

Vehicle Spray Painter

Vehicle spray painters, also known as paint technicians or motor vehicle finishers, carry out all aspects of preparing vehicles including buffing, polishing and priming surfaces before spray painting.

The Work

You could be:

- examining and cleaning repaired bodywork and discussing what you need to do to finish it
- preparing the surface to be painted: cleaning it, buffing and polishing (by hand or using a machine), priming it and masking (covering) the parts not to be painted
- mixing colours, usually using computerised paint mixing technology, to match the rest of the body colour
- applying the paint with a spray machine or hand held spray gun
- buffing and polishing the surface between coats
- working out estimates of costs
- completing records of materials used
- keeping up to date with new products and working methods.

You may specialise as a:

- **light vehicle spray painter** - working with cars, vans and motorcycles
- **heavy vehicle spray painter** - working with lorries, trucks, buses, coaches and train carriages.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries may be based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £8.00 an hour (1 April 2026). Apprentice vehicle spray painters may earn up to around £14,500 a year.

A qualified vehicle spray painter may expect to earn between £25,000 and £30,000 a year. Shift allowances may also be available. Experienced motor vehicle professionals may earn up to between £35,000 and £50,000 a year.

Conditions

- You would be working in a workshop which can be dirty, noisy, and have strong paint fumes.
- You may have to work in a paint spraying booth which is ventilated.
- You would wear a facemask to protect against paint fumes.
- You would stand a lot and also have to bend and stretch in awkward positions.

- You may have to lift heavy equipment.
- You will work around 40 hours a week Monday to Friday, but may have to do overtime in the evenings and weekends.

Getting In

- Most entrants start through a Modern Apprenticeship in Vehicle Accident and Repair.
- There are no formal entry requirements, however employers normally look for English, Maths and a science or technological subject at least to National 4.
- You usually need to take an aptitude test.
- You need to be physically fit to lift heavy parts and work in cramped positions.
- There may be a medical test: this could be important if you have breathing problems which could be affected by paint fumes.
- You may have to sit a colour vision test.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- strong communication skills
- good hand skills and co-ordination
- a good eye for colour
- an awareness of safety procedures.

You need to be able to:

- pay attention to detail
- concentrate for long periods at a time
- follow instructions (written and verbal)
- work on your own and as part of a team
- work under pressure.

Training

- Training for a Modern Apprenticeship usually lasts four years. You would attend college or a training centre on a day or block release basis.
- You would complete SVQ Vehicle Paintwork Repair at SCQF Level 6.
- You could study the Foundation Apprenticeship in Automotive (SCQF Level 4) in S3-S6, which can help to get into a relevant Modern Apprenticeship.
- You can do a full time college course first, but to get a full qualification you need to do an apprenticeship.
- You may work towards the IMI Accreditation Paint. This involves sitting practical exams and completing online knowledge tests. There are two levels of job roles within IMI Accreditation Paint: Technician and Senior Technician.

Getting On

- With experience, you may be able to move on to be a senior technician, supervisor, workshop manager, or paint shop equipment salesperson and demonstrator.
- You could move into teaching trainees.
- Some spray painters set up their own paint shop.

More Information

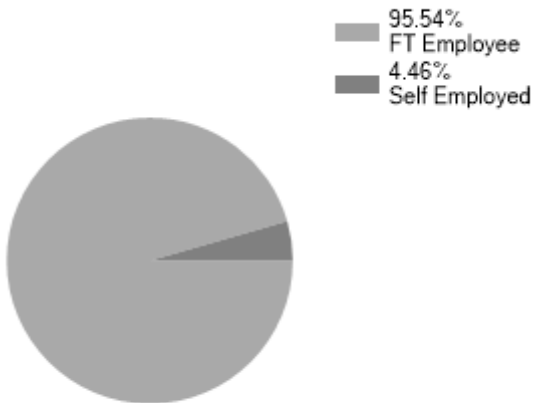
For more information please see organisations listed below:

- [GTG Training Ltd](#)
- [Institute of the Motor Industry](#) (IMI) (Scotland)

Contacts

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.