

So, you want to be an Electrician?

A GUIDE FOR NEW ENTRANTS

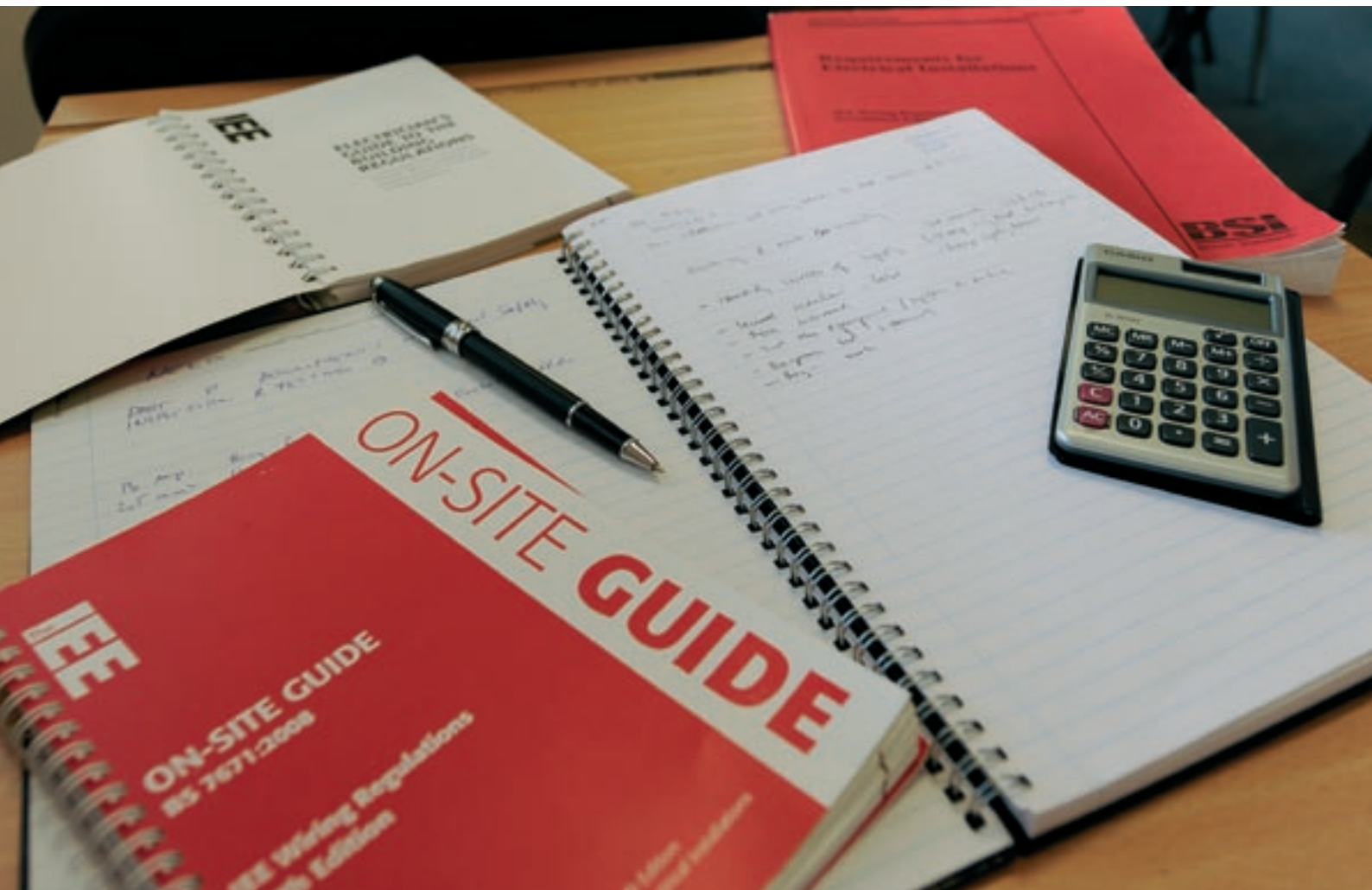


a career for life

ATL
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Introduction

From the time Benjamin Franklin sent up his kite in a thunderstorm, electricity has dominated our world. To appreciate this, all you have to do is remember what happened the last time you had a power-cut. Nothing worked. No heating, no light, no electric cooking, no refrigerator, no gadgetry and no modern entertainment. Electricity runs practically everything that's important in our lives and when it malfunctions, somebody has to fix it, somebody who knows what they're doing - an Electrician.





The job

An Electrician is someone who installs and maintains all of the electrical and power systems for our homes, businesses, and factories. Electricians put in all the cables, wiring, meters, switchgear, conduit (metal channel for cable), fitments and equipment needed in buildings. They also repair faults - locating and diagnosing problems, isolating circuits and making repairs and replacing components. Some Electricians also service and repair electrical machines and equipment, working in manufacturing and engineering companies for example.

Some industry pundits like to distinguish between an Electrician and an Electrical Installer (or Domestic

Electrical Installer) on the basis of qualifications held and the type of work carried out. As far as the public is concerned however and the vast majority of electrical contracting firms too, an Electrician is simply someone who does electrical work. The term 'Electrician' is not a protected title and so while some people would like to draw a distinction it is not very helpful.

What is important however is that the people carrying out electrical work are properly trained, have relevant qualifications and are competent i.e. they know what they are doing, their work is safe and it complies with the Building Regulations.

Lawful requirements

Although there may be some ambiguity over job titles, there is absolutely no confusion about what is needed to be considered competent and lawful.

All electricians must follow and comply with the Building Regulations when performing their work. These Building Regulations set out strict rules about how to wire buildings and they are lawful requirements.

The regulations also stipulate that “all electrical work undertaken must be certified as complying with the Building Regulations”. Work which is not properly

certified is unlawful and certifying work requires that the relevant local authority is advised that work has taken place and that the customer is issued with a certificate. Only a local authority Building Control Officer or an approved Competent Persons Scheme Operator can issue this certificate.

Electricians who are not members of an approved Competent Persons Scheme cannot carry out electrical work without first informing the local authority Building Control office of the intention to do work and must then get a Building Control Officer to come out and certify



the work when it is completed. Being a member of a Competent Persons Scheme allows an electrician to self-certify the work they carry out without the need to inform the local Building Control Officer. The Competent Persons Scheme Operator will issue the certificate to the customer and advise the relevant local authority that work has taken place.

So, while you are training and until you gain registration for yourself, you must get another registered Competent Person or your employer to certify your work, or you must notify the local authority of all the work you intend to carry out and when it's completed get a Building Control Officer to come out and certify it.



Becoming a registered Competent Person

To become a Competent Person requires registration with a government approved Competent Persons Scheme Operator such as NICEIC, Elecsa, NAPIT or BSI. There are entry requirements which include certain knowledge, skills and qualifications.

You can expect the Scheme Operator's assessor to carry out an onsite visit to verify your technical knowledge and competence. This is likely to involve checking you

have an adequate number of serviceable instruments and the latest editions of technical reference documents, standards and directives. The assessor will also want to review a sample of the records of work you have carried out, check your qualifications and insurance cover, and carry out an onsite assessment of two or more jobs you have undertaken.



Proper training

Proper training is essential if you want to work lawfully and safely and if you want to join a Competent Persons Scheme. There is no short-cut to become an Electrician and there is no substitute for experience either.

In order to work as an Electrician 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 contracting 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 required to join a Competent Persons Scheme.



Basic qualifications

The industry's preferred qualification for a new entrant Electrician is a Level 3 Diploma in Electrotechnology, such as the City and Guilds 2357 or equivalent. This is the main qualification in an Electrical Apprenticeship and is the hallmark of a good careers course. To work lawfully and to join a Competent Persons Scheme you will at the very least need your:

Part P Full Scope

17th Edition of the IEE Wiring Regulations

Certificate in Inspection, Testing and Verification of Electrical Installations;

as well as training that provides a thorough understanding of electrical theory and practice.



Qualities needed

Being an electrician can be an immensely satisfying job. An electrician is a 'people person'. Someone who makes things work and in the process makes peoples' lives better and more comfortable.

Electricity has the power to run things, but, it can also cause fires and kill people if misused. Electricians are highly skilled and responsible individuals, with a lot of training and practical experience behind them.

If you want to be an electrician you must have good attention to detail. You'll 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, a creative mind, sound judgment and most importantly professionalism and honesty.

Earning potential

Forget the stories of earning £100,000+ a year. The average electrician employed by a company will earn in the region of £30,000-£35,000 after a couple of years experience. A self-employed electrician can earn a lot more and £60,000+ is achievable, it all depends on how much time and effort they put in.



In summary

From domestic work to major engineering projects, the electrotechnical world provides a variety of jobs that few others can match. It is a diverse and exciting industry at the cutting-edge of installing, commissioning and maintaining technology in all types of building.

You could choose to get involved in large projects such as shopping centres, music concerts, sports stadiums and hospitals. You could specialise in complex computer-controlled building energy management systems, advanced data-cabling, data-handling systems and fibre-optic systems - or even in renewable energy systems, like wind turbines and solar panels.

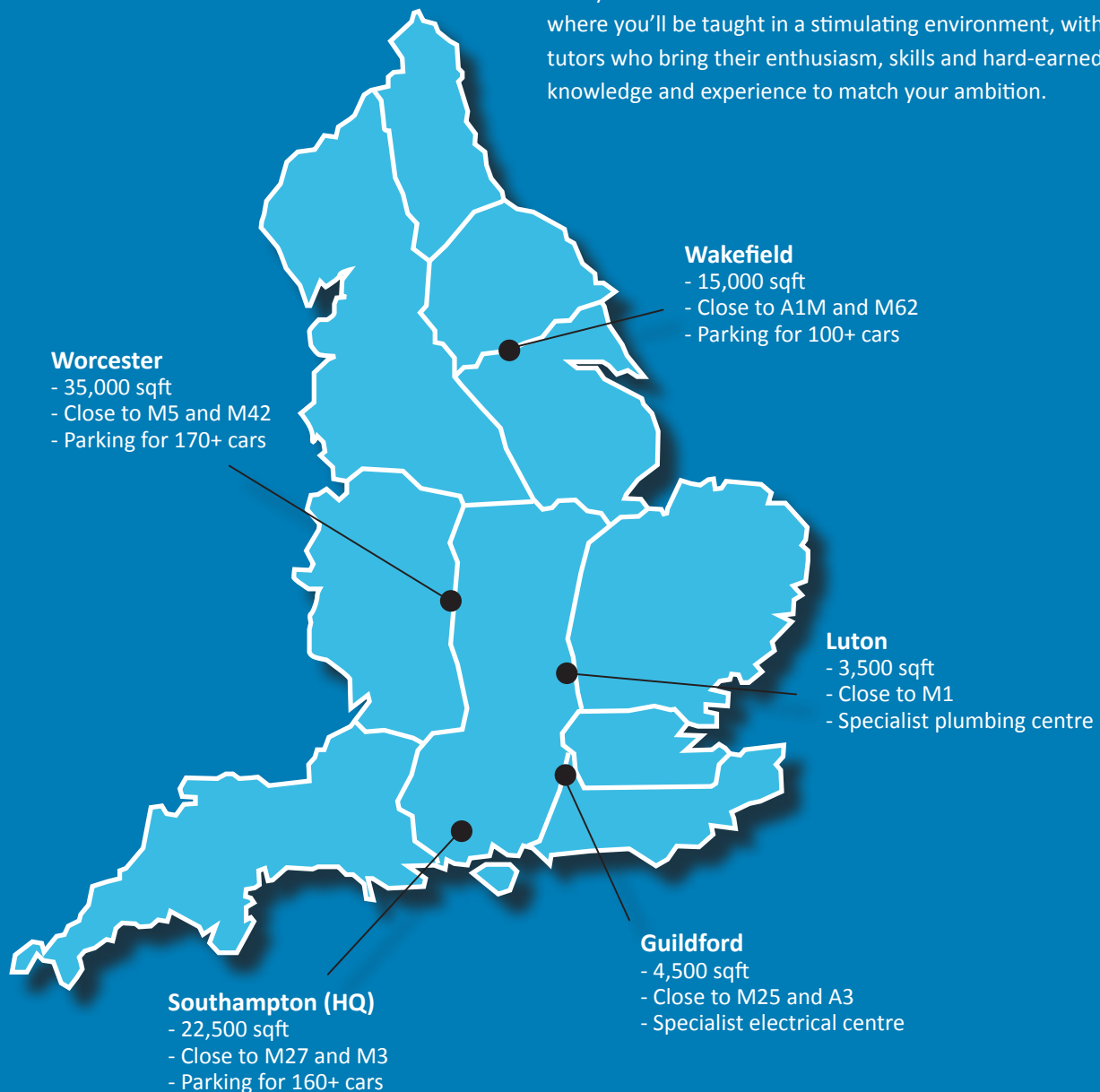
The electrical industry is professional, responsible and future proof. As an Electrotechnical Engineer you will have numerous choices regarding the type of work you do and the career path you take. It offers a guaranteed future, professional status and good pay.

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 Electrician 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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