

Scott Finlayson

Working in the construction trades has always been an interest of mine; when I was offered the opportunity to obtain my first level of technical training in plumbing through the ACE-IT program, I was excited. Throughout the course I was thoroughly challenged by the many subjects we were introduced to: math, science, soldering and brazing, to name a few. It was a phenomenal experience on many levels. During the course we were often brought into the shop, so that we could see how the theory we learned was vital to real situations.

Safety was immediately brought to our attention, and was continually stressed throughout the course. Extensive material was covered, and we also got a more detailed view of what tools and equipment we would be using, and how to safely operate and maintain them.

Pipes valves and fittings was another substantial part of the course. We learned about what kinds of pipes are used in different situations, how they are rated and how to decipher the different colours and codes on the pipes.

High school math was never my forte, but we dove into formulas for pressure and volume, conversions, fitting allowance, and a list of other calculations. As I worked through it all, though, my understanding of math improved.

I found “related science” to be a very engaging subject. New and insightful topics – BTU calculations, specific heat and gravity of substances, and many others – and old math topics were elaborated on. After the theory, it was time to hit the shop.

We did several projects in the shop – one involving an opportunity to use math formulas, practice with the threading machine, and the newly introduced oxyacetylene torch – that showed me how nothing can replace hands-on experience. The soldering and brazing was an art form that needed a steady hand, a feel for the metal and the torch, and a smooth technique; things that couldn’t be taught in a classroom.

Some of the other topics we learned were rigging and hand signals, different types of drafting and blueprint material, and the theory of oxyacetylene cutting. We put it all into practice, where I learned that technique, developed from experience, was invaluable.

The teachers at PIAB (Piping Industry Apprenticeship Board) were excellent. My main instructor was extremely knowledgeable in the field, and he was able to convey that knowledge to the class effectively, always relating the theories to an on-site situation which made it easier to understand how essential the numbers and formulas really were.

My overall experience was more than I could have expected, and I ended up tied with another person for top overall mark at 92%. I have nothing but good things to say about the experience and I am very grateful for the opportunity.

PLUMBING