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# A CAREER IN THE TRADES:

How to get there and  
what to expect

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A guide from the  
Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection



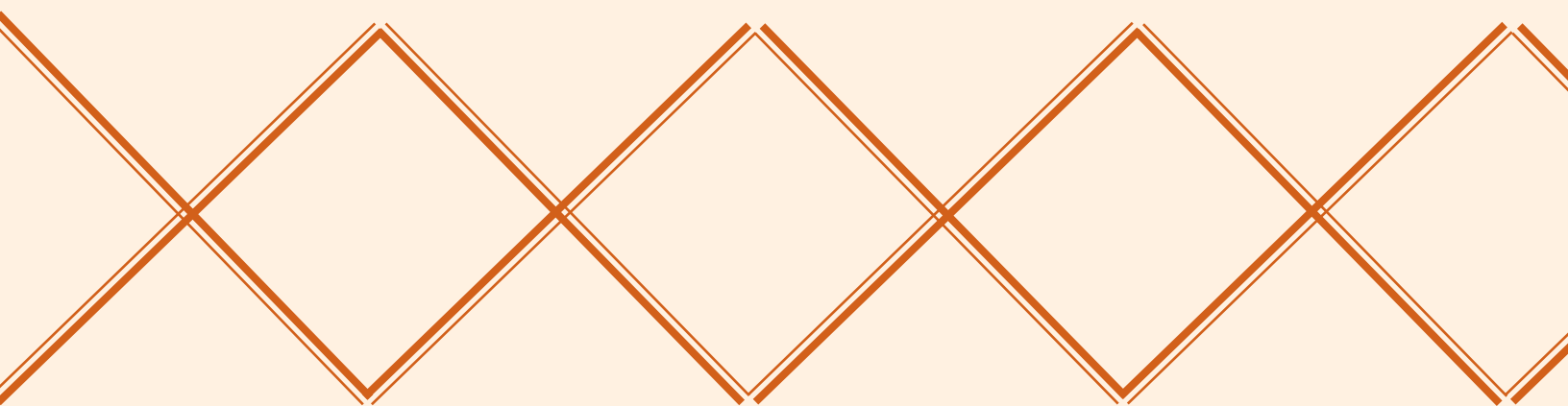


# So, you're considering a career in the trades ...

Careers in the trades can offer a rewarding job with good pay and opportunities for growth.

A number of industries are growing rapidly and looking for more people with the right training to begin careers in fields such as electrical, elevators and conveyors, fire protection sprinkler and Ansul® systems, plumbing and lawn irrigation, heating, cooling and sheet metal, and glazier automotive and flat glass.

Training for a career in the trades is hard work, and the culture can be challenging. But, if you put in the time, get the work done, and prove that you're reliable, it can pay off.



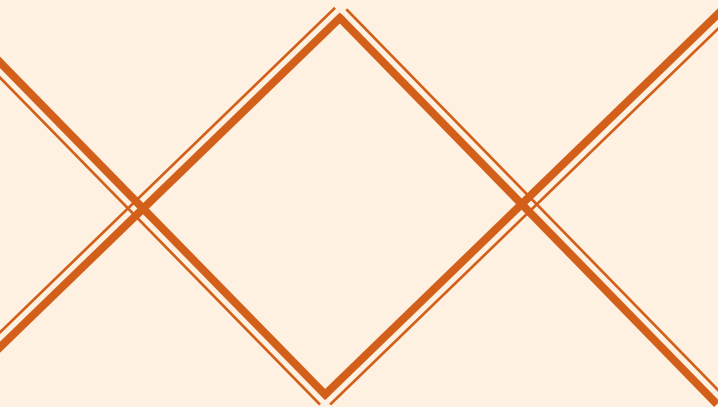


## ... We are here to help.

In this guide, you will find information about each step of the process to obtain the right training and license for a career in the trades. This guide discusses:

- Apprenticeships and Course Requirements
- Licensing
- Finding a Job

In addition to areas directly related to a career in the trades, this guide also includes basic information about what you'll need to succeed, including reliable transportation, childcare, and what to do if you have gaps in work.



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# 1 What to Expect in an Apprenticeship Program

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## *To Work Hard at Hard Work*

Training for a career in the trades will include an apprenticeship program with a significant, but manageable, time commitment. An apprenticeship is a training program that includes classroom time, and on the job experience.

Your training will likely include a variety of classroom settings, and a variety of worksite conditions, ***including rain or shine, and all temperatures.***

The Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) [Office of Apprenticeship Training](#) oversees apprenticeship programs in the state.

## 1.1 – Time Commitment for On-the-Job Training & Coursework

Different programs require different amounts of time. Typically, you will spend two (2) years in a program for a limited license, and four (4) years in a program for an unlimited license. During that time, you should expect to:

- Work five (5) days a week
- Work both inside and outside in all types of weather
- Work on commercial and residential construction sites
- Work on private and government projects
- Attend apprenticeship school for related instruction, theory and code

### NOTE

*If you graduated from a Connecticut Technical High School or other approved institutions with a diploma in the construction/occupational trades, your apprenticeship sponsor through DOL may grant you credit for those related instruction hours.*

## 1.2 – Your Schedule

During an apprenticeship, you should expect to build study time into your schedule **in addition** to your work and school time.

Most apprenticeship schools have tests and exams during the school year, and you are often expected to maintain a certain average for your school work.

### TIP

*Periodically review your recorded hours in your progress report to ensure you are receiving all the training necessary to complete your apprenticeship.*



## 1.3 – Pay & Budget

While most trade careers offer opportunities for good pay, it's important to know that, generally speaking, in construction and the occupational trades:

- If you work, you get paid, if you don't work, you don't get paid
- Sick days, bereavement days and vacation days are typically unpaid

You should plan to budget your money to save for unexpected illnesses and vacation time.

### **NOTE**

*In some cases, there may be work shortages, and layoffs may be necessary. If you are laid off for a period of time, you are still required to attend related instruction classes. There will be more detailed information about layoffs in your [DOL Apprenticeship Handbook](#).*

## 1.4 – What You Need to be Successful

- High School Diploma or GED
- Valid Driver's License
- A vehicle
- Auto insurance
- Reliable child care if applicable

**Depending on the type of program you're participating in, you will need different tools and clothing items such as:**

- Solid sturdy work boots or steel toed boots
- Work clothes like heavy duty denim jeans, work shirts, and jackets, work boot socks, t-shirts, hoodies, work gloves or leather gloves
- Pocket tools such as folding rulers, pencils, linesmen pliers, a flat head screwdriver, a Philips head screwdriver, and Channel Locks® (or similar adjustable grip wrench)

## 1.5 – Other Fees and Costs You Should Plan For

In addition to purchasing the appropriate tools and ensuring you have a vehicle, auto insurance, and childcare, it is likely that you will incur routine fees during your apprenticeship.

### For example:

- There is a fee to register as an apprentice with DOL (registrations expire and must be renewed annually).
- Unions may have fees associated with their programs.
- Related instruction textbooks, training manuals and online training may have separate fees.



***Extra costs can stack up quickly, but keeping a budget and planning for expenses will help.***







## 2 Locating the right Apprenticeship Program for you

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### *Department of Labor*

The DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training resources can be helpful if you are hoping to learn more about a career in the trades.

Visit their website, [www.ctapprenticeship.com](http://www.ctapprenticeship.com), to access the list of employer apprenticeship programs you may be interested in.

*Not all sponsors will be accepting apprentices at all times. Be sure to ask if they are accepting applications before you complete one. If you do not hear back from your prospective apprenticeship sponsor, you may contact them to indicate that you are still interested when openings are available.*

## 2.1 – License Types & Training Requirements

There are a number of different license types in the trades and each area has different levels or subsections of license types that allow a license holder to do specific types of work within their area of expertise.

### **Each license type has different requirements for:**

- Type of training
- On-the-job instruction hours
- Related instruction hours

### **License Type Subject Areas**

**Electrical**  
**Electrical Solar**  
**Conveyor Hoists Cranes & Lifts**  
**Elevator**  
**Residential Stair Lift**  
**Fire Protection Systems**  
**Automotive Glass Repair**  
**Flat Glass**  
**Heating, Piping & Cooling**  
**Plumbing & Piping**  
**Limited Sheet Metal**  
**Swimming Pool Builder - In Ground**  
**Tv & Radio Electronics**  
**Dish Antenna Installation and Repair**  
**Limited Geothermal Driller**  
**Non-Water Supply Driller**  
**Water Supply Driller**

*A description of each license type is [available on the DCP website](#).*

## 2.2 – Apprenticeship Registration Agreement

You will sign an Apprenticeship Registration Agreement that is a legal, binding document between you, your apprenticeship sponsor, and the State of Connecticut.

The terms and conditions of your training are contained in the agreement, including the start date of your apprenticeship.

If you have any questions about your agreement, contact your DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training representative.

### NOTE

*There is a probationary period required for apprenticeships.*

*During this period, you and your sponsor both reserve the right to cancel the agreement.*

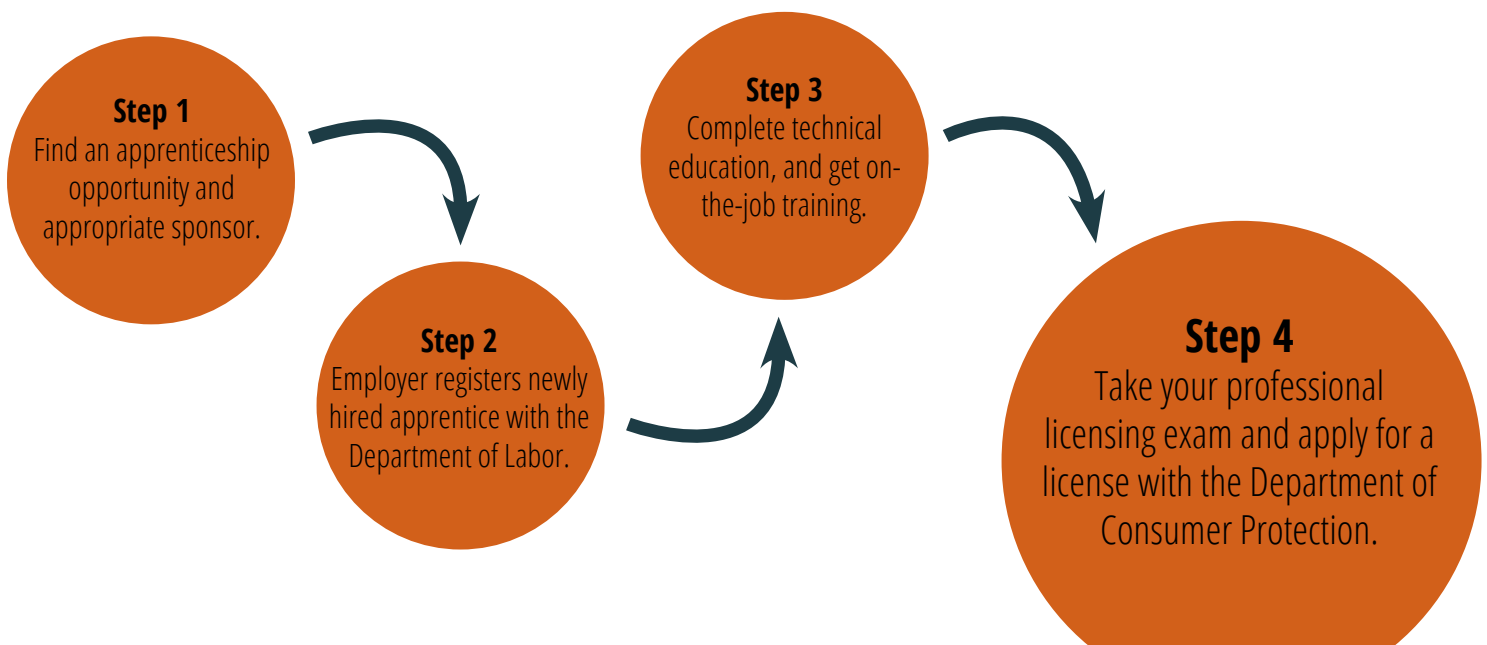
*Unless otherwise stated in your agreement, that period is the first wage progression period — or first pay scale level.*

### Required Registration with the DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training

Your sponsor (employer or union) **must** register you as an apprentice with the DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training Program before you are sent to a jobsite. Not only is it unlawful to be working on the jobsite as an unregistered apprentice, but your hours on the jobsite will not count toward the hours needed to be licensed if you are not properly registered.

You **must** carry your DOL apprenticeship card while working, and produce it upon request to appropriate parties (*usually a DCP licensing inspector, DOL wage and workplace standards agent, OSHA agent, or the town building official*).

You may receive a temporary card until your permanent one is prepared.



## 2.3 – Places to Find Apprenticeship Opportunities

- Connecticut Department of Labor [American Job Centers](#)
- Contractor Associations Websites
- Listings in Local Papers

### Other Government Opportunities

There may be opportunities in public works and building maintenance programs at:

- Municipal, State and Federal Governments
- Hospitals
- Colleges and Universities

## 2.4 – How to Locate Active Apprenticeship Sponsor Company Information

1. Visit [www.ctapprenticeship.com](http://www.ctapprenticeship.com)
2. Click on “List of Sponsors”
3. Click on the “Go to the Apprenticeship Sponsor Report” (Excel) link on the bottom left of your screen to download the list
4. Filter the list to include your trade, and the location you would like to work in. (Column A is “Trade” and Column D is “City”)
5. To filter, click on the arrow to the right of the column you are filtering. Then, uncheck “Select All” at the top of the list, and either use the search feature, or scroll down to find your selection.



## 2.5 – Union vs. Non Union Apprenticeships

Information about both union and nonunion (or “open shop”) apprenticeship opportunities are available through DOL. They will both get you the appropriate training through an apprenticeship sponsor, but are structured differently.

### Union Programs:

- Unions register you with their Joint Apprenticeship Training Councils (JATC).
- You are registered with the [DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training](#).
- Your related instruction is typically held in the union’s training facilities.
- The union is like an employment referral agency.
- If a contractor wants to hire an apprentice, they contact the union and you are sent to work for that contractor. The contractor becomes your employer and pays you.
- Unions usually have deadlines each year for apprenticeship programs, and may have an apprenticeship committee that will interview you in addition to a written exam and/or skills test.

### Open Shop Programs:

- You are hired directly by a contractor in the construction or occupational field of your choice.
- You are registered with the [DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training](#).
- Your related instruction will be conducted by the State Department of Education, Technical High School System or any approved registered apprenticeship related instruction providers. Information about class availability can be found through DOL. You should note that depending upon class availability, you may need to travel.
  - There are seven locations to choose from along with [online courses available](#).
  - Non-registered apprentices may apply as an extension student. Extension students may use the earned course credit to future apprenticeship requirements, or they may take the course just to learn new skills or gain information. Students under 18 years of age may apply with parental permission.
- The contractor that hires you is your employer.



### **In All Programs:**

- Your apprenticeship sponsor must have a full-time and regularly employed licensed contractor of record on their payroll.
- They must have an approved apprenticeship program in good standing with DOL.
- They can only hire you as a registered apprentice if they have the proper number of licensees in their company (referred to as “hiring ratio”).
  - **For example:** A company can hire one (1) registered apprentice if they have three (3) licensed journeypersons.
- You will meet with the [DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training](#) representative with your sponsor to sign the apprenticeship application for your trade.
  - This is when your Technical construction/occupational trade diploma and transcript are reviewed for related instruction credits.

### **Training programs for professions that do not require apprenticeships**

While most license types require you to complete an apprenticeship program through DOL, a small number do not.

If you don't require an apprenticeship program, you may require a certain number of training hours. In that case, you may be eligible to obtain a trainee license through DCP. While a trainee license may not be a requirement, it is helpful as you will likely be asked to verify that you're authorized to be on a worksite, just like those who have apprenticeship documentation.



## **3** Licensing with the Department of Consumer Protection

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Prior to obtaining a license with DCP, you must complete an apprenticeship program through the [DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training](#) (or in rare cases, other training), submit an application, pass the appropriate exam, and finally, send the needed information to DCP to receive your license.

*Please note that DCP does not administer exams, and it is likely you will coordinate your exam details, and submit some paperwork to a third party testing vendor.*

## 3.1 – Application Process

Once you have completed your apprenticeship or on the job and school related instruction training hours, you will be eligible to apply for a license. Detailed and up to date information about license applications at DCP can always be found at [ct.gov/DCP/license](http://ct.gov/DCP/license).

Always keep information from your applications and exams on file.

### To apply for a license, you should:

- 1. Send in your application:** Fill out, and send in an application along with your application fee, and a record of your instructional and training hours.
- 2. Register for your exam:** If your application is accepted, you will receive an exam approval along with times and places you may take the exam. Then, you will register for the time and place you wish to take the exam, and pay an exam fee. You must take the test within one year of approval.
- 3. Obtain your initial license from DCP:** If you pass your exam, you will send your license fee, along with verification that you have passed your exam, and you will be issued your license.

Application forms can be found by visiting [ct.gov/DCP/forms](http://ct.gov/DCP/forms) and clicking on “License, Registration, and Permit Forms”. You should also visit [DCP’s website](#) for updated information about what vendor is administering exams.

#### **NOTE**

*The application asks about your criminal background, but prior criminal convictions should not discourage you from pursuing an occupational license. In some cases, a prior criminal conviction could be of concern if it is related to the nature of the potential employment.*





# 4 Getting a Job

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## 4.1 – Where to Look

There are many ways to search for a job, and you should use all of the resources available to you when you are looking for work. A few ways that you can start looking for work are:

- Social Media ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#))
- Job recruiting websites ([Indeed](#))
- Through unions
- Your network (*Your apprenticeship sponsor, coworkers*)
- Trades job boards
- Government job boards

There are a number of sites and job boards you can visit. A few recommended in the State of Connecticut, and for trades related work are:

- [Department of Administrative Services](#)
- [Department of Labor Jobseeker Services](#)
- [Federal Government Jobs](#)
- [Build Connecticut Jobs](#)
- [Sisters in the Brotherhood](#)
- [National Association of Women in Construction \(NAWIC\)](#)

### **Be Aware of Scams**

- *Use caution when posting your resume online.*
- *Beware of fake job ads that are designed to capture your information.*
- *Limit the personal information you disclose on these sites.*
- *It's never a good idea to disclose your home address, date of birth and social security number.*
- *Listing an email address and phone number where your potential employer can contact you should be sufficient.*

**While each job and each employer is different, these are common things you may be asked to provide:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	A resume that highlights your work experience and skillset
<input type="checkbox"/>	References from your current employer, apprenticeship sponsor, and past employers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proof of High School Diploma or GED
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certificates from your trade school
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any occupational licenses, or apprenticeship card from your former employer(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proof of professional certifications you have
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evidence you are able to meet the physical and dexterity requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proof you are able to work legally in the United States, such as a social security number, green card or a U.S. work permit

Once you have gathered the above documentation, you are ready to start job applications. Most employers will verify the information that you have provided on the application before offering you a job.

## 4.3 – Interviews: What to Expect

It's always smart to prepare before your interview so that you can be comfortable. These are a few things that you can do to ensure that you are ready:

- Have someone practice with you by asking possible interview questions. This should help increase your confidence in answering questions.
- Research your potential employer ahead of the interview. You should visit their website, and meet with current employees to ask questions about the company's culture and environment if possible.
- Plan to wear the appropriate attire. You should dress neatly, but also be prepared to tour the jobsite. It will be helpful to have pocket tools specific to your trade, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on hand.

### **NOTE**

*If you have been offered a job, or are in the final stages, you may want to ask what PPE is provided by the company, and what you are expected to have yourself.*

### **During Your Interview**

- Speak clearly about your skills, work experience and why you are interested in working for your potential employer.
- Always take a minute to pause and think if you are unsure what to say.
- Never misrepresent your skill level or experience just to get the job.
  - Once on the job site, your employer will expect you to perform all aspects of the job you were hired to do. If your performance is less than satisfactory, you could be required to seek additional training, or worse, you could be terminated.

### **REMEMBER**

- *Even if you didn't do as well as you had hoped during the interview, keep in mind that you have still benefitted from the experience.*
- *Do not be discouraged if you do not receive a response from a potential employer.*
- *Continually remind yourself of your goal and, most of all, don't give up and remain patient.*



# 5 Other Resources

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This section includes some things you should consider before classes and training begin to ensure you have the stability and predictability in your life necessary to be successful in an apprenticeship training program, and in your career.



## 5.1 – Purchasing a Vehicle

Reliable transportation is essential to be successful in an apprenticeship training program. Job sites can be in different locations, and the start and end times may vary depending on the nature of each job. Relying on public transportation is typically not a reasonable expectation, and you should expect to purchase a reliable vehicle.

### **Things you should research and consider before committing to a vehicle:**

- Miles per gallon, or fuel economy
- Common repairs for the make and model, along with how much they typically cost
- Property taxes for a specific vehicle in your town
- The cost of insurance on your car
- Where you can find a reliable mechanic to take a look at your car
- If you're purchasing a used car, you should have a mechanic look at it before purchase
- Reviews of the make and model from previous owners, and other organizations
- Be wary of add-on offers from your dealer (they're often unnecessary expenses)
- What financing is available for you
- What warranty type you have

#### **REMEMBER**

*It is your responsibility to take it to a mechanic and have a full check-up on the vehicle.*

## 5.2 – Obtaining Auto Insurance

Not only should you have a car, but you need to budget for appropriate car insurance. You may be asked to pick up supplies or run other errands at a job site. Your boss needs to be able to rely on you as someone that can be trusted to do what is necessary for a project.

### **NOTE**

Visit the [Department of Motor Vehicles website](#) to make sure you know what paperwork you need to complete before you go to register a car.

In Connecticut, you'll need to verify your car insurance coverage in order to legally register your vehicle. If you do not have insurance, and you are caught driving without it, you risk the suspension of your license, and paying a fine.

Connecticut state law requires that if you own a vehicle, you must maintain minimum insurance. You can find information about minimum insurance requirements from the [Connecticut Insurance Department \(CID\)](#).

Depending on your circumstances, you may also want additional insurance. You should consult your insurance company, employer, and CID for more information to consider.



## 5.3 – Finding Child Care

If you have children, arrange for consistent and reliable child care. During your apprenticeship program, classes are generally in the evenings at least two (2) days a week and you will need to be at work sites during the day, possibly early in the morning. You may also have unpredictable hours during your career, so you should expect to maintain childcare services.

There are a number of child care resources available. Below are some programs that you may consider to help with your childcare needs:

- **Care 4 Kids:** The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) sponsors Care 4 Kids, which helps low to moderate income families pay for child care costs.
- **Head Start:** This is a comprehensive child development program that serves children from birth to age five (5) and their families.
- **Child Day Care Contracts:** This program provides early care and education to infants and toddlers, preschoolers and/or school age children who meet certain eligibility requirements, including falling below 75 percent of the state median income.

### NOTE

You can get a list of licensed childcare facilities, or verify a license in the State of Connecticut by visiting [elicense.ct.gov](http://elicense.ct.gov).





Although a career in the trades is likely to put you on a path toward a higher paying job, it is not without risk. There will likely be gaps between when one project ends and another begins. These periods could be as short as a few days or could last several weeks or longer.

As you put together a budget, make every effort to set money aside for periods when you are between jobs or using unemployment insurance.

### **Unemployment Insurance**

Unemployment insurance is temporary income for workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own and who are either looking for new jobs, in approved training, or awaiting recall to employment. To collect benefits, you must meet certain legal eligibility requirements. For more information about unemployment insurance, consult DOL at [ct.gov/DOL](http://ct.gov/DOL).

### **Filing for Unemployment Insurance**

You should file a claim as soon as possible after you are separated from employment. Starting the process quickly will allow you time to provide DOL the information they need to process your claim.

You can file your initial claim or reopened claim 24 hours a day online by visiting [www.FileCTUI.com](http://www.FileCTUI.com).

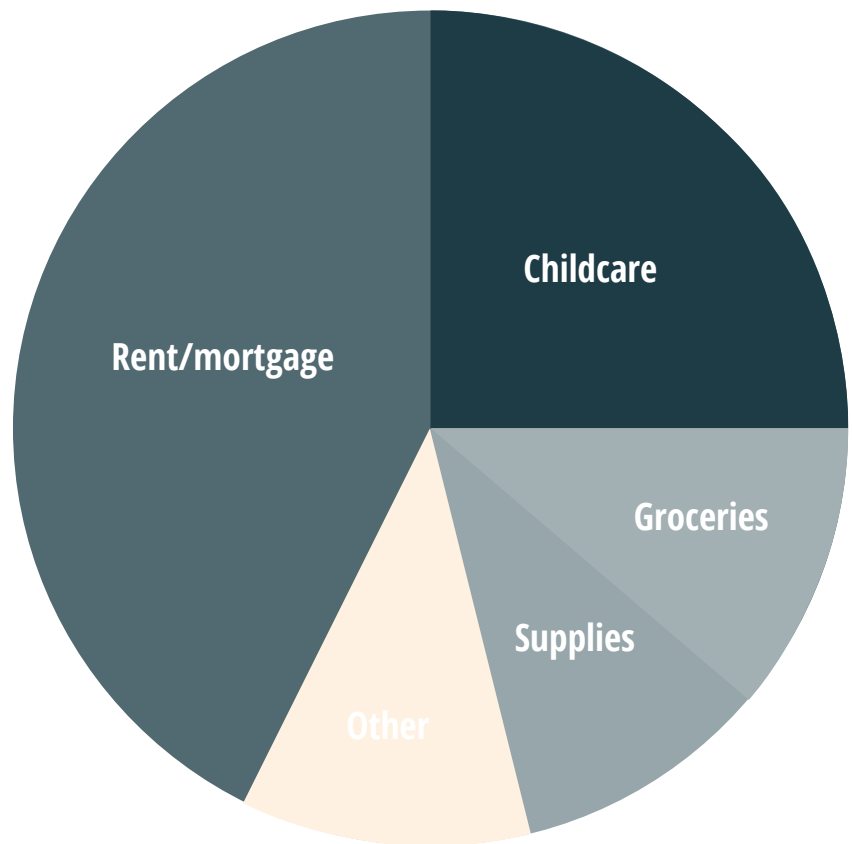
## 5.5 – Managing a Budget

Although it may seem like a lot of work to set up a first budget, ultimately it will pay off. Creating a reasonable budget will put you in control of your expenses, and create a feeling of comfort in the long run.

### Starting Your Budget

Once you are receiving a regular paycheck, and know what your take-home pay is, it is important to create a budget to help you plan for spending and saving for the future.

- Determine what you need. Make a list of things like your rent or mortgage, food, utilities, transportation expenses, clothing, school expenses, child care, school loan repayments, phone charges, medications not covered by insurance, and other necessary items.
- Make a budget. Any budget must cover all of your needs, some of your wants or incidental expenses, and savings.
- Track your spending as regularly as possible. There are a number of online tools to help you. You can also sign up for automatic payments for regular expenses like utilities.



#### **DON'T FORGET**

*Revisit your budget as things change. Things like marital status, illness, a pay raise, unexpected expenses or emergencies can impact your income. Adjust your budget accordingly, but always have one.*

# Now that you've reviewed this guide, are you ready to pursue a career in the trades?

*For more information on specific trades, check out these organizations:*

- [Associated Builders and Contractors – Connecticut Chapter](#)
- [Building Pathways Connecticut](#)
- [Capital Workforce Partners](#)
- [Connecticut AFL-CIO](#)
- [Connecticut Construction Industries Association](#)
- [Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology](#)
- [Connecticut Heating and Cooling Contractor's Association](#)
- [Connecticut Association of Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors](#)
- [Construction Education Center](#)
- [Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board](#)
- [Eastern Millwright Regional Council](#)
- [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers \(IBEW\) Local 3](#)
- [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers \(IBEW\) Local 35](#)
- [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers \(IBEW\) Local 90](#)
- [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers \(IBEW\) Local 488](#)
- [Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut](#)
- [Independent Electrical Contractors of New England](#)
- [International Union of Elevator Constructors Local 91](#)
- [National Association of Women in Construction](#)
- [Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board](#)
- [Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777](#)
- [Sheet Metal Workers International Association Local Union 40](#)
- [Sisters in the Brotherhood](#)
- [The Workplace, Inc. \(Southwest region\)](#)
- [Workforce Alliance](#)

# Still have questions? Contact Us

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