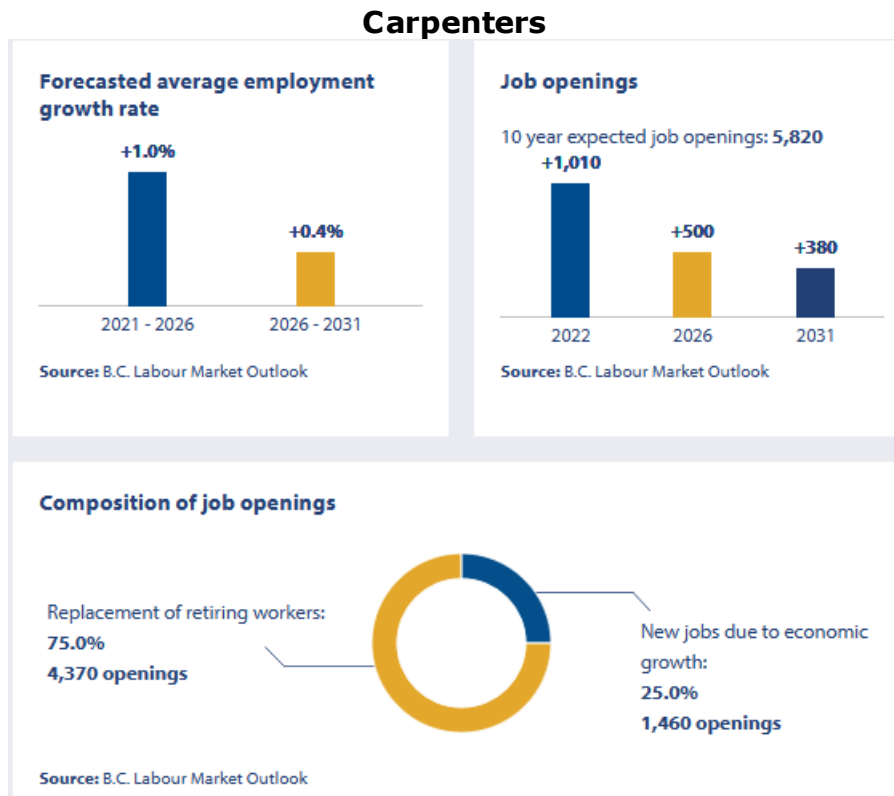


Chart from WorkBC

Cabinetmakers

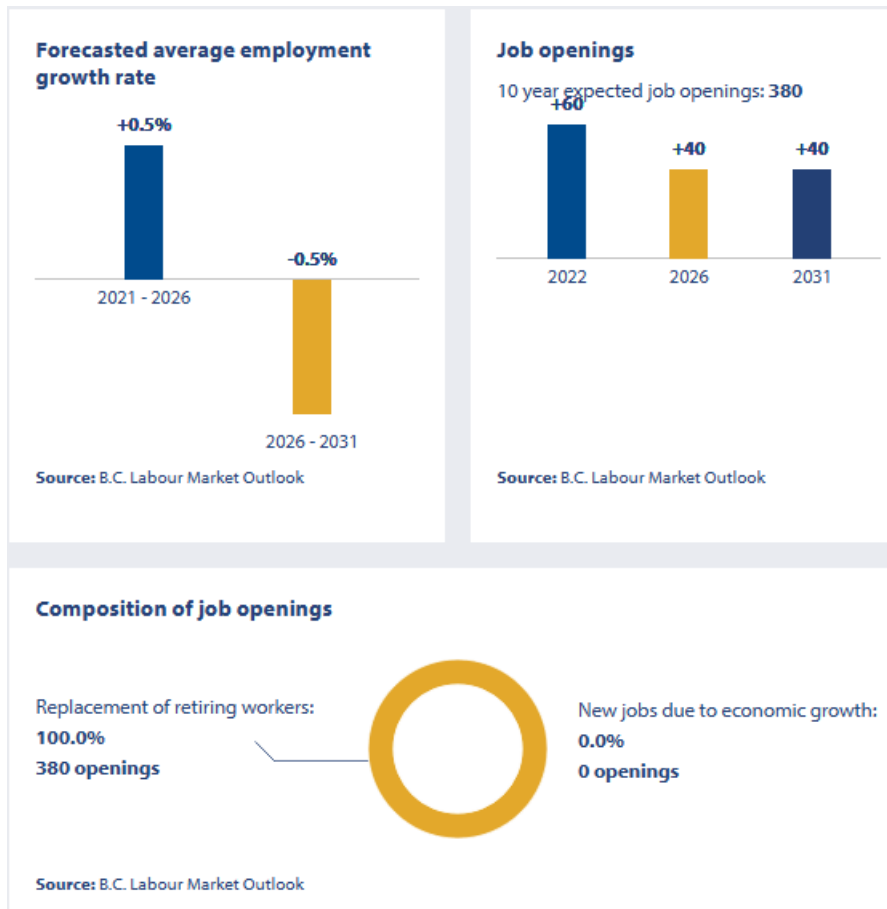


Chart from WorkBC

Sources:

- WorkBC Career Profiles
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- BuildForce Canada
<https://www.buildforce.ca/en/lmi>
- Job Bank Canada
<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-job-outlooks>

5. How Do I Become A Carpenter or Cabinetmaker?

In British Columbia, trade certification for carpenters and cabinetmakers is available, but not mandatory.

Completion of secondary school is usually required and you can find employment as a carpenter or cabinetmaker without formal training. However, most employers prefer to hire applicants who have completed a four year apprenticeship program and gained certification through BC's Industry Training Authority (<https://www.itabc.ca>).

Apprenticeship involves both classroom studies and on-the-job training under the supervision of a certified tradesperson, called a journey person.

To obtain a Certificate of Qualification as a carpenter or cabinetmaker, you also write the Interprovincial Exam to qualify for the Interprovincial Standards' Red Seal. With a Red Seal, you can work in this trade anywhere in Canada.

If you have significant work experience in the trade but have never been certified in Canada, you may apply to **challenge** the certification. Being approved to challenge means that if you meet the criteria for your trade, you will not be required to go through the full program. Instead, you are allowed to become certified by writing and passing the final exam(s).

For more information about apprenticeship programs and certification see:

- **Industry Training Authority BC**
 - **Carpenters**
<https://www.itabc.ca/program/carpenter>
 - **Cabinet Makers**
<https://www.itabc.ca/program/cabinetmaker-joiner>
 - **Red Seal Program**
<https://www.red-seal.ca/>

6. How Do I Find A Job?

Where would I work?

Carpenters work in:

- *construction companies*
- *carpentry contractors*
- *maintenance departments of factories, plants*

Cabinetmakers work in:

- *furniture manufacturing or repair companies*
- *construction companies*
- *cabinetmaking contractors*

Finding Advertised Jobs

Jobs are advertised in a variety of sources including newspapers, magazines and online job sites.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free.

Online Job Postings

- **Construction Job Centre**
<https://www.constructionjobcentre.ca/>
- **BC Regional Council of Carpenters**
<https://www.bcrcc.ca/member-info/job-board/>
- **Indeed.com**
https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
- **BC JobConnect**
<https://www.bcjobconnect.ca> **must have permanent resident number**

Finding “Hidden Jobs”

Many job vacancies are not advertised. The resources below help you with finding jobs in this “hidden” job market.

Using Directories to Create a List of Potential Employers

You can use company directories to produce lists of employers who employ carpenters and cabinetmakers in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they’re hiring.

- **British Columbia Construction Association Directories**
<https://bccasn.com/about-bcca/regional-associations/>
- **BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association Members List**
<https://www.roadbuilders.bc.ca/members/>
- **Homebuilders Association Vancouver Member Directory**
<https://members.havan.ca/directory>
- **Reference Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on “Start Search” beside Canadian Businesses, then select the “Advanced Search” button. Select both “Keyword/SIC/NAICS” under Business Type and “City” under Geography. In the top search box enter “carpenters” OR “cabinets” and click LOOKUP. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the “View Results” button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

Networking, Volunteering and Temporary Agencies

Many positions are filled by people who have been recommended by someone they know. Networking, working as a volunteer or registering with a temporary employment agency are good ways of helping you find jobs and meet people in your industry.

Networking and the Hidden Job Market:

When looking for work, be sure to talk to friends, relatives and neighbours. They may know someone who is hiring! Working as a volunteer, attending events, and joining clubs and associations are good ways to gain "Canadian experience." They are also good ways to meet people to learn about the local job market.

Volunteer opportunities

- **Habitat for Humanity**

Volunteer at Habitat ReStores or Habitat Construction Sites

<https://www.habitatgv.ca/applytovolunteer/>

- **Volunteer BC**

<https://volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

Temporary Agencies

- **Embers Staffing Solutions – NonProfit - Construction Staffing**

Eastside Movement for Business & Economic Renewal Society,

<https://emberscanada.org/>

For additional tips see:

- **Networking for Employment**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

7. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your experience.

Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

For more information see:

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>

8. Where Can This Job Lead?

Carpenters can move into supervisory positions, such as foreman or construction superintendent. You may also become self-employed and work as contractors or subcontractors.

Cabinetmakers can advance to supervisory positions or start your own business.

9. Where Can I Find More Information?

- **British Columbia Regional Council of Carpenters**

<https://www.bcrc.ca/>

- **STEP BC – Skilled Trades Employment Program**

<https://www.stepbc.ca/>

Free employment program that helps newcomers get jobs in the construction industry

- **FAST BC – Facilitating Access to Skilled Talent – Skilled Trades**

<https://fastbc.org/skilled-trades>

Free online employment preparation program that helps newcomers get a head start in their Canadian careers

- **Careers in Construction**
<https://www.careersinconstruction.ca/en>
- **BC Construction Association Integrating Newcomers Program**
<https://bccassn.com/skilled-workforce/bcca-integrating-newcomers/>
- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.