

Automotive Service Technician

Diagnose it, fix it, prove it works. The most common skilled trade in America.

TYPICAL PAY

\$50,620

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$35k to \$82k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Dealerships, independent repair shops, fleet garages, tire and quic...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Take the automotive class if your school runs one. Many high school programs are accredited by the Automotive Service Excellence Education Foundation, which employers recognize.
- 2 Training program** 1 to 2 years
 A 1 to 2 year community college associate degree, or a 12 month private technical school program. Both are accepted, and the community college route costs a fraction as much.
- 3 Get hired** During or straight after
 Start as a lube or tire technician, or in a dealer apprentice slot. Registered apprenticeships in auto repair are listed on the government apprenticeship site.
- 4 Get certified** About 2 years in
 Automotive Service Excellence runs nine automobile tests. You need two years of hands-on experience to be certified, and a training program counts for one of those years.
- 5 Master technician** 3 to 6 years
 Pass the eight core automobile tests and you are a Master Automobile Technician. Certifications have to be renewed about every five years.

Pros and cons

- + Work exists in every town in the country
- + Short, cheap training at a community college
- + Real problem solving, not the same task all day
- You buy your own tools, and they are expensive
- Flat rate pay punishes you for a hard diagnosis
- Cuts, burns, solvents and a hard time on your back

Optional boosts

Master Automobile Technician. Advanced engine performance. Manufacturer master certification. High voltage and electric vehicle training.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
 Automotive Service Excellence: certification tests
 Universal Technical Institute: Automotive Technology program
 Apprenticeship.gov: Registered Apprenticeship, US Department of Labor

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/automotive-service-technician>

Good to know

Every car since 1996 speaks the same language

On-board diagnostics, second generation, was required on every car sold in the United States from the 1996 model year. That standard is why a cheap code reader from any parts store fits every car in the lot.

Right to repair started in Massachusetts

Massachusetts voters passed a right-to-repair law in 2012 that forced carmakers to share diagnostic information with independent shops, then voted in 2020 to extend it to data sent wirelessly. Carmakers fo...



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