

# Opticians & Optometrist Assistants

An employment guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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Financé par :



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## Opticians NOC 3231 & Optometrist Assistants NOC 3414

***Opticians NOC 3231 may also be called:***

- *Contact lens fitter*
- *Eyeglasses/frame fitter*

***Optometrist Assistants NOC 3414 may also be called:***

- *Optical laboratory technician*

## 1. What Would I Do?

### ***Opticians***

Fit clients with prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses, help clients select eyeglass frames, arrange for the production of eyeglasses or contact lenses and mount lenses in eyeglass frames. Duties may include:

- do automated refractions (sight tests)
- get specifications for eyeglasses or contact lenses from a prescription prepared by an ophthalmologist or optometrist or by analyzing clients' eyeglasses or contact lenses and measuring clients' eye curvature, pupillary distance and bridge width, using optical measuring devices
- help clients to select eyeglasses by advising on lens materials, frames, tints and anti-reflection coating
- advise on use and care of contact lenses

- arrange for grinding and polishing of lenses or grind and polish lenses
- cut and edge lenses and fit lenses into frames
- adjust finished eyeglasses to fit clients

**More information:**

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Opticians**

<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3231>

**Optometrist Assistants**

Provide services and assistance to optometrists, opticians or other health care professionals. Duties may include:

- patient reception, scheduling appointments and referrals
- conducting preliminary vision tests prior to the eye health examination
- make minor repairs for customers such as replacing frame screws or straightening frames
- operate laboratory equipment to grind, cut, polish and edge lenses for eyeglasses according to prescriptions received and fit lenses into frames
- maintain and repair optical laboratory equipment or machinery

**More Information:**

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Assisting Occupations in Support of Health Services (including Optometrist Assistants)**

<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3414>

- **Canadian Association of Optometrists**

<https://opto.ca/what-is-an-optometric-assistant>

## 2. Am I Suited For This Job?

***Opticians and Optometrist Assistants should be:***

- *able to work well with your hands*

***They should have:***

- *good communication and interpersonal skills*

Opticians work indoors in well-lit, comfortable surroundings.

**Sources:**

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Opticians**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3231>
- **Career Cruising** database (Profile for 'Optician')  
<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

### 3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

**Opticians:** WorkBC reports that in British Columbia the *median* annual salary for Opticians is approximately \$41,941.

**JobBank Canada** lists hourly wages for BC's regions where opticians can expect to make:

#### Opticians NOC 3231 Hourly Wage

Location	Wage (\$/hr)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	10.85	20.11	30.85
Cariboo Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kootenay Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lower Mainland - Southwest Region	10.85	20.16	31.43
Nechako Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Coast Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Northeast Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thompson--Okanagan Region	11.96	24.36	28.87
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	12.06	20.04	29.76

Table from Job Bank Canada Wage Report <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home-eng.do?lang=eng>

Full-time opticians often receive benefits, such as dental coverage and sick days. Those who run their own businesses must cover the costs of these things themselves. Opticians working in retail stores may earn (in addition to their regular salaries) commissions based on the number of glasses each optician sells.

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Opticians**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3231>
- **Career Cruising** database (Profile for 'Optician')  
<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

**Optometrist Assistants:** WorkBC reports that in British Columbia the *median* annual salary for all 'Assisting Occupations\*\* in support of Health Services', including optometrist assistants, is approximately \$43,798.

- **\*\*Assisting Occupations include:** Optical and ophthalmic laboratory technicians and assistants (optometrist assistant) **AND** orthopedic technologists, rehabilitation assistants, pharmacy aides, sterile processing technicians, blood donor clinic assistants, morgue attendants

**JobBank Canada** lists hourly wages for BC's regions where 'Assisting Occupations' including optometrist assistants can expect to make:

**Assisting Occupations\*\* in support of Health Services NOC 3414  
Hourly Wages**

**Wage Estimates**

Location	Wage (\$/hr)		
	Low	Median	High
<b>British Columbia</b>	14.00	21.00	26.15
<u>Cariboo Region</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>Kootenay Region</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>Lower Mainland - Southwest Region</u>	10.85	20.73	26.50
<u>Nechako Region</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>North Coast Region</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>Northeast Region</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>Thompson--Okanagan Region</u>	13.50	19.15	23.89
<u>Vancouver Island and Coast Region</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A

**\*\*Assisting Occupations include:** Optical and ophthalmic laboratory technicians and assistants (optometrist assistant) **AND** orthopedic technologists, rehabilitation assistants, pharmacy aides, sterile processing technicians, blood donor clinic assistants, morgue attendants

Table from Job Bank Canada Wage Report <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home-eng.do?lang=eng>

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Assisting Occupations in Support of Health Services (including Optometrist Assistants)**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3414>

## 4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

**Opticians:** Job openings will come from retirements and new job creation.

The demand for optical services is rising due to provincial population growth and aging. British Columbia's growing population will require more optical products, such as glasses and contact lenses. In addition, as B.C.'s population ages, a larger portion of the population will need enhanced vision aids such as corrective lenses and bifocal contact

### Opticians NOC 3231 Employment Outlook

<b>1.5%</b> Expected annual demand growth rate (2015-2025)	<b>590</b> Job openings (2015-2025)
N/A - Data not available or not provided due to data quality issues	
Occupation Outlook for B.C.:	
% of job openings from replacement	64%
% of job openings from expansion	36%

lenses. Also, with the large number of people using computers in their jobs, special "task-specific" lenses help reduce eye fatigue, further maintaining the need for opticians.

**WorkBC** provides regional employment outlooks for three regions:

- Vancouver/Lower Mainland: projecting 1.9% average annual employment growth for 2015-2025 with 380 job openings
- Thompson Okanagan: projecting 1.3% average annual employment growth for 2015-2025 with 110 job openings
- Vancouver Island/Coast: projecting 0.4% average annual employment growth for 2015-2025 with 110 job openings

**JobBank Canada** reports that for the 2016-2018 period, the employment outlook is expected to be good for Opticians (NOC 3231) in British Columbia. Employment growth is expected to be strong and a large number of people are expected to retire.

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Optometrists**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3231>
- **JobBank Canada: Job Market Report** <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home-eng.do?lang=eng>

**Assisting Occupations\*\* in Support of Health Services, including  
Optometrist Assistant NOC 3414  
Employment Outlook**

**2.0%** Expected annual demand growth  
rate (2015-2025)

**2,080** Job openings (2015-2025)

N/A - Data not available or not provided due to data quality issues

Occupation Outlook for B.C.:

% of job openings from replacement **53%**

% of job openings from expansion **47%**

**\*\*Assisting Occupations include:** Optical and ophthalmic laboratory technicians and assistants (optometrist assistant) **AND** orthopedic technologists, rehabilitation assistants, pharmacy aides, sterile processing technicians, blood donor clinic assistants, morgue attendants

Source:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Assisting Occupations in Support of Health Services (including Optometrist Assistants)**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3414>

## **5. How do I become an Optician or Optometrist Assistant**

### ***Optician:***

#### ***Education:***

Successful completion of an accredited optician program at an institution recognized by the College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) (<http://www.cobc.ca/>) (for accredited institutions, see: [http://www.cobc.ca/Training\\_and\\_Education.aspx](http://www.cobc.ca/Training_and_Education.aspx))

#### ***Licensing Exam:***

Opticians who have completed their education must then write and pass the NACOR (National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators) national licensing exam (see, [http://www.nacor.ca/National\\_Examination.aspx](http://www.nacor.ca/National_Examination.aspx) and <http://www.cobc.ca/Examinations.aspx>) (NACOR National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators, <http://www.nacor.ca/>)

#### ***Registration:***

College of Opticians of BC (COBC) (<http://www.cobc.ca/>) registers/certifies opticians in BC who have completed an accredited education program, passed the NACOR exam, have a clear criminal record check and met other COBC registration requirements. COBC will designate successful registrants with these titles, "Licensed Optician", "Registered Optician", or "Refracting Optician". The College licenses opticians in the following registration classes:

- Registered Optician – Eyeglass Dispensing
- Registered Optician – Contact Lens and Eyeglass Dispensing
- Registered Optician – Contact Lens Student
- Registered Optician – Non Practicing

See: <http://www.cobc.ca/Registration.aspx>  
[http://www.cobc.ca/Becoming\\_an\\_Optician.aspx](http://www.cobc.ca/Becoming_an_Optician.aspx)  
[http://www.cobc.ca/New\\_Registrant\\_Information.aspx](http://www.cobc.ca/New_Registrant_Information.aspx)

### ***Internationally Educated Opticians***

College of Opticians of BC has a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process that assesses the candidate's eligibility to become a licensed optician in BC. This assessment entails an initial document assessment, a Competency Gap Analysis, and in-person interview. These assessment results are then considered by the Registration Committee to ascertain if the candidate is eligible to challenge the national examination (NACOR) (<http://www.nacor.ca/>) or must complete bridging courses to meet the entry-to-practice standards for opticianry in Canada. See: [http://www.cobc.ca/Important\\_Information.aspx](http://www.cobc.ca/Important_Information.aspx)

***To be considered to be exempt from examination***, applicants who have **not** completed a certification examination approved by the COBC must supply the following information:

- i. License Opticians scope of practice statement from their current jurisdiction
- ii. outline of the License Opticians programs they have completed which normally includes the learning outcomes of each of the courses within the program as well as a transcript of completion
- iii. A blue print or candidates hand book for the examination or in absence of such a document copies of examinations.

[http://www.cobc.ca/Reg\\_Policies.aspx](http://www.cobc.ca/Reg_Policies.aspx)

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Opticians**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3231>
- **Colleges of Opticians of BC**  
<http://www.cobc.ca/>

## ***Optometrist Assistant***

In BC, no certification is required to work as an optometrist assistant. Most employers look for successful completion of secondary education and some experience in a retail or health clinic environment. Most assistants receive on the job training at a retail optometry store or clinic.

### ***Certified Optometric Assistant CCOA program [voluntary certification]***

Optometrist assistants interested in advancing their skills may apply to the Canadian Certified Optometric Assistant CCOA program (<https://opto.ca/ccoa>) an online distance education program. The CCOA program includes nine course modules, a practicum, one workshop and a final examination. *Application requirements include current employment with a CAO – Canadian Association of Optometrists member optometrist for the duration of the CCOA program.* For more information, see:

<https://opto.ca/ccoa>

<https://opto.ca/program-overview>

<https://opto.ca/eligibility-criteria>

## 6. How Do I Find A Job?

### ***Where would I work?***

- *optical retail stores and laboratories*
- *physicians' offices,*
- *medical laboratories*
- *large chain stores*
- *other establishments with optical dispensing departments*

### ***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. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and, in *The Province* on Sundays.

### **Online Job Postings**

- **Opticians Association of Canada**  
<http://www.opticians.ca/page.asp?id=186>
- **Jobs4ECPs**  
<http://www.jobs4ecps.ca/>
- **BC (chapter) Doctors of Optometry Canada**  
<https://members.optometrists.bc.ca/bcao/BCAOMember/optomart/BCAOMember/Optomart/optomart.aspx> (*scroll down and click on link for 'Opportunities for Optometric Assistants/Opticians'*)
- **Indeed.ca**  
[http://ca.indeed.com/advanced\\_search](http://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search)  
<https://ca.indeed.com/Eye-Optometry-jobs-in-British-Columbia>  
<https://ca.indeed.com/Optician-jobs-in-British-Columbia>  
<https://ca.indeed.com/Optomeric-Assistant-jobs-in-Vancouver,-BC>
- **Neuvoo**  
<http://neuvoo.ca/en>
- **WorkBC**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/JobSeekers/SearchResults.aspx>
- **BC Jobs.ca**  
<https://www.bcjobs.ca/>

### ***Finding "Hidden Jobs"***

Many job vacancies are not advertised. The resources below will help you *with finding jobs in this "hidden" job market.*

### ***Using Directories to Create a List of Potential Employers***

You can use directories to produce lists of employers who are in this industry. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **BC Doctors of Optometry (BC Association of Optometrists)**  
<http://bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca/find-a-doctor>

- **College of Optometrists of British Columbia**

<http://optometrybc.com/about-optometrists/how-to-find-an-optometrist/>

- **Reference Canada**

<http://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 "opticians" OR "optometrists" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings, e.g. "optometrists OD". 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***

- **Volunteer BC**

<http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

- **GoVolunteer.ca**

<http://govolunteer.ca/>

- **Third World Eye Society Canada – TWECS**  
a local BC chapter of VOSH - Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity  
<http://www.twecs.ca/eyecareprojects.php> [primarily sponsors eye health care projects outside Canada]  
<http://www.twecs.ca/eyeglassrecycling.php> [local individuals needed to recycle eyeglasses]
- **Canadian Red Cross**  
<http://www.redcross.ca/volunteer>

### ***Volunteering in Health Care Facilities***

The following organizations accept volunteers in hospitals, residential care facilities, adult day centres, and other community settings.

- **Vancouver Coastal Health**  
<http://www.vch.ca/get-involved/volunteer/>
- **Fraser Health Authority**  
<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/about-us/volunteer/> (services and information for pregnant women)
- **Providence Health Care**  
<http://www.providencehealthcare.org/volunteers>

*For additional tips see:*

- **Networking for Employment**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search Networking for Employment]
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search 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, <http://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**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]

## **8. Where Can This Job Lead?**

With experience, opticians may progress to Senior Optician, and eventually to a position as supervisor or manager of an eyecare retail store.

Source:

- ***Career Cruising*** database (Profile for 'Optician')

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

## **9. Where Can I Find More Information?**

- **Opticians Association of Canada, BC Chapter**

<http://opticians.bc.ca/roleofoptician/>

<http://opticians.bc.ca/opticianseducationbecome-an-optician/>

- **Canadian Certified Optometric Assistant CCOA**

<https://opto.ca/ccoa>

- **College of Opticians of British Columbia**

<http://www.cobc.ca/Default.aspx>

- **Canadian Association of Optometrists: What is an Optometric Assistant?**

<https://opto.ca/what-is-an-optometric-assistant>

- **Welcome BC: Job Profiles for Immigrants: Opticians**

<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Work-or-Study-in-B-C/Job-profiles-for-immigrants/Optician>

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

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

