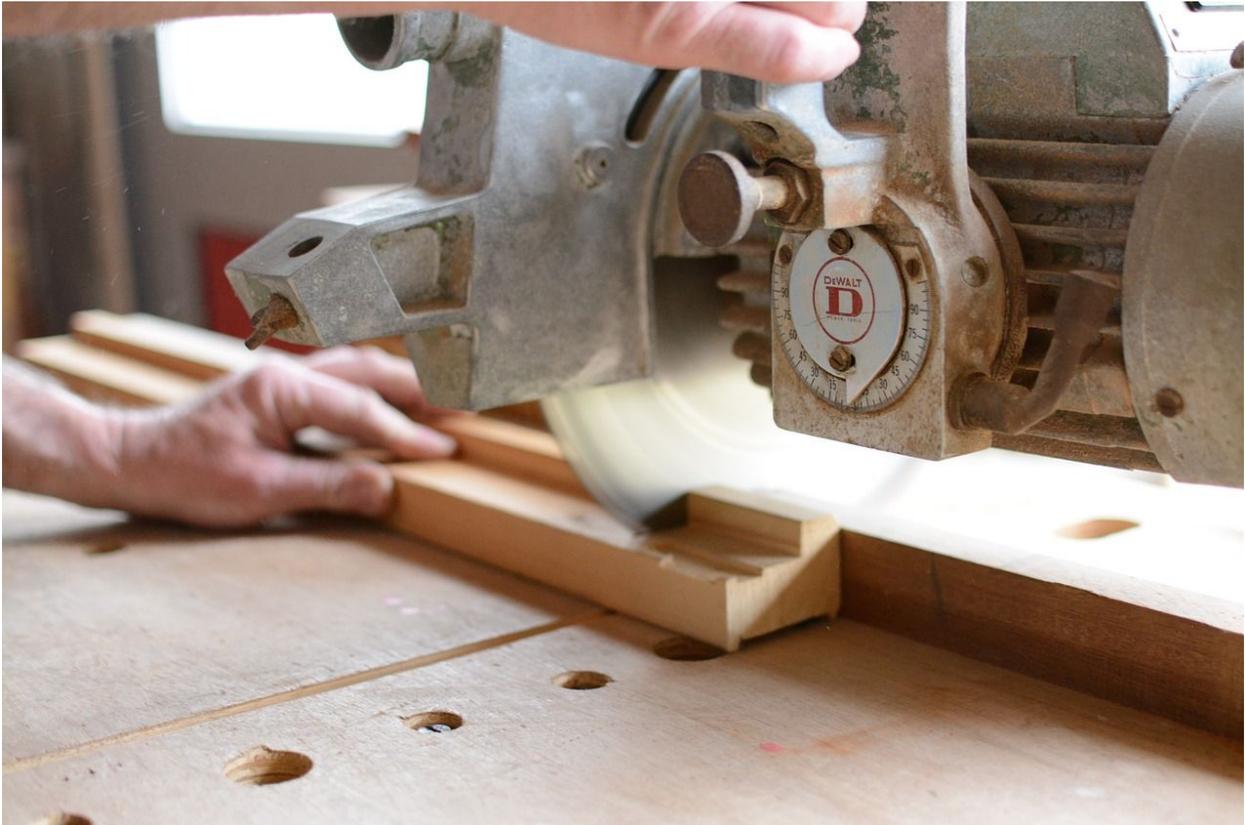


A Quick Guide to Starting a Promising Career in the Skilled Trades



If you're looking to work with your hands, develop an in-demand skill set, make competitive wages, and enjoy relative job security, a career in the skilled trades is perhaps the top option. [Skilled trades](#), like plumber, electrician, mechanic, machinist, and carpenter, involve manual labor but rise above the level of simple manual labor. They are true crafts. Anyone at any age can begin a rewarding career in one of dozens of skilled trade fields. Here's how to get a good start.

Is a skilled trade right for you?

Traditionally, the career question has been framed like this: do you want to get a degree at a four-year college or university, or just enter the job market and work your way toward success? This is a bit simplistic. In fact, another option exists and it is working toward a skilled trade. Sure, education studies have long said that having a four-year degree boosts your overall lifetime income significantly. But this fails to factor in debt and the fact that skilled traders make a lot more than unskilled laborers.

As one trade college [notes](#), when you factor in that trade schools are typically only two years and a bit less expensive than traditional college, "trade school grads can be more than \$140,000

ahead from the start, making up for more than 12 years of difference in income.” So if you want to kick off your career as soon as possible and you love working with your hands, pursuing a skilled trade is a wonderful decision.

How much money can I make?

That’s a tough question. It depends on your location, skill level, specific trade path, and years of experience. Eventually, you will be skilled and experienced enough to make a top-tier salary. As HomeAdvisor.com notes in [their primer](#) on hiring for contracting companies, a significantly higher wage must be paid to higher skilled workers.

But starting salaries among many popular skilled trades can be much higher than starting jobs for those coming out of a four-year college, [For example](#), an airplane mechanic, electrician, and pipe fitter can make \$49,000, \$44,000, and \$49,000, respectively. Even more skilled trades like elevator installer and locomotive repair can even net close to \$70,000. Those wages will increase over time, as you gain experience.

How to Get Started

The first step in getting started in a skilled trade is to receive a High School diploma or your GED. This is vital for any skilled trade position. Next, your options branch a bit. Many opt for direct apprenticeships if they can be found - on-the-job training without first attending a trade school. Some companies will cover some costs of education to employees. You could also just head straight for a trade school, which will boost your chances of landing a quality apprenticeship when you graduate. Either path will require a couple of years of schooling and a handful of years in apprenticeship - it just depends on how you want to go about it. [Check here](#) for some more tips on pathways to tradesmanship.

Compared to many jobs, skilled trades are less likely to disappear. Automation can’t replace a good plumber, and you can’t really outsource your electrician, for example. Combine that job security with the highest wages among non-four-year-degree-jobs, and you can see why many - from millennials to those rethinking their career mid-life - are taking a serious look at skilled trades.

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