

Diesel Mechanic

Keep trucks, buses and heavy engines running. Paid to learn, and short of people almost everywhere.

TYPICAL PAY

\$61,770

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$45k to \$89k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Truck shops, bus garages,
dealerships, city and school distri...**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Auto shop, welding and math if your school has them. A clean driving record matters from here on.
- 2 Training or a first shop job** 1 to 2 years
A 1 to 2 year community college diesel program, a registered apprenticeship, or hire on as a lube technician and learn in the bay.
- 3 Build hours in the bay** 2 to 3 years
Brakes, suspension, electrical, then engines and aftertreatment. This is where you actually learn the trade.
- 4 ASE (National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence) certification** Year 2 or 3
The medium and heavy truck test series, T1 through T8. You need about two years of hands on experience before the certificate is issued, or one year plus a two year degree.
- 5 Specialize** Ongoing
Engine performance and emissions, transit buses, refrigerated trailers, or heavy equipment. Each one pays more than general work.

Pros and cons

- + Little or no student debt, and an apprenticeship pays from day one
- + Indoor and year round, unlike most construction trades
- + Real shortage of technicians, so you can move shops for a raise
- Heavy, dirty and hard on your hands, knees and back
- You buy your own tools, and it never really stops costing
- The federal profile lists slower than average growth for this occupation

Optional boosts

Master Medium and Heavy Truck technician. Diesel engine performance and emissions. CDL (commercial driver's license), Class A or B. Welding.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists (49-3031.00)

ASE: National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence

Universal Technical Institute: diesel technology program

Apprenticeship.gov: United States 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/diesel-mechanic>

Good to know

The job became a computer job

A modern highway truck runs dozens of sensors and several control modules, and the emissions system alone has its own filters, sensors and fluid tank. Most days you spend as much time with a diagnostic l...

Almost everything you own arrived on a diesel

Trucks carry the large majority of freight tonnage moved in the United States. When a fleet is short of mechanics, trucks sit in the yard instead of moving goods, which is why shops pay bonuses to fill thes...



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