The Craft of Motor Mechanics

Motor mechanics repair and service cars, vans and other light vehicles. Some motor mechanics specialise in the servicing and repair of particular makes of vehicle.

Central Aspects
Learning new practical skills
Learning how machines work
Good analytical and troubleshooting skills
Working with vehicles
Learning and developing new craft-related skills

Secondary Aspects
Understanding and using physics
Being responsible for controlling or adjusting equipment
Understanding technical drawings and diagrams
Being accurate with numbers in counting, measuring and arithmetic
Good communications skills
Practical skills and theoretical knowledge

Other Aspects
Being physically active and on your feet
Working with electricity or electronics
Keeping up-to-date with changing technologies
Enthusiasm to solve problems
Being well-organised and careful with practical tasks
Taking responsibility for own learning, including the allocation of study time

Work activities

Motor mechanics carry out the routine servicing and repair of cars and other light vehicles such as vans and motorcycles. A vehicle may be due for a service after it has travelled a certain number of kilometres or after a certain period of time, according to instructions set out by the vehicle's manufacturers. Mechanics also repair vehicles that have broken down or been involved in accidents.

Servicing involves making routine checks according to a list, finding faults or problems, overhauling or replacing worn or faulty parts, and using special equipment and road tests to make sure the vehicle performs as it should.

Sometimes customers take their vehicles to mechanics to investigate a particular mechanical fault. Solving these problems may involve stripping down the affected part of the car (eg the gearbox) on a bench or in a workshop area, finding the faulty components and replacing them, and then putting all the parts together again. Mechanics tend to replace parts rather than repair them because this is quicker and therefore less costly.

During the course of their work, mechanics also deal with electrical and electronic systems, which are becoming more and more sophisticated on modern vehicles. For example, mechanics may connect laptop computers to a vehicle’s electronic control unit, using an on-screen menu to choose the part of the vehicle they want to investigate. The computer is able to find and report back information on the fault, for example, a break in circuit wiring. With older vehicles, mechanics use electrical testing equipment like voltmeters and ammeters to test electric circuits/components.

Some mechanics go out to vehicles that have broken down or been damaged in accidents. They may be able to repair on the roadside, depending on the fault or tow the vehicle back to their work station to assess any damage or unseen problems.

Mechanics are also responsible for pre-delivery inspections. These are done to ensure a vehicle is working well and performing as it should before it is delivered to the customer. Mechanics use specialised equipment to measure things like engine and brake performance, transmission and the accuracy of dashboard indicators. Mechanics also road test vehicles during pre-delivery inspections.

Generally, motor mechanics are responsible for routine work, while vehicle technicians look after more complicated work. Vehicle technicians may have a supervisory position.

Personal qualities and skills

You must have good practical skills and a high level of technical knowledge. You need to be physically fit to cope with bending, lifting and stretching, although you will use ramps and pits, hoists and jacks for heavy work. You will need nimble fingers to handle small parts and hand tools.

You should be logical and patient in tracing faults, and have good organisational skills to prioritise your workload. It is important for mechanics to have good communication skills, because they need to explain faults and repairs clearly to customers.

Pay and opportunities

A qualified and experienced motor mechanic earns around €30,500 a year.

A motor mechanic works a basic 39-hour week. Weekend work and part-time work may be available.

During your apprenticeship you will be paid an apprentice rate. The actual rates paid may vary, depending on the occupation and employer. Generally, the rates will increase in a number of steps during the apprenticeship. You should seek details of rates of pay for apprentices from your prospective employer.

All apprentices are paid a training allowance by FÁS while attending off-the-job training phases 2, 4 and 6.

Opportunities arise from time-to-time for promotion to supervisor level. Many persons use an apprenticeship as a first step in proceeding to such occupations as instructors, teachers, training advisers, managers and owners of businesses.

Where apprentices and crafts persons have the necessary ability, initiative and basic qualifications, opportunities are available for advancement. These include advanced technological and management courses which are available in Institutes of Technology, schools of management, professional institutes, etc.

People anxious to advance themselves in their careers are advised to discover for themselves what opportunities are available.

Note: Wage and salary figures quoted under pay and opportunities are approximate and are for guideline purposes only. These may vary, depending on experience or economic and local circumstances. Any variances are outside the control of FÁS.

The craft is designated for apprenticeship training and as such is governed by the statutory apprenticeship rules that have been made by FÁS