



⚡ Grounded in 3 sources

Trades That Pay Well: The 2026 Insider Job Catalog

A master list of 50+ skilled trade jobs that pay \$60K+—with real pay, certs, and where to apply. Includes overlooked, high-demand roles and the exact shortcuts to land them.

📌 Updated for 2026

📄 **\$60K–\$120K+** Typical pay range for top trades (source-reported, role-dependent)

📢 @jobhacki · JobHacki Community



Start Fast

Clear first steps you can take this week.



Real Sources

Built from people who actually did it.



Honest Numbers

Source-reported pay, costs, and risks.

[Get the Full Guide Vault →](#)

🔒 Includes checklists, scripts & source-backed insights

YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Who This Guide Is For
- ✓ Why This Job Is Worth Looking At
- ✓ Pay Potential — The Real Numbers
- ✓ Opportunity Snapshot
- ✓ What The Job Actually Does
- ✓ Requirements

Table of Contents

01 Who This Guide Is For

02 Opportunity Snapshot

03 Why This Job Is Worth Looking At

04 What The Job Actually Does

05 Pay Potential — The Real Numbers

06 Requirements

07 Skills Needed

08 Certifications or Licenses

09 Beginner Roadmap

10 7-Day Action Plan

11 30-Day Action Plan

12 Insider Secrets & Shortcuts

13 Exact Resume Keywords

14 Copy/Paste Application Script

15 Interview Talking Points

16 Red Flags / Scams To Avoid

17 Source Notes

18 Resources, Certifications & Direct Links

▶ MODULE 01

Who This Guide Is For

This guide is for job seekers who want a stable, well-paid career in the skilled trades—without a 4-year degree. If you want hands-on work, fast entry, and real demand from employers, this is for you. Includes both classic and underrated trades, with details on pay, certs, and where to get hired.

▶ MODULE 02

Opportunity Snapshot

\$60K–\$120K+

Typical pay for top trades (source-reported, varies by role)

3–24 months

Time to qualify for most roles (cert/apprenticeship)

50+ roles

Master catalog—common & obscure jobs

High demand

Many trades have chronic shortages in 2026

▶ MODULE 03

Why This Job Is Worth Looking At

Skilled trades offer high pay, job security, and fast entry—often with no degree. Many roles pay \$60K–\$90K+ within 1–2 years, and some (like elevator techs or power plant operators) can hit \$100K+ with overtime. Demand is strong due to retirements and a lack of new entrants. Several trades are hiring with paid training or apprenticeships.

What The Job Actually Does

Trades jobs span hands-on work in construction, utilities, transportation, manufacturing, and maintenance. Some roles are field-based (e.g., lineman, HVAC tech), others are in plants or facilities (e.g., water treatment operator, elevator inspector). Most involve operating, installing, repairing, or inspecting complex systems or equipment.

Pay Potential — The Real Numbers

Role	Typical Pay (source-reported)	Notes
Elevator Technician	\$80K–\$120K+	Union roles, overtime common
Power Plant Operator	\$85K–\$110K	Often shift-based, utilities
Railroad Signal Operator	\$80K–\$100K	Rail companies, unionized
HVAC Technician	\$60K–\$90K	Residential/commercial
Water Treatment Operator	\$65K–\$90K	Municipal/utilities
Lineman (Utility)	\$75K–\$110K	Electric utilities, hazardous
Sterile Processing Tech	\$60K–\$80K	Hospitals, 1yr cert
Wind Turbine Tech	\$65K–\$90K	Growing field, travel
Plumber	\$65K–\$100K	Union/contractor
Industrial Electrician	\$70K–\$100K	Manufacturing/utilities

Requirements

Requirement	Details
Education	HS diploma or GED (minimum)
Cert/License	Varies—see job catalog below
Background Check	Required for most roles
Physical Ability	Most roles require lifting, standing, or climbing

Skills Needed

Key skills: mechanical aptitude, troubleshooting, reading technical diagrams, safety awareness, and communication. Many roles require comfort with tools, machinery, or computers (for diagnostics). Some jobs (e.g., signal operator, water plant) require attention to detail and ability to follow strict procedures.

Certifications or Licenses

Role	Cert/License	Time to Qualify
Elevator Technician	State license + apprenticeship	4 yrs (paid)
Power Plant Operator	On-the-job + possible NERC cert	6–24 mo
Railroad Signal Operator	Railroad training program	6–12 mo
Sterile Processing Tech	CRCST (IAHCSMM)	9–12 mo
Water Treatment Operator	State operator license	12–18 mo
Lineman	Apprenticeship + CDL	3–4 yrs (paid)
Wind Turbine Tech	Tech school cert	6–24 mo
HVAC Technician	EPA 608 + state license	6–12 mo
Plumber	Apprenticeship + state license	4 yrs (paid)
Industrial Electrician	Journeyman license	2–4 yrs (paid)

► MODULE 09

Beginner Roadmap

- 1 Pick a trade based on pay, demand, and your interests (see master catalog below).
- 2 Check your state's licensing/certification requirements for that role.
- 3 Find local union apprenticeship programs (for roles like electrician, lineman, elevator tech) or employer-sponsored training.
- 4 Apply for entry-level helper or apprentice roles on Indeed, union job boards, or company sites.

- 5 Prepare for a basic mechanical aptitude or math test (common for utilities, elevator, and railroad roles).
- 6 Gather documents: HS diploma/GED, ID, resume with relevant skills.
- 7 If required, enroll in a short-term certificate program (community college or trade school) for roles like sterile processing tech or water operator.

▶ **MODULE 10**

7-Day Action Plan

- 1 Day 1: Review the master catalog below and shortlist 3 roles that match your interests and pay goals.
- 2 Day 2: Research your state's licensing/certification requirements for those roles.
- 3 Day 3: Search for local union apprenticeship programs (e.g., IBEW for electricians, NEIEP for elevator techs).
- 4 Day 4: Set up job alerts on Indeed, Glassdoor, and union job boards for your chosen roles and alternate titles.
- 5 Day 5: Update your resume with exact keywords from job postings (see section below).
- 6 Day 6: Prepare for a basic aptitude test (use free resources like Mometrix or JobTestPrep).
- 7 Day 7: Apply to at least 5 entry-level roles or apprenticeships.

▶ **MODULE 11**

30-Day Action Plan

- 1 Weeks 1–2: Complete all steps in the 7-day plan. Reach out to local trade schools or community colleges for info sessions.

- 2 Week 2: Attend a union or employer info session (virtual or in-person).
- 3 Week 3: Take any required aptitude or entrance tests.
- 4 Week 3–4: Interview for apprentice/helper roles. Use the copy/paste script below to follow up after applying.
- 5 Week 4: If not selected, ask for feedback and reapply to new openings. Consider enrolling in a short certificate program if required.
- 6 By Day 30: Accept an offer or secure a spot in a paid apprenticeship or training program.

▶ **MODULE 12**

Insider Secrets & Shortcuts

- 1 Use the 80/20 rule: Focus on the 20% of trades with the highest pay and lowest competition (elevator tech, signal operator, sterile processing tech). (Source: '5 BEST Marketing Strategies For Small Business 2026')

- 2 Don't buy all new tools or gear up front—many apprentices regret this. Start with used or employer-provided equipment to save thousands. (Source: \$1K a Day From This Simple Side Hustle)

- 3 For trades like HVAC, elevator, or lineman, union apprenticeships often pay you to train—search 'apprentice' or 'helper' on union job boards, not just Indeed.

- 4 For water treatment and sterile processing, 1-year community college certs can get you hired—look for 'fast track' or 'accelerated' programs at local colleges.

- 5 If you have a personal connection (family/friend in a trade), leverage it—referrals are a major shortcut to interviews in these fields. (Source: Starting a Website Business in 2026)

- 6 For overlooked roles (e.g., railroad signal operator, elevator inspector), check employer sites directly (e.g., Union Pacific, Otis, Schindler) as they rarely post on Indeed.

Exact Resume Keywords

Role	Keywords / Alternate Titles
Elevator Technician	Elevator Mechanic, Elevator Apprentice, Elevator Installer, Elevator Repair Technician, NEIEP Apprentice
Power Plant Operator	Control Room Operator, Utility Operator, Plant Operator, Generation Operator
Railroad Signal Operator	Signal Maintainer, Signal Technician, Signalman, Railroad Electronics Technician
Sterile Processing Tech	Central Sterile Technician, Sterile Processing Technician, SPD Tech, Instrument Tech, CRCST
Water Treatment Operator	Water Operator, Wastewater Operator, Plant Operator, Water Plant Technician
Lineman	Lineworker, Apprentice Lineman, Power Line Technician, Utility Lineworker
Wind Turbine Tech	Wind Technician, Wind Energy Technician, Wind Turbine Maintenance
HVAC Technician	HVAC Installer, HVAC Service Tech, Refrigeration Technician, HVACR Technician
Plumber	Plumbing Apprentice, Journeyman Plumber, Pipefitter, Plumbing Technician
Industrial Electrician	Maintenance Electrician, Journeyman Electrician, Plant Electrician, Electrical Technician

Copy/Paste Application Script

▶ MODULE 15

Interview Talking Points

- 1 Emphasize reliability, willingness to learn, and safety mindset.
- 2 Mention any hands-on or mechanical experience (even if not paid).
- 3 If applying for an apprenticeship, state you are ready for shift work and overtime.
- 4 Show you've researched the company and know the cert/license path.
- 5 Ask about advancement and training opportunities.

▶ MODULE 16

Red Flags / Scams To Avoid

Caution

Avoid 'schools' or recruiters that promise guaranteed jobs for high upfront fees. Legitimate apprenticeships and most trade certs are paid or low-cost through community colleges or unions. Never pay thousands for a 'placement'—real employers pay you to train.

▶ MODULE 17

Source Notes

“Fun fact, one really good offer beats 10 mediocre ones. And it's easier to market, easier to sell, and way easier to scale. And in a world full of noise and choice, having that kind of clarity gives you a significant edge over your competition.”

— 5 BEST Marketing Strategies For Small Business 2026

- [1] 5 BEST Marketing Strategies For Small Business 2026 (YouTube transcript)
- [2] \$1K a Day From This Simple Side Hustle (YouTube transcript)
- [3] Starting a Website Business in 2026: My Step-by-Step Guide (YouTube transcript)

▶ RESOURCE GUIDE

Resources, Certifications & Direct Links

Tap straight into search results, certification training, and paid apprenticeships for this path.

🔍 DIRECT SEARCH LINKS

Indeed — open roles

biggest board ↗

LinkedIn Jobs

apply + network ↗

ZipRecruiter

1-click apply ↗

Google — near me

local + niche boards ↗

Glassdoor — real salaries






verify pay ↗

USAJOBS (federal)

gov + benefits ↗





🎓 Certifications & Training — direct links

0 free · 5 paid

-  **EPA 608 (HVAC)** Required to handle refrigerant Paid [↗](#)
-  **State Water Operator Cert (ABC)** Water/wastewater treatment operator — state-licensed, steady gov pay Paid [↗](#)
-  **NICET (Fire Alarm / Inspection)** Engineering tech certs — fire alarm, inspection, \$70K+ niches Paid [↗](#)
-  **NCCCO Crane Operator** Crane operator cert — \$80K+ union paths Paid [↗](#)
-  **CDL-A (Truck Driving)** Commercial driver license — freight/local/union routes Paid [↗](#)

🔧 Paid Apprenticeships — earn while you learn

0 free · 4 paid

-  **Apprenticeship.gov Finder** Official US registered apprenticeships — earn while you learn Paid [↗](#)
-  **Department of Labor Apprenticeship** Paid apprenticeship programs by trade Paid [↗](#)
-  **IBEW Electrical Apprenticeship** Paid electrician union training Paid [↗](#)
-  **UA (Plumbers/Pipefitters)** Paid plumbing/HVAC apprenticeships Paid [↗](#)

Hack

Set a saved-search alert on [Indeed](#) + [LinkedIn](#) for this exact term — new roles hit your inbox before they're crowded.






▶ **TOOL GUIDE**

Tool Stack — Organized by Category

Every tool for this path, grouped by category. Free tools first, paid last. Tap any logo to open it.








Gig & Delivery

5 free · 0 paid

-  **Amazon Flex** Package delivery blocks Free [↗](#)
-  **Angi** Local service leads Free [↗](#)
-  **DropOff** Medical courier contracts Free [↗](#)
-  **Roadie** On-demand delivery gigs Free [↗](#)
-  **Thumbtack** Find local service clients Free [↗](#)










Job Boards

7 free · 0 paid

-  **Indeed** Largest job board Free [↗](#)
-  **LinkedIn Jobs** Jobs + networking Free [↗](#)
-  **Remote OK** Remote jobs board Free [↗](#)
-  **USAJOBS** Federal government jobs Free [↗](#)
-  **We Work Remotely** Remote-only jobs Free [↗](#)
-  **Wellfound** Startup + tech jobs Free [↗](#)
-  **ZipRecruiter** Quick-apply job board Free [↗](#)

Learning & Certifications

6 free · 3 paid

	AWS Skill Builder Free AWS cloud training	Free	↗
	Coursera Courses (audit free)	Free	↗
	freeCodeCamp Free coding + certs	Free	↗
	HubSpot Academy Free sales/marketing certs	Free	↗
	Professor Messer Free CompTIA training	Free	↗
	Salesforce Trailhead Free Salesforce admin path	Free	↗
	CompTIA CertMaster Official A+/Net+/Sec+ prep	Paid	↗
	Google Career Certificates Job-ready certs (IT/data/cyber/UX)	Paid	↗
	Udemy Cheap skill courses	Paid	↗

Money tip

Stack the **free** tools first. Only pay once a tool is directly making or saving you money.

► MODULE 20

Master Catalog: 50+ Trades That Pay Well

Role	Realistic Pay	Time to Qualify	Cert/license	Where to Apply
Elevator Technician	\$80K– \$120K+	4 yrs (paid)	State license + NEIEP	Otis, Schindler, NEIEP, Indeed
Power Plant Operator	\$85K– \$110K	6–24 mo	On-the-job + NERC (sometimes)	Local utilities, Indeed
Railroad Signal Operator	\$80K– \$100K	6–12 mo	Railroad training	Union Pacific, BNSF, CSX
Sterile Processing Tech	\$60K– \$80K	9–12 mo	CRCST	Hospitals, IAHCSMM, Indeed
Water Treatment Operator	\$65K– \$90K	12–18 mo	State license	Municipalities, AWWA, Indeed
Lineman (Utility)	\$75K– \$110K	3–4 yrs (paid)	Apprenticeship + CDL	IBEW, local utilities, Indeed
Wind Turbine Tech	\$65K– \$90K	6–24 mo	Tech school cert	NextEra, Vestas, Indeed
HVAC Technician	\$60K– \$90K	6–12 mo	EPA 608 + state license	Local contractors, Indeed
Plumber	\$65K– \$100K	4 yrs (paid)	Apprenticeship + state license	UA, local contractors, Indeed
Industrial Electrician	\$70K– \$100K	2–4 yrs (paid)	Journeyman license	Manufacturing, IBEW, Indeed
Elevator Inspector	\$80K– \$110K	2–4 yrs	State license	State agencies, Otis, Schindler

Role	Realistic Pay	Time to Qualify	Cert/license	Where to Apply
Power Line Inspector	\$70K– \$95K	2–4 yrs	State/utility cert	Utilities, Indeed
EEG/Neurodiagnostic Tech	\$78K+	1–2 yrs	ABRET	Hospitals, ASET
Diesel Mechanic	\$60K– \$85K	1–2 yrs	ASE cert	Dealers, trucking companies
Boilermaker	\$65K– \$100K	3–4 yrs	Apprenticeship	Union, contractors
Nuclear Medicine Tech	\$75K– \$100K	1–2 yrs	ARRT(N)	Hospitals, ARRT
Crane Operator	\$65K– \$95K	6–12 mo	NCCCO	Construction, unions
Heavy Equipment Operator	\$60K– \$85K	6–12 mo	State cert	Contractors, unions
Sheet Metal Worker	\$60K– \$90K	4 yrs	Apprenticeship	Union, contractors
Sprinkler Fitter	\$65K– \$90K	4 yrs	Apprenticeship	Union, contractors
Refrigeration Tech	\$60K– \$90K	6–12 mo	EPA 608	HVAC companies, Indeed
Millwright	\$65K– \$90K	4 yrs	Apprenticeship	Union, manufacturing
Pipefitter	\$65K– \$100K	4 yrs	Apprenticeship	UA, contractors

Role	Realistic Pay	Time to Qualify	Cert/license	Where to Apply
Instrumentation Tech	\$70K– \$100K	2–4 yrs	Cert (ISA)	Manufacturing, utilities
Utility Meter Technician	\$60K– \$80K	6–12 mo	On-the-job	Utilities, Indeed
CNC Machinist	\$60K– \$85K	1–2 yrs	NIMS cert	Manufacturing, Indeed
Locksmith	\$60K– \$80K	6–12 mo	State license	Security firms, Indeed
Fire Alarm Technician	\$60K– \$85K	6–12 mo	NICET	Security firms, contractors
Solar Installer	\$60K– \$80K	6–12 mo	NABCEP	Solar companies, Indeed
Aircraft Mechanic	\$70K– \$100K	2 yrs	FAA A&P	Airlines, MROs
Avionics Technician	\$65K– \$90K	2 yrs	FAA cert	Airlines, MROs
Gas Plant Operator	\$70K– \$95K	6–12 mo	On-the-job	Utilities, gas companies
Nondestructive Testing Tech	\$65K– \$90K	1–2 yrs	ASNT	Manufacturing, construction
Elevator Constructor	\$80K– \$120K	4 yrs	Apprenticeship	NEIEP, Otis, Schindler
Telecom Line Installer	\$60K– \$85K	6–12 mo	On-the-job	Telecoms, contractors

Role	Realistic Pay	Time to Qualify	Cert/license	Where to Apply
Railroad Switch Operator	\$80K– \$100K	6–12 mo	Railroad training	Rail companies
Power Dispatcher	\$80K– \$110K	6–12 mo	NERC	Utilities
Stationary Engineer	\$70K– \$95K	2–4 yrs	State license	Facilities, utilities
Wastewater Operator	\$65K– \$90K	12–18 mo	State license	Municipalities
Medical Equipment Repairer	\$60K– \$85K	1–2 yrs	CBET (optional)	Hospitals, service firms
Elevator Repair Technician	\$80K– \$120K	4 yrs	NEIEP	Otis, Schindler
Fire Protection Engineer Tech	\$65K– \$90K	2–4 yrs	NICET	Engineering firms
Industrial Maintenance Tech	\$65K– \$90K	1–2 yrs	Cert (varies)	Manufacturing
Sheet Metal Fabricator	\$60K– \$85K	1–2 yrs	On-the-job	Manufacturing, contractors
Truck Dispatcher	\$60K– \$80K	6–12 mo	On-the-job	Logistics firms
Utility Locator	\$60K– \$80K	6–12 mo	On-the-job	Utilities, contractors
Bridge Inspector	\$70K– \$95K	2–4 yrs	PE/Cert	DOT, engineering firms

Role	Realistic Pay	Time to Qualify	Cert/license	Where to Apply
Building Automation Tech	\$65K– \$90K	1–2 yrs	Cert (varies)	Facilities, contractors
Control Systems Tech	\$70K– \$100K	2–4 yrs	ISA	Manufacturing, utilities
Hydroelectric Plant Tech	\$70K– \$95K	6–12 mo	On-the-job	Utilities
Maintenance Planner	\$65K– \$90K	1–2 yrs	On-the-job	Manufacturing, utilities

THE JOBHACKI ARSENAL

This guide is 1% of what members get

The community unlocks the tools that do the heavy lifting for you:



OmniCut

Upload any video — get back a timestamped, cut-by-cut edit blueprint: hooks, vocal cues, effects and animation calls, all mapped to the viral frameworks behind our own content. You (or your AI editor) just follow the map.



JobHacki Resume Builder

Our exact one-page, recruiter-tested template — auto-built from your LinkedIn in minutes, exported as an editable doc + PDF.



JobHacki Readiness Simulator

Paste any job link. Get tested on what the role actually requires, see your readiness score, and get the fastest study path to close the gaps.



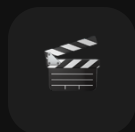
Atlas Directory

Every guide and career path we publish — refreshed by 24/7 AI researchers so you never act on stale info.

[Join the JobHacki Community →](#)

Join free today — founding-member pricing locks in before the tools go paid.

WHAT EACH TOOL ACTUALLY DOES



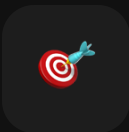
OmniCut

OmniCut watches your entire video the way an elite editor would — every frame, the full transcript, your offer and what you're actually selling — then runs it through the viral frameworks behind our own content. What you get back is a timestamped editing score: your video chopped into 10-second sequences, each with exact vocal cues, audio cues, effect calls and animation directions. Copy a sequence, paste it into Gemini Omni, and generate that cut — then the next, then the next, until the whole edit is done. Runs as a custom GPT inside ChatGPT (you'll need a ChatGPT account), purpose-built for Gemini Omni video editing the day it drops.



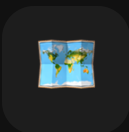
JobHacki Resume Builder

Drop in your LinkedIn (or paste your experience) and it rebuilds everything into the exact one-page format we use: tight summary line, education with the details recruiters scan for, metric-driven experience bullets, and the 10-category skills stack that beats ATS keyword filters. Out comes a polished PDF plus a fully editable doc — change any line later without starting over. Single-industry and multi-industry versions included.



JobHacki Readiness Simulator

Paste a real job posting link. The simulator breaks down what that role actually demands — skills, tools, terminology, scenarios — and tests you on it: multiple choice, written answers, even voice roleplay for interviews and sales calls. You get a Readiness Score out of 100 across skill match, tool match, communication and interview readiness, plus the exact study plan to close your gaps — linked straight to the guides, certs and resources that fix them.



Atlas Directory

The full living library: 100+ grounded, step-by-step playbooks across AI businesses, careers, trades, healthcare paths and side income — every one built from people who actually did it, never theory. Our AI researchers monitor hundreds of creators and sources around the clock, so tools, pay data and methods stay current. Search it, filter it, read online or download any guide as a PDF.

Created by JobHacki · @jobhacki · JobHacki Community · Version 2026

Income figures in this guide are source-reported or estimates from real creators and practitioners — not guarantees. Income depends on location, skill, speed, and demand. Verify pay rates and offers before applying or buying.