

So, you want to be a Plumber?

A GUIDE FOR NEW ENTRANTS

a career for life

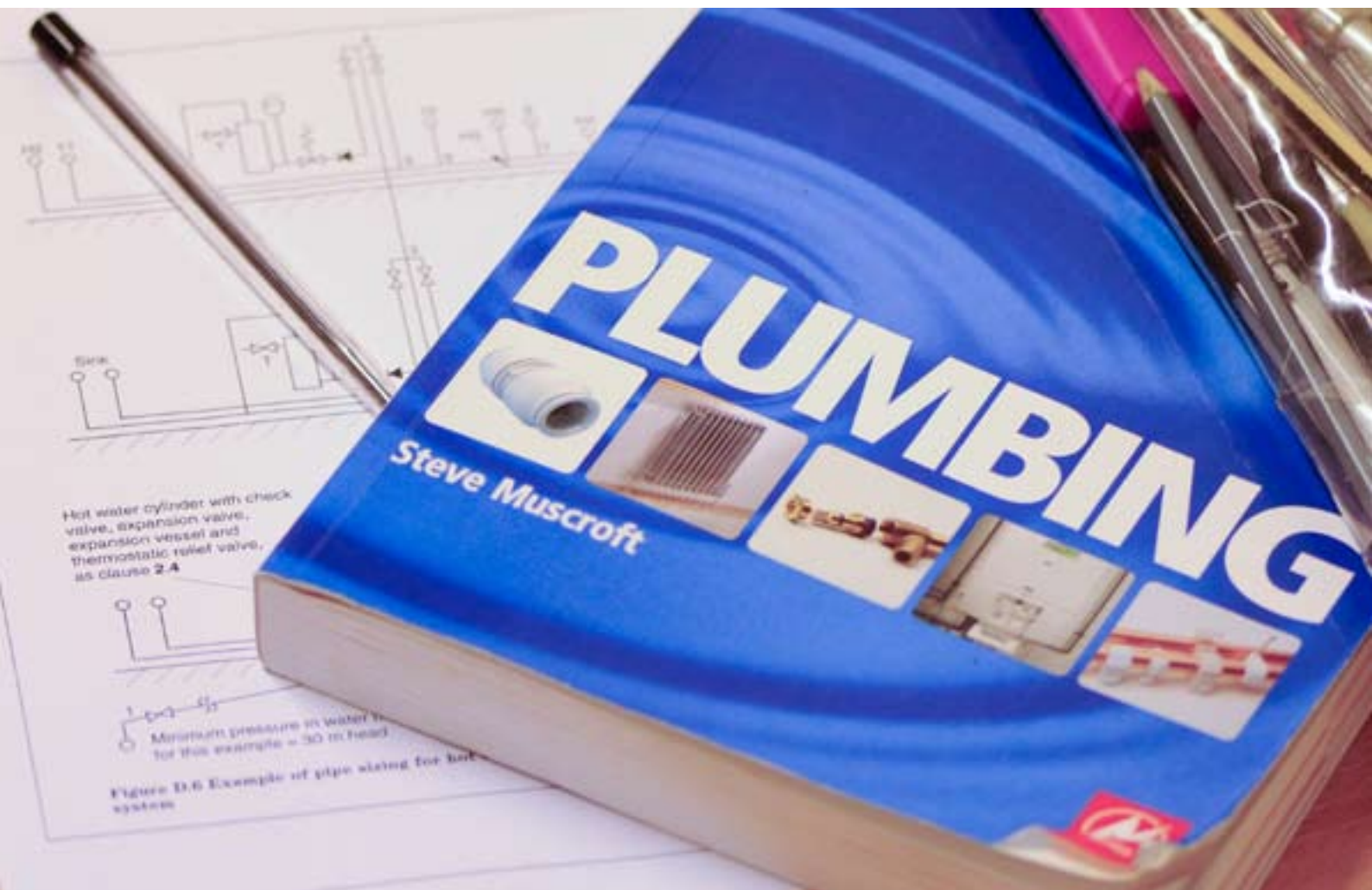


training for trades

The Professionals' choice since 1992

Introduction

Plumbers are extremely important people in society. It's a fact of life that wherever people settle, they will always need Plumbers. Good plumbing is not only vital to public health (Plumbers deal with clean drinking water, sanitation, heating systems etc), but is also an integral part of modern day life - how many of us could do without the luxury of a hot bath or central heating? Without the competent Plumber disease would be rife, sanitation non-existent, clean, fresh drinking water from a tap only a dream and central heating would consist of a coal or log fire!





The job

Plumbers are a familiar sight to most people who employ them to fix a leak or install a sink. What few people realise however is just how wide ranging is the work that Plumbers embrace.

A Plumber is someone who specialises in systems that carry water. *If water flows through it, they do it!* Plumbing work involves the installation and repair of pipes which are used to carry water, wastewater and sewage. These pipe systems will be found in everything from small domestic dwellings to commercial properties, power plants, water treatment plants, waste disposal facilities and even in the international space station.

Piping systems are also used in the production of microchips and medicines and much more besides! Plumbers are also responsible for the flow of water within towns and cities. Specialist pipe workers include pipe layers, pipe fitters and steam fitters.

Once the piping system is installed, Plumbers install sanitary ware and fixtures, such as basins, WCs, bathtubs, showers, hot water tanks, washing machines and dishwashers etc. Plumbers will also undertake basic carpentry work to access pipes and brace water tanks.

Lawful requirements

There are no lawful restrictions on anyone carrying out basic plumbing work, with the exception of the Water Regulations qualification if they are connecting anything to the water mains. However, a lack of lawful requirements does not mean that inadequately trained and unqualified people should do plumbing work.

Plumbing is a highly specialised job. Shoddy plumbing work can lead to water contamination, which can cause serious illness e.g. Legionella. Water systems also often

run alongside electrical and gas systems. Messing with these or creating situations where these systems may be compromised will kill people.

Whatever area of the industry Plumbers work in, they must be suitably trained and qualified. Plumbers need extensive knowledge of the Water Regulations and the Building Regulations and some work is regulated and in these cases the proper training and qualifications are essential to work lawfully.



Proper training

Proper training is essential if you want to be a Plumber and to ensure you always work lawfully and safely. There is no short-cut to become a Plumber and there is no substitute for experience either.

In order to do certain plumbing related work some qualifications are mandatory - they are a lawful requirement. Others are simply optional, but demonstrate your level of knowledge and skill, which is very useful if you are seeking employment with a plumbing firm. If you study full-time you can obtain your basic qualifications in just a few weeks or months. However, having gained these qualifications you should be prepared to hone your knowledge and skills over a number of years.



You have a number of avenues open to you for training. However it is essential that you follow a properly prescribed course. One that contains all the knowledge and skills you need to do the job properly and safely and which includes all the lawful qualifications too

An Apprenticeship is the traditional way to train and enter the industry. An Apprenticeship is a work-based training programme, whereby a new entrant is hired by an employer while they learn the trade and the government pays for some or all of their training. The great thing about Apprenticeships is you gain real work experience while you learn and you know you are getting the right qualifications needed for the job. Although Apprenticeships have historically been seen

as something for young people, there are no legal restrictions based on age that prevent an adult from taking part in an Apprenticeship scheme.

The alternative to an Apprenticeship is a self-pay career course which you can study on either a full-time, part-time or a blended learning basis. A blended learning course is a mix of home study and occasional attendance at a training centre or college for practical tuition under the watchful eye and guidance of qualified tutors. These courses are particularly suitable for people who need to continue working while they retrain. However, beware courses which do not offer all the qualifications needed to operate lawfully and which are wanted by industry bodies and employers.



Basic qualifications

The industry's preferred qualification for a new entrant Plumber is a Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Plumbing and Heating, such as the City and Guilds 6189 or equivalent. This is the main qualification in a Plumbing Apprenticeship and is the hallmark of a good careers course. To work competently, safely and lawfully you will at the very least need your:

Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999; and Training that provides a thorough understanding of plumbing theory and practice

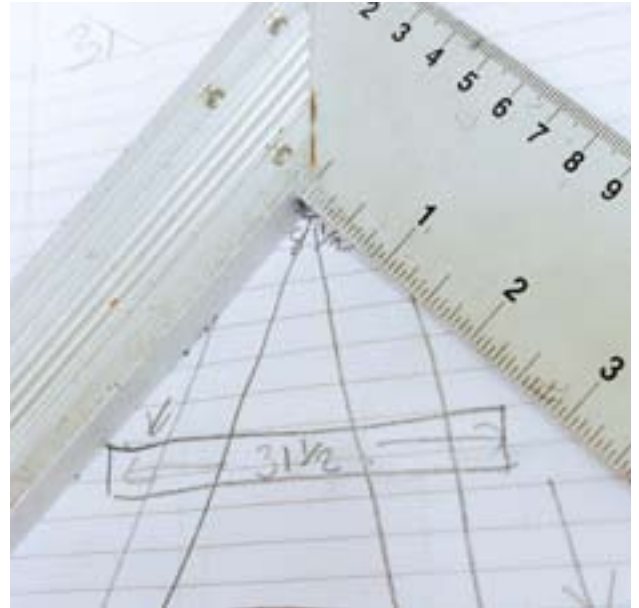
Here is a list of other training and qualifications you must have for specific work:

- Unvented Domestic Hot Water Systems (if you intend to install, service or commission unvented domestic hot water storage systems);
- Part P Defined Scope (if you intend to do any electrical work in kitchens, bathrooms or outbuildings - such as putting in an electric shower, a heated towel rail, new lights or even a new socket);
- CSCS card (if you want to work on construction and building sites i.e. new housing developments); and
- Energy Efficiency Certificate (if you want to install, design or give advice on heating and hot water systems)



Qualities needed

Plumbers must have attention to detail. They need the intelligence to work out complex equations, the expertise and flexibility to install different systems, the knowledge to understand how and why different systems work, the ability and initiative to solve problems, a thirst for knowledge of new technology, a creative mind, sound judgment and most importantly professionalism and honesty.



Plumbers use a variety of specialised tools, techniques and materials. They must be able to read blueprints, follow instructions from builders or contractors, plan out work to be done, and be capable and efficient. Computers are being used more and more often to keep track of progress and to make detailed plans, so computer skills are also helpful.

Being a Plumber is also a physical job; Plumbers have to be prepared to get their hands dirty (repairing toilets and soil pipes!), learn to use many tools and equipment in a safe and proper fashion. They need to be good with their



hands, have physical strength, a head for heights, and be willing to fit into small, cramped spaces (under sinks, loft spaces etc).

Plumbers also need to be good with people. They meet customers, usually in their own homes so they must respect people's property, be polite, have good communication skills and take pride in the high standard of their work, not only for the pride associated with doing a good job but also to protect the public health.

If you want to become a Plumber, you'll need to be healthy and not suffer from medical conditions. Because you'll frequently use sharp and powered cutting tools, you must not suffer from medical conditions, such as frequent blackouts or dizziness that could endanger yourself or others. You may also work with wiring so you'll need good colour vision and because you'll occasionally work at heights you mustn't suffer from Vertigo. As you may have to travel around locally, a driving license will also be essential.

Earning potential

Forget the stories of earning £100,000+ a year. The average Plumber employed by a company will earn in the region of £20,000-£25,000 after a couple of years experience. A self-employed Plumber can earn a lot more and £60,000+ is achievable, it all depends on how much time and effort they put in.



In summary

Plumbing can be an immensely satisfying occupation. From domestic work to major construction projects, the plumbing world provides a variety of jobs that few others can match. No two days are the same - from changing a tap washer to installing a solar powered hot water system, Plumbers work on domestic, commercial and industrial projects that offer variety and challenge.

You could choose to get involved in large projects such as construction sites or laying pipes to a new town. You could specialise in under floor heating, advanced micro pipe-work, water plant treatment, drainage - or even in renewable energy systems, like solar hot water systems and ground-source heat pumps.

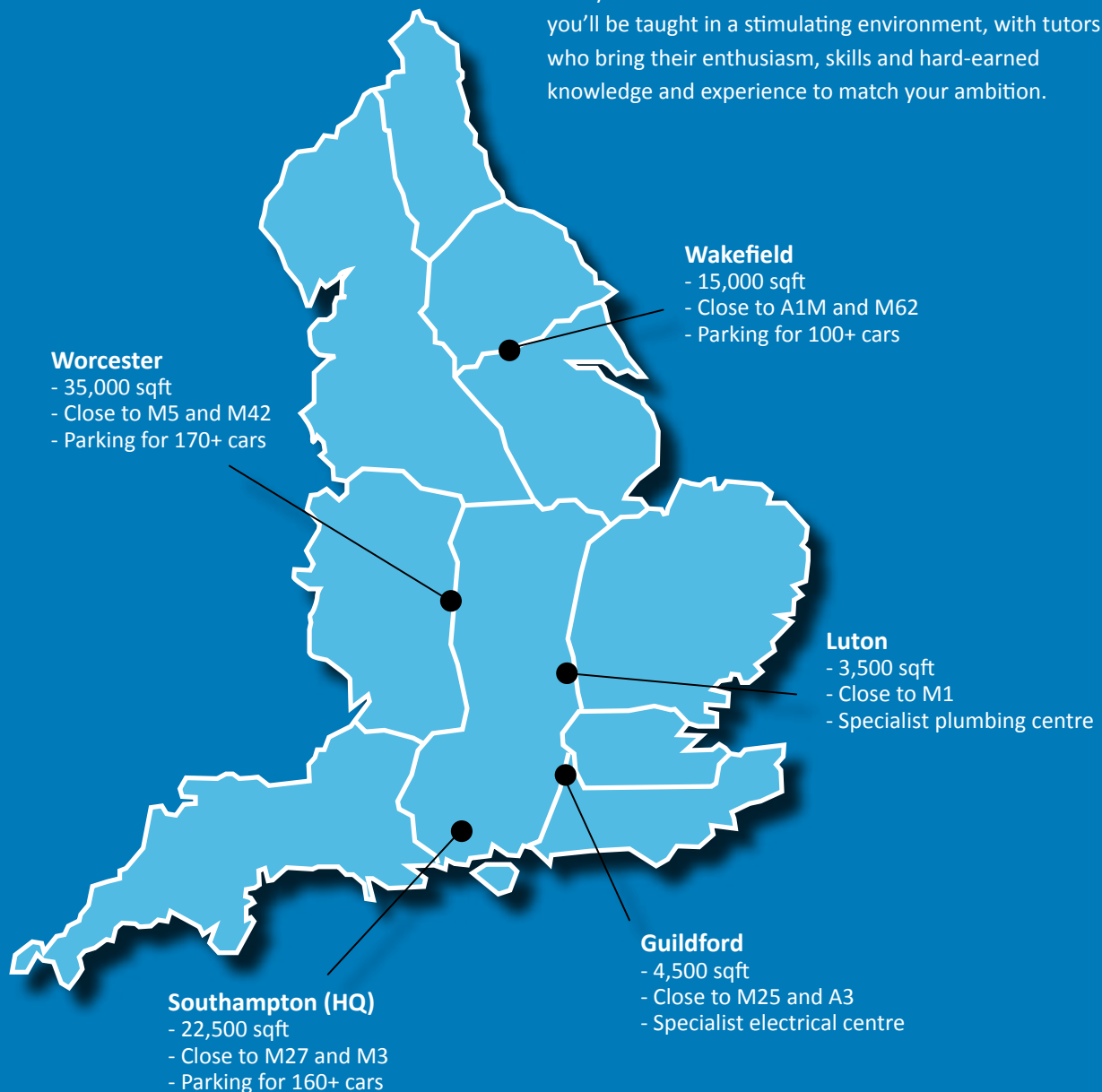
The plumbing industry is professional, responsible and future proof. As a Plumber you will have numerous choices regarding the type of work you do and the career path you take. It offers a rewarding future, a full career path leading to professional status and good pay.

About ATL

Founded in 1992, ATL is the UK's largest training provider in the area of building services engineering, with centres nationwide. We aim to give people the best chance to be successful in a country that expects its engineers to be highly skilled in an increasingly knowledge-intensive, complex and fast changing environment.

An Ofsted high-achiever, ATL has an impressive track record. All careers programmes benefit from significant vocational and professional content to build confidence and skills, and every course leads to industry recognised skills and professional qualifications. First-time achievement rates for our students are over 95%.

So if you want a career as a Plumber come to ATL where you'll be taught in a stimulating environment, with tutors who bring their enthusiasm, skills and hard-earned knowledge and experience to match your ambition.



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