



For more info on Collins Automotive Technicians check out www.collinsauto.co.nz

Cracking a career in Automotive can be a challenge, with many young people keen to secure apprenticeships in the industry.

But persistence paid off for Cait, who printed off her CV and cold-called Collins Automotive – and other businesses – at least eight times before she got a foot in the door.

The FutureForce® Team spoke with Collins' Auto Electrical Apprentice Cait Finlay – and her boss Jason – to find out what it takes to make it in the industry...



What you will do...

Automotive electricians may do some or all of the following:

- Test automotive electrical systems to find and fix faults
- Repair and replace automotive electrical systems such as charging and starting systems
- Repair and replace electronic systems such as: Engine-management systems, Air-conditioning systems, ABS brakes, Electronically controlled gearboxes, Instrument panels and Vehicle computers
- Install car security and entertainment systems.

To find out more about this sector, profiles of young people like you in the industry, and career tools and tips...

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CAIT FINLAY
AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRICIAN APPRENTICE



The FutureForce® Crew sat down with Cait to chat about her role...

TOP CAREER TIP

“IT’S IMPORTANT TO KEEP A GOOD ATTITUDE – PEOPLE RESPECT YOU MORE WHEN YOU’RE POSITIVE AND YOU HAVE A GOOD ATTITUDE.”

WHAT IS AN AUTO ELECTRICAL APPRENTICE?

I’m learning the basics of how the electrical system in a vehicle works and operates. There is a little bit of mechanical too but here at Collins, the mechanics do that, so we mainly focus on the electrical side of things. I shadow the qualified auto sparkies as well to learn how things are done.

WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN THIS PATHWAY?

I was always into cars, but it took me a while to decide to take the plunge because I didn’t want to ruin my hobby. But I wasn’t enjoying my retail job at the time, so I finally decided, “stuff it, I’m doing it!”

WHAT’S A DAY ON THE JOB LIKE?

No day is the same! Today, for example, I came in and had to finish my job from the day before, so I was replacing a window regulator. Then I went on to diagnose faulty headlights and had another car where the brake lights are staying on, so we had to try and figure that out. I do a lot of battery changes in a day, and a lot of bulb changes – standard stuff for an apprentice to be doing. There’s also lots of cleaning and that’s part of an apprentice’s job... sweeping the floors, mopping up oil spills, keeping your bench and the equipment tidy.

It’s standard for an apprentice to sweep the floors and change lights. You don’t get to do all the cool jobs all the time, but you do get there eventually.



CAIT FINLAY
AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRICIAN APPRENTICE



JASON LAND
MANAGER DIRECTOR



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ON THE JOB?

Pretty much everything about the car, how car systems work and I'm still learning every day. Not every car is the same so you're learning all the time. For example... Mazda does it like this... but a Toyota does it like that!

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WORKING AT COLLINS?

Probably the variety, like if I wanted to I could jump into the mechanical side as well. And just the atmosphere, everyone has a laugh and we all get along.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR PEOPLE STARTING OUT ON THE JOB?

I definitely had to learn how to start from the bottom again. I was the manager of two stores and then I came here and had to go back to bottom. I knew it was going to happen, so I was prepared, and it definitely doesn't last forever. It's important to keep a good attitude – people respect you more when you're positive and you have a good attitude. They're more willing to help you and work with you. You have to put in the hard work and prove you're reliable.



“OUR BIG STRENGTH IS OUR PASSION ABOUT WHAT WE ALL DO AND A GENUINE ENERGY TO LEARN AND GROW. THAT'S A HUGE PART OF WHAT I THINK INSPIRES OUR TEAM TO DO THE VERY BEST FOR OUR CUSTOMERS EVERY DAY.”

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN TAKING ON A YOUNG PERSON?

For us it's the attitude. We can teach the skills, that's our job to provide a place to learn, so it's about the attitude, the willingness to learn and the willingness to be part of our team. Someone who will embrace the culture and wants to learn and is engaged. All of those soft skills you need to have and then we can teach you how to actually do the job.

WHAT KIND OF SKILLS, EXPERIENCE OR QUALIFICATIONS ARE HELPFUL IN THIS LINE OF WORK?

I think if they've got an interest in cars is important. It can be a challenging job so having some passion about the automotive industry and cars is important. We used to encourage having a Pre-Trade or a Level 3 but with our last few apprentices we've done the level three in house and it's so much better. We select them for their soft skills and their attitude and then if we can have them at Level 3 and train them up and them doing stuff our way right from the start, it's better. So really there's not a lot of back ground that's expected. Most of the people we have on board play around with cars on the weekend, it's their hobby and this is somewhere they want to be.