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BECOME A LIFT ENGINEER

The complete UK starter guide, routes in, what it pays, and how to land your first role. Written by people who work in the trade.

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1. WHY LIFT ENGINEERING?

Lifts are everywhere, offices, hospitals, stations, mansion blocks, and every one of them must be installed, maintained, repaired and, by law, examined. That makes lift engineering one of the steadiest, best-paid hands-on trades around, with a genuine shortage of qualified people. The barrier to entry is low, the ceiling is high, and the skills travel anywhere there are buildings.

2. WHAT A LIFT ENGINEER ACTUALLY DOES

The work splits into four areas; most engineers specialise over time:

- **Installation**, fitting new lifts into new or refurbished buildings. Heavy, project-based.
- **Maintenance (service)**, planned visits keeping lifts running safely. A route of sites you get to know well.
- **Repair / callout**, diagnosing and fixing breakdowns, often under time pressure.
- **Modernisation**, upgrading older lifts with new controllers, drives or fixtures.

It's varied and technical. You'll work at height, in machine rooms and occasionally in lift pits, a head for heights and confined spaces helps.

3. THE ROUTES IN

THE APPRENTICESHIP (STANDARD ROUTE)

The most common way in is the **Lift and Escalator Electromechanic (Level 3)** apprenticeship. You're employed by a lift company from day one, earn while you learn, and combine on-the-job training with block-release study. It typically takes around four years and leads to a recognised NVQ-level qualification. The Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA) coordinates much of the industry's training.

FROM ANOTHER TRADE

Already a qualified **electrician** or have a strong **mechanical** background? Many firms will take you on as a trainee/improver and convert you across with lift-specific training and an NVQ, one of the fastest routes to qualifying.

COLLEGE FIRST

A college course in electrical/electronic engineering builds the fundamentals and can make your application stand out, though it isn't essential.

4. WHAT YOU NEED TO START

Age: apprenticeships usually start 16-18, but the trade is genuinely open to career-changers of any age.

Maths & English: GCSEs (or equivalent) grade 4/C+ are typically expected, especially maths.

Aptitude: comfort with hand tools, basic electrics and problem-solving matters more than paper qualifications.

Practicalities: reasonable fitness, OK with heights/confined spaces, and most field roles need a **driving licence**.

5. WHAT IT PAYS

Pay rises sharply as you qualify and pick up callout and overtime. As a broad guide:

- **Apprentice**, a wage throughout training, rising each year; no tuition debt.
- **Improver / trainee**, a clear step up once you're useful on site.
- **Qualified engineer**, the big jump; in London comfortably into the mid-£40,000s with overtime.
- **Senior / supervisor / surveyor**, the top of the field range and beyond.

Overtime and standby/callout are the biggest swing factors and can add a substantial chunk to total earnings, especially in London. Get a tailored figure with the salary calculator at **lifthub.co.uk/salary-calculator**.

6. A DAY IN THE LIFE

Most field engineers start from home in a company van, heading straight to site. On maintenance you work a route you come to know well; on repair the phone decides your day. Breakdowns carry real urgency, someone may be stuck, and there's genuine satisfaction in getting a stopped lift moving again. Many engineers are on a standby rota, which is where a chunk of the overtime comes from. Expect work at height, in machine rooms and pits, with safe-working procedures drilled in for good reason.

7. HOW TO LAND YOUR FIRST ROLE

- **Target lift companies directly.** Manufacturers and national maintenance firms run formal apprenticeship intakes; independents hire too.
- **Apply for "trainee" and "improver" roles**, not just apprenticeships, especially with a trade background.
- **Lead with attitude.** Reliability, a clean licence and genuine interest in how things work carry real weight.
- **Be willing to travel** and say yes to variety in your first year.

8. YOUR NEXT STEPS

Browse lift companies near you in the directory: **lifthub.co.uk/directory**

Check realistic pay: **lifthub.co.uk/salary-calculator**

Read the full guides: **lifthub.co.uk/guides**

Look up apprenticeships on the government's *Find an apprenticeship* service and LEIA member firms.

QUICK-START CHECKLIST

- ✓ Sort your maths & English (GCSE grade 4/C+)
- ✓ Get (or start) a driving licence
- ✓ List the lift companies within travelling distance
- ✓ Apply to apprenticeship intakes *and* trainee/improver roles
- ✓ Prepare to talk about why you like fixing things
- ✓ Bookmark the salary calculator and directory

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