



# Pathways to Skilled Trades for Ontario Secondary School Students

Secondary school students in Ontario have multiple pathways to explore and engage with skilled trades, providing them with valuable hands-on experience and the opportunity to build practical skills. These pathways help prepare students for careers in fields such as construction, manufacturing, technology, and automotive trades, among others. Here are several key opportunities available for students to gain experience in skilled trades:

## Technological Education Course Selection

Ontario high schools offer a wide range of **Technological Education** courses that provide students with foundational knowledge and practical skills in various trade fields. These courses are typically hands-on and offer real-world applications of skills in areas such as:

- **Construction** (e.g., carpentry, electrical, plumbing)
- **Manufacturing** (e.g., welding, machining, fabrication)
- **Transportation** (e.g., automotive repair, mechanics)
- **Communication Technology** (e.g., graphic design, media production)
- **Culinary Arts** (e.g., food preparation, kitchen management)
- **Computer Technology** (e.g., programming, networking)

These courses are available at various grade levels (typically starting in Grade 9), and students can select them based on their interests and future career aspirations. By participating in these classes, students not only learn technical skills but also gain problem-solving, teamwork, and safety awareness—important skills for success in the trades.

## Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) through Cooperative Education

The **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)** allows students to gain early, hands-on experience in the skilled trades through an **apprenticeship** while still in high school. Through OYAP, students can combine classroom learning with **Cooperative Education (Co-op)**, where they spend a portion of their school day working in a trade-related job with an employer. This experience is crucial in helping students:

- **Earn Credits:** Students can earn high school credits while gaining real-world experience in a trade.
- **Workplace Skills:** Students develop essential skills for the workplace, such as time management, communication, and problem-solving.
- **Build Connections:** OYAP students often establish valuable relationships with employers and mentors in their field, which can help them secure future employment or apprenticeship opportunities after graduation.
  - By participating in OYAP, students can also get a head start on completing their apprenticeship hours and training, which can count toward becoming a certified tradesperson after graduation.

## Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Program

The **Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)** program is designed to give students in Grade 11 and 12 the opportunity to specialize in a particular sector, such as skilled trades, while completing their high school diploma. Through SHSM, students can:

- **Earn Sector-Specific Certifications:** Students receive certifications in areas such as First Aid, WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System), and other industry-recognized credentials.
- **Complete Focused Courses:** Students take specific courses related to their chosen sector (e.g., construction, manufacturing, or transportation) and gain specialized knowledge and skills.
- **Engage in Work Placements:** The SHSM program includes opportunities for students to participate in job placements or cooperative education experiences related to their chosen sector, further enhancing their employability and hands-on experience.
  - The SHSM program is an excellent choice for students who want to gain a competitive edge in the skilled trades field while earning their high school diploma. It helps students build both academic and technical skills that are directly aligned with their career interests.

## Dual Credit Program

The **Dual Credit Program** allows secondary school students to take college-level courses while still enrolled in high school. This program provides students with the opportunity to earn both high school credits and postsecondary (college) credits simultaneously, particularly in the skilled trades and technology fields. Key benefits of the Dual Credit Program include:

- **College-Level Learning:** Students can experience the academic rigor of college courses and gain exposure to advanced technical skills in various trades.
- **Hands-On Experience:** Many of the dual credit courses offer hands-on, practical learning experiences that align with real-world work in the skilled trades.
- **Transition to Postsecondary:** Earning college credits while in high school can give students a head start if they decide to continue their education at a college or enter the workforce in a trade. It also provides an opportunity to explore postsecondary options and make informed decisions about their career paths.
  - For students interested in skilled trades, the Dual Credit Program can be a stepping stone to a rewarding career or further education, allowing them to gain practical skills and earn college credentials before graduating from high school.

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### References

Ontario. (n.d.). *Start an apprenticeship*. Government of Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/start-apprenticeship>