

5 Ways to Prepare for a Career



Most careers require education or training beyond high school. Some careers require two or four years of college; others require only one year of training or education. In many cases, your career choice will determine which education option is most appropriate for you.

The following are post-high school education options for you to consider. Read about each of these options and think about which one might be best for you.

- ▶ Two-year college
- ▶ Four-year college
- ▶ Career/trade school
- ▶ Apprenticeship
- ▶ The military

Two-Year College

Two-year colleges provide affordable, career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less. Students completing short-term programs receive certificates or diplomas. Students who complete a two-year program earn an associate degree.

Students who aren't ready to attend a four-year college can start at a two-year college and then transfer after a year or two. Because they are less expensive, many students start at a two-year college in order to save money.

Two year colleges are an increasingly popular education option. For more information, watch this short video.



Four-Year College

A four-year college education, or bachelor's degree, can prepare students for a wide variety of financially rewarding careers.

All four-year colleges recommend that students take college-prep courses in high school. Students who haven't taken several of the recommended college-prep courses may want to consider starting at a two-year college or at a four-year college's branch campus.

Career/Trade School

Career and trade schools offer short-term training in a variety of career fields. Some programs last only a few weeks; others take up to two years. Students usually receive hands-on training from experienced instructors.

When considering a career or trade school, check to see if, and by whom, a school is accredited. Be very wary of any school that is not accredited or claims to be seeking accreditation.

Apprenticeships

Students who prefer a hands-on approach to learning may want to consider an apprenticeship, where they can learn a trade through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Apprenticeships are considered the gold standard for training in skilled trades.

The Military

As the nation's largest employer, the military offers applicants a salary, benefits, and free job training. The military also provides discipline, structure, and opportunities for career advancement and travel.

EDUCATION OPTIONS

You can't explore your career options without also considering your post-high school education choices. Careers and education go hand in hand.

Most people prepare for their career by 1) going to a two-year college; 2) going to a four-year college; 3) joining the military; 4) going to a career or trade school; 5) getting an apprenticeship.

Read each of the following statements and put the correct letter (A - E) in the blanks.

A. 2-Year College B. 4-Year College C. Military D. Career/Trade School E. Apprenticeship

- _____ 1. Attending this school for a year generally costs less than half of what it costs to attend a four-year college for a year.
- _____ 2. Some programs take one or two years to complete; others can be completed in a matter of weeks.
- _____ 3. Most of their programs are for students interested in construction or manufacturing.
- _____ 4. Students take about half their courses in their major (the subject they study in depth).
- _____ 5. They provide free job training in over 2,000 job specialties.
- _____ 6. To save money, many students start here and then transfer to a four-year college.
- _____ 7. These schools are privately owned and in business to make a profit. Their costs vary greatly, and they can be expensive.
- _____ 8. After 8-12 weeks of basic training, individuals typically go to Advance Individual Training where they receive training for a specific job.
- _____ 9. To provide students with a well-rounded education, all students are required to take general education courses (English, math, science, etc.).
- _____ 10. Here you learn a skilled trade through class instruction and on-the-job training.

Answers are below.

Which of these educational options do you think you might consider?

☐ 2-Year College ☐ 4-Year College ☐ Career/Trade School ☐ Military ☐ Apprenticeship

1. A 2. D 3. E 4. B 5. C 6. A 7. D 8. C 9. B 10. E

Options for HS Graduates

Career and Trade School

Students today can prepare for many high growth careers by going to a career or trade school.

Career and trade schools focus on teaching students the skills they need for a specific career.

If you know what career you want to pursue, going to a career or trade school might be the right choice for you.

"I'm studying to become a medical assistant. My classes are small and I love the fact that all of the courses I am taking will prepare me for my career." Kate



Education and Training

Training is available in a wide variety of careers

Career and trade schools offer training for a large number of careers. Many of the most popular programs are in health care, business, computer science, and hospitality (travel and tourism, culinary arts, and hotel management).

Students prepare for a specific career

The education that students receive at a career or trade school is very focused, and the courses students take are directly related to their chosen career field. Art students study art, cosmetology students learn how to cut and style hair, and students wanting to be an auto mechanic learn how to repair cars.

Students receive hands-on instruction

Students spend the majority of their class time in job-related settings where they receive hands-on training from experienced instructors. The student-teacher ratio is low, and students generally receive a great deal of individual attention.

Programs vary in length

While some programs take one or two years to complete, others can be completed in a matter of weeks. There are, for example, a number of healthcare careers that require less than a year of training.



Things to Consider

Costs vary greatly

Career and trade schools are privately owned and in business to make a profit. While these schools can be expensive, their costs vary depending on the school and the program. Students who qualify may be eligible for financial aid.

All high school graduates are accepted

A high school diploma (or GED) is generally all that's required for acceptance to a career or trade school. Schools are looking for students who have good basic skills, an interest in their chosen field, and a desire to learn.

Credits usually do not transfer

Because career and trade schools vary tremendously in their requirements and in the programs they offer, their credits usually are not accepted by two and four-year colleges. Students should, therefore, never go to a career or trade school with the idea of transferring.

Consider all of your options

Many of the programs offered at career and trade schools are also available at community colleges—where they are often less expensive. Research and compare *all* of your options.



Do Your Research

While there are many excellent career and trade schools, not all of them are reputable. Visit any school you are considering and get answers to the following questions.

▶ **Licensing and Accreditation**

Is the school accredited? Who is the school accredited by? *Be wary of any school that is not accredited.*

▶ **Facilities**

Is the equipment up-to-date and adequate for the number of students? What are the buildings and classrooms like?

▶ **Placement**

What percentage of the school's graduates find a job? Who hires their graduates? What are their starting salaries?

▶ **Cost**

What is the total cost of tuition, fees, and supplies? What is the refund policy? Is financial aid available?

▶ **Quality of Instruction**

Are the courses and books up-to-date? What are the qualifications of the instructors?

▶ **Reputation and Stability**

How long has the school been in operation? What percent of the students finish their program?

Career Options

Below are some of the careers you can prepare for by going to a career or trade school.

Accountant	Heavy equipment operator
Administrative assistant	Hotel manager
Auto body technician	Interior designer
Auto mechanic	Legal assistant / Paralegal
Barber	Legal secretary
Broadcaster	Licensed practical nurse
Carpenter	Massage therapist
Child care worker	Medical assistant
Commercial artist	Medical lab technician
Computer programmer	Medical secretary
Computer service technician	Motorcycle mechanic
Cosmetologist	Nurse's aide
Court reporter	Pharmacy technician
Data entry operator	Photographer
Dental assistant	Plumber
Dental laboratory technician	Respiratory therapist
Drafter	Secretary
Electrician	Surveyor
Electronics technician	Tool and die maker
Fashion designer	Travel agent
Fashion merchandiser	Truck driver
Flower arranger	Veterinarian assistant
Heating / AC technician	Welder

To find the career and trade schools in your area, search online or go to nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator.

On-the-Job Training

Employers generally provide on-the-job training for new employees.

This training can last a few hours to several months. It is designed to teach you what you need to know to perform a specific job.

To make the most of your on-the-job training, and to prepare for your future career, do the following:

► **Find a job in a field you're considering.**

For example, if you want a career in the fashion industry, try to get a job at a clothing store.

► **Increase your chances for advancement.**

Be polite, enthusiastic, and willing to learn. Have excellent attendance, and make every effort to get along with your co-workers and supervisors.

► **Consider additional education/training.**

Remember, you can always go back to school, even if it's just to take one course.

► **Make a three-year plan.**

Making a three-year plan will help ensure that you don't get trapped in a dead-end job.

How to Find a Good Job

Think about your skills, talents, and interests

Before you begin your job search, do a quick self-assessment. Make a list of your interests, talents, and skills (e.g., cooking, computers, working with children). Having this information will help you find a job you'll be good at, and one that you will enjoy.

Determine what kind of job you want

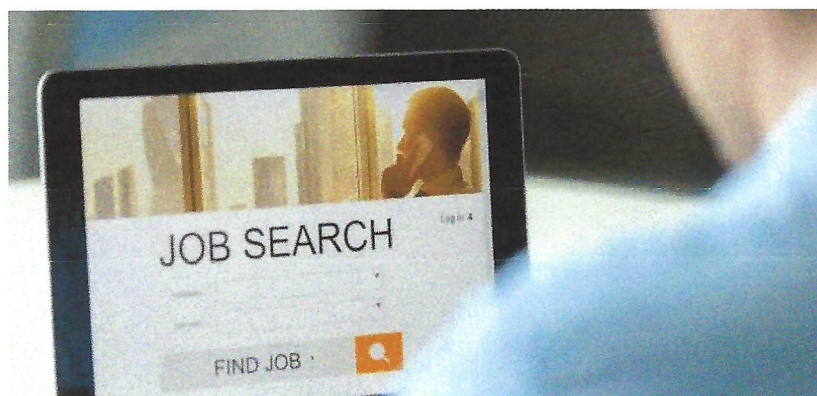
- ▶ Do you want to work days? Nights? Weekends? What hours are you available to work?
- ▶ Are you looking for a part-time or full-time job?
- ▶ Would you rather work inside or outside? Do you want to work where there's lots of activity or where it's quiet? With people or by yourself?

Network

Talk to family and friends about job possibilities and tell everyone that you're looking for a job. Most employers would rather hire a person that's been recommended by someone they know than sort through applications, do interviews, and then hire a stranger. This is why most jobs are never advertised. *Networking is the best way to find a job!*

Search for job openings

Check out your local newspaper and free websites such as indeed.com and snag.com for job openings.

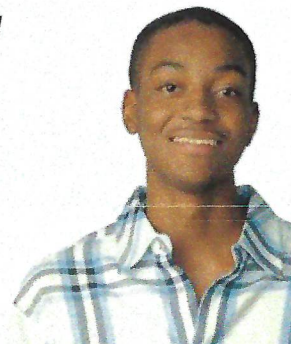


Application Tips

Submit an impressive application

- ▶ A company's application may be available online. You can go and pick one up in person, or contact the business and ask them to send you one.
- ▶ Use blue or black ink and print neatly. Don't leave any lines blank. If a question doesn't apply to you, write N/A.
- ▶ Answer all questions truthfully. If there's something on your application that could be seen as negative, explain how much you've learned and grown from the situation or experience.
- ▶ Include any volunteer or unpaid jobs you've had.
- ▶ If you have a resume, attach it to your application.
- ▶ Make sure your application looks neat, clean, and professional. Do not bend or fold it.
- ▶ Remember, the application is your opportunity to "sell yourself."

"I just graduated from high school and now I'm working as a waiter. Someday I hope to go to cooking school and work as a chef—or maybe own my own restaurant."
Jeremy



Interview Tips

Prepare for the interview

- ▶ Learn as much as you can about the company or business.
- ▶ Have a one-minute speech about yourself ready.
- ▶ Prepare a few questions for the interviewer.

Interview well

- ▶ Dress appropriately.
- ▶ Arrive early and turn off your phone.
- ▶ If you have a resume, bring a copy with you.
- ▶ Be courteous and friendly to everyone.
- ▶ Sit up straight and make eye contact.
- ▶ Emphasize that you're eager to learn and willing to work hard. Show enthusiasm for the job.
- ▶ Keep your answers brief and positive.
- ▶ If you want the job, tell the interviewer.
- ▶ Thank the interviewer for the opportunity.

After the interview

The day after your interview, write a thank you note and thank the interviewer for his/her time. Also mention a few of the reasons why you would be a good choice for the job.



How to Succeed at a Job

Be responsible and reliable

- ▶ Be at work on time every day.
- ▶ Be honest and trustworthy.

Know your job

- ▶ Understand your responsibilities and duties.
- ▶ Know the procedures you are to follow with regards to safety regulations, asking for help, etc.

Do your job well

- ▶ Be enthusiastic and have a good attitude.
- ▶ If you don't understand something, ask for help.
- ▶ Try to do your job to the best of your ability.
- ▶ Treat each customer and client the way you would like to be treated.

Do more than is expected of you

- ▶ Be willing to take on extra work.
- ▶ Show initiative. If you see something that needs to be done, do it.

Get along with co-workers and supervisors

- ▶ Learn to adapt to your supervisor's style of leadership and supervision.
- ▶ Take an interest in the people you work with.
- ▶ Be friendly and respectful to everyone.