

# 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 [londonlifts.co.uk/salary-calculator](https://londonlifts.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: **[londonlifts.co.uk/directory](https://londonlifts.co.uk/directory)**

Check realistic pay: **[londonlifts.co.uk/salary-calculator](https://londonlifts.co.uk/salary-calculator)**

Read the full guides: **[londonlifts.co.uk/guides](https://londonlifts.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