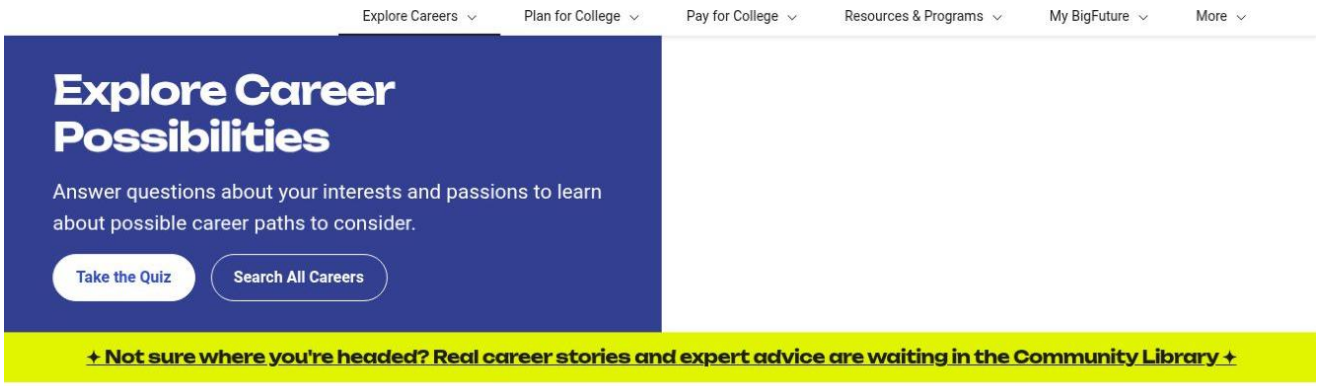
BigFuture: Explore Your Next Step

A guide for CHS students and families
Career ideas, technical training, and four-year college options

You do not need to know your future career to get started. BigFuture, from College Board, helps students explore work, connect careers to education, and plan for life after high school. Families can use it together.

Open Explore Careers | bigfuture.collegeboard.org





Useful section	How it can help your family
Explore Careers	Try the Career Quiz, search job types, and explore career clusters.
Plan for College	Explore majors and schools, including different degree and program options.
Pay for College	Learn about costs, financial aid, and scholarships.
Resources & Programs	Find the Community Library, parent resources, and other guidance.
My BigFuture	Return to saved career, college, and scholarship lists and planning tools.

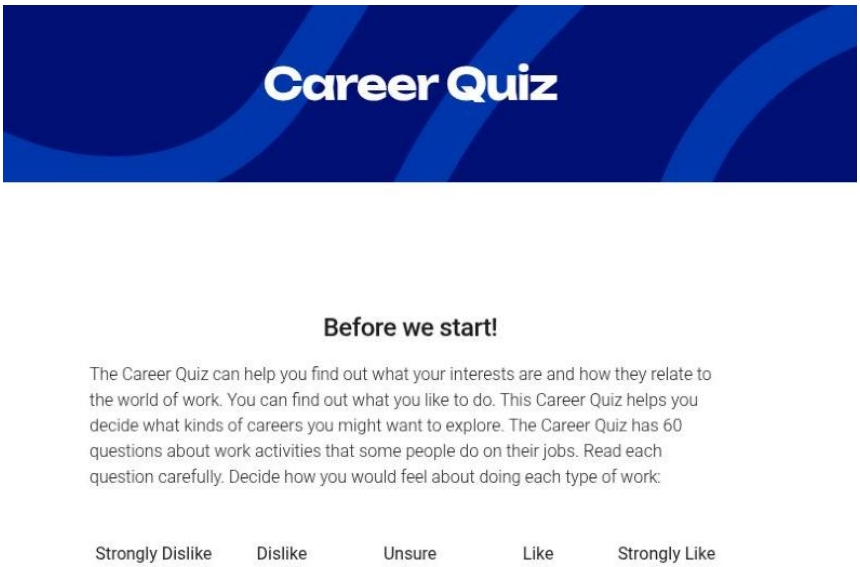
Do we need to sign in?

We viewed career profiles and began the quiz without signing in. Choose **Continue without signing in** when offered. Signing in adds saved results, lists, and personalized planning. Use your existing College Board account if you already have one for College Board services.

A useful goal: Find one interesting career and one education option. This guide shows an electrician route and a civil engineer route.

1. Begin with interests

On Explore Careers, click **Take the Quiz**. The site estimates **15 minutes**. Choose **Continue Without Signing In** if you want to begin as a guest. Read the directions, then click **Start Career Quiz**.



The quiz has **60 questions** about work activities. Choose how you would feel doing each activity: Strongly Dislike, Dislike, Unsure, Like, or Strongly Like. Answer based on what you enjoy, even if you have not learned how to do the work yet.

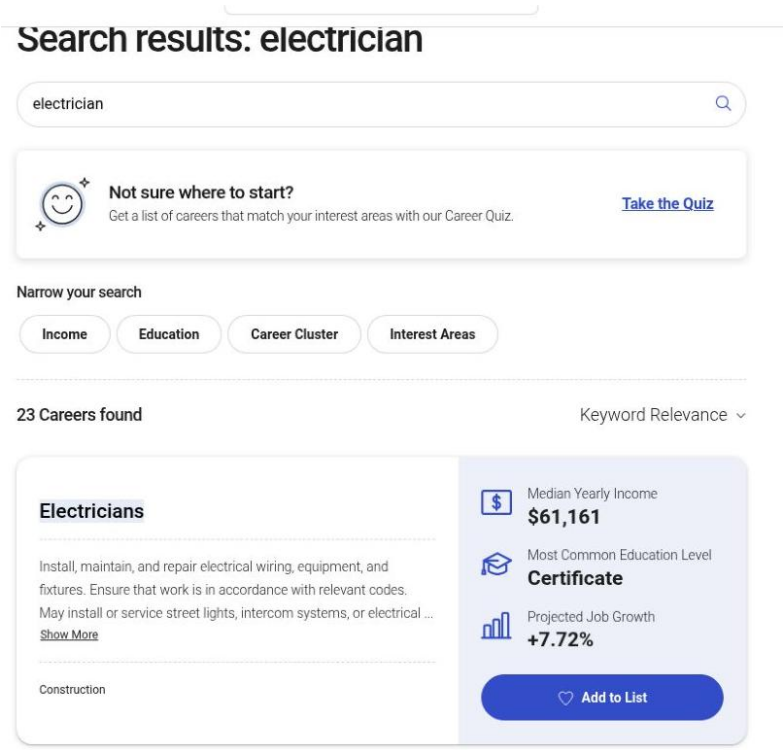
Family tip: Help explain unfamiliar words, but let the student choose the answers. The quiz explores interests; there are no right or wrong answers.

What you receive	What to do with it
Suggested careers connected to interests	Choose two to explore. A match is an idea to investigate, not a career you must choose.
Career profiles	Read the work description, education information, and skills before deciding whether it interests you.
An option to save matches	Sign in if you want to keep results in your account. As a guest, write down the careers you want to revisit.

Other starting points: Career Clusters groups related jobs. The Community Library offers videos and articles about work and planning. After a video, name one task you would like to try and one question you still have.

2. Search for a career

Click **Search All Careers** on Explore Careers. In the career keyword box, type **electrician**, then click **Search**. This is the career search box, separate from the general College Board search at the top.



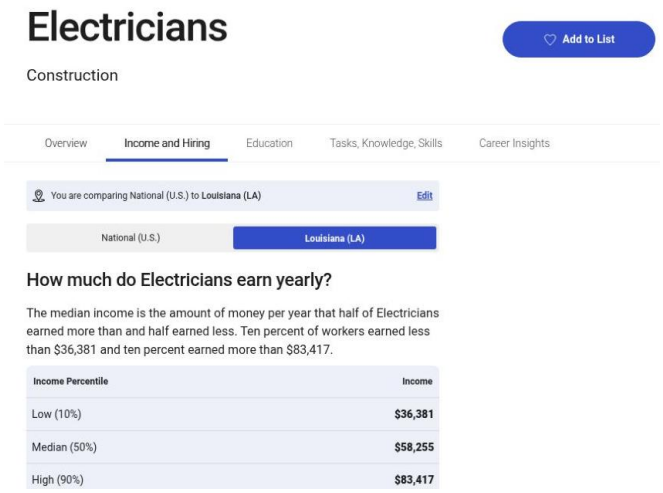
Our search found **Electricians** and other related careers. Open the exact title you want. A helper, technician, and engineer can do different work and need different training.

Search tool	What it does
Income filter	Narrows careers by income information. It does not guarantee what a new worker will earn.
Education filter	Narrows careers by the site's education categories. Check the actual training and entry requirements afterward.
Career Cluster filter	Narrows careers to a related field of work.
Interest Areas filter	Narrows careers by kinds of activities people may enjoy.
Sort menu	Changes the order of results. It does not choose the best career for you.
Show More / Add to List	Show More expands a description. Add to List helps keep careers together; sign in for saved planning features.

Keep choices open: Start with few filters. If your results are too narrow, clear a filter and try again. Open a career title to read its full profile.

3. Technical example: Electricians

Search for **electrician**. In the results, click the career title **Electricians** to open its profile. If the **Personalize Your BigFuture** message appears, choose **Continue without signing in**.



Electricians install, maintain, and repair electrical wiring and equipment. Open **Income and Hiring**, click **See a Specific Location**, type and select **Louisiana (LA)**, then click **Show Localized Data**. Confirm Louisiana is selected before reading pay.

Our viewed result	How to read it
Louisiana median yearly income: $58,255	The middle annual pay level in this display. It is not guaranteed starting pay or take-home pay.
National overview: Certificate	The profile's most common education category. It does not describe every employer's requirements, apprenticeship, or licensing rules.
Overview	A short description of the work and interest areas.
Income and Hiring	Pay and job-trend information. Check the selected location and timeframe.
Education	Education information; read the explanation of the table.
Tasks, Knowledge, Skills	What the work involves and what people need to know or do.
Career Insights	Connects PSAT/SAT math and reading and writing skills to this career. See the next page for how to use it.

Local next step: Ask the CHS CTE coordinator or Nunez about current electrical training. Ask employers about apprenticeships, safety training, experience, and starting pay.

Read carefully: The selected Louisiana view still used the word "national" in its growth explanation when we visited. Confirm the geography before quoting growth. Job counts describe employment, not openings available today.

Go Further: Skills and Similar Careers

Career Insights: Connect school skills to a career

On the Electricians profile, click **Career Insights**. This tool uses your latest **PSAT or SAT Math and Reading and Writing scores** to show how those skills connect to the career you are exploring. Follow the screen directions to provide your assessment information if needed.

It can help you think about your preparation and identify skills to keep building. It is one part of career exploration; also consider your interests, work preferences, and the training the career requires.

Message you may see	What it means
In Line and Strong Option	Your skills align with this career. It may be worth exploring further.
In Line and Continue Exploring	Your skills align. Keep learning about the work and whether it interests you.
Continue Preparing	Keep strengthening your math or reading and writing skills as you explore this career.

Your skills can grow. These results do not decide whether you can pursue a career or whether you will be ready in the future. They are also different from a college or training program's admission requirements.

Talk together: Which skill could you strengthen? What class, project, or activity could help you practice it?

Explore “You might also be interested in…”

Scroll down the career profile to **You might also be interested in...**. This section shows related careers you may not have heard of. Click a career title to learn about its work, skills, education, and pay. Use the arrows, when shown, to see more suggestions.

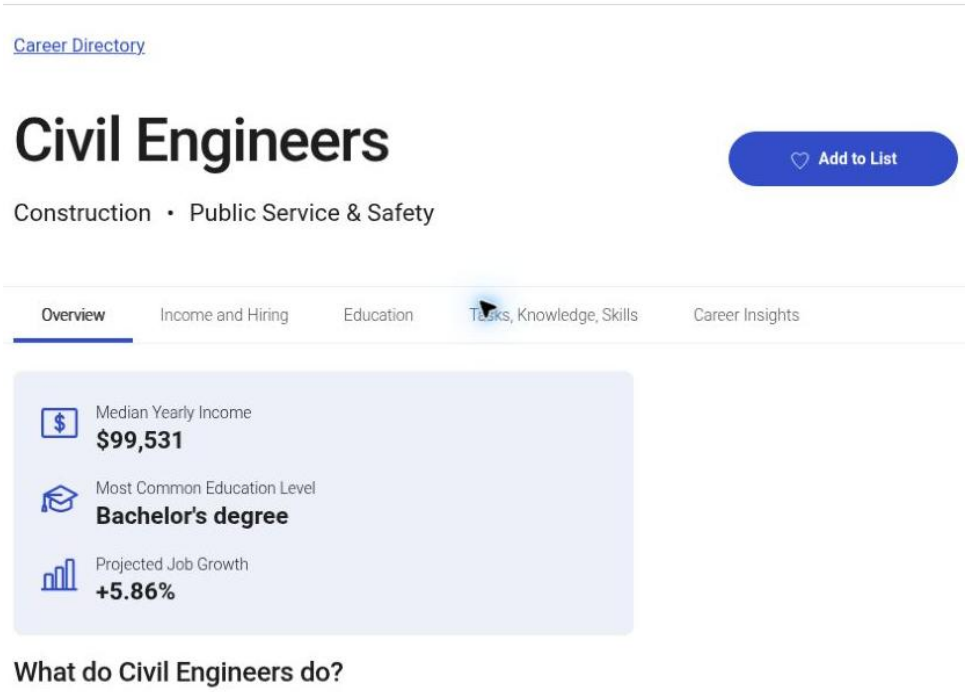
On our Electricians example, suggestions included **Solar Photovoltaic Installers** (people who install solar panels) and **Construction and Building Inspectors**. These are ideas to explore; compare the actual tasks and entry requirements.

Try it together	Your response
Choose one unfamiliar career	
What does it have in common with Electricians?	
What work, skill, or training is different?	

A useful next step: Add an interesting option to your career list or write it down. Ask your counselor how you could learn more about it.

4. Four-year example: Civil Engineers

Return to **Career Search**. Search **civil engineer** and choose **Civil Engineers**, rather than Civil Engineering Technicians. These are different career profiles.



Civil engineers help plan, design, and oversee projects such as roads, bridges, and water systems. The overview lists **Bachelor's degree** as the most common education level. This makes it a useful example of an academic, four-year route.

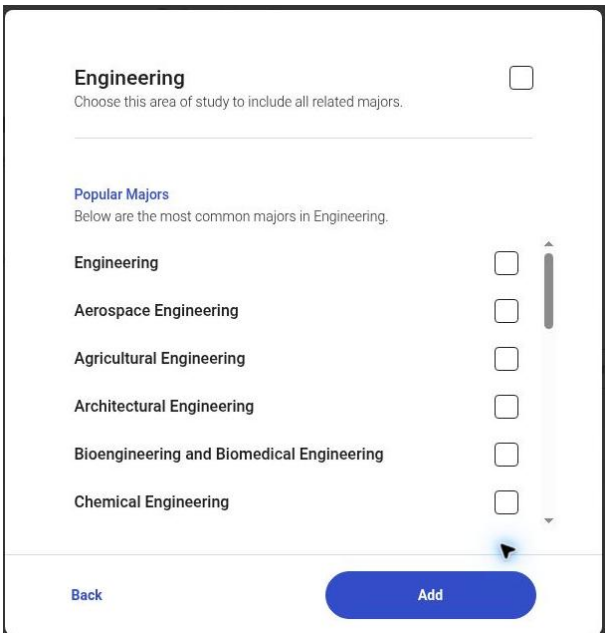
What families can explore	What to ask next
A bachelor's degree	A college degree often planned over four years of full-time study. What courses and admission requirements does the program have?
A major	Your main subject of study in college. For this example, explore Civil Engineering.
Education tab	The table explains survey responses about education needed for the career. It is not a promise that a specific degree guarantees employment.
Tasks, Knowledge, Skills	Would I enjoy the work? Which math, science, design, or problem-solving skills could I explore now?
Income and Hiring	Check Louisiana and national information separately. Compare careers using the same location.

A possible next step: Ask your CHS counselor about courses and dual enrollment that could prepare you for an engineering major. Ask colleges how any earned credits apply to that specific degree.

Think beyond the title: A student interested in building things might explore electrical work, civil engineering, drafting, or other careers. Different routes can fit different goals.

5. Connect a career to education

Open **Plan for College > College Search**. A **major** tells you what you will study; a **career** tells you what work you might do. Explore both.



Try the academic example

1. Open **Majors** and choose **Engineering**.
2. Select **Civil Engineering**. Click **Add**, then **Show Colleges**.
3. Use **Location** to narrow where you want to study. Use **Type** or **Degrees** to explore four-year and bachelor's degree options.
4. Open a college result and confirm the current major, admission requirements, cost, and program details on the college website.

College search filter	What it helps you compare
Location	Where the school is. Consider commuting, housing, and travel.
Type / Degrees	The kind of school or credential offered. Read the exact choices on your screen.
Affordability	Cost-related information. Ask about your own estimated cost after aid.
Admissions	Entry information. A search result is not an admission decision.
Credit	Information related to college credit. Confirm how your AP or dual enrollment credits apply to the degree.

Try the technical route, too

On Explore Careers, scroll to **Search for Technical and Certificate Programs** and click **Less than 2-Year Programs**. You can also explore **Search Credentials**. Confirm program length, what the credential qualifies you to do, costs, and employer requirements with the provider.

6. Costs, scholarships, and staying on track

Use **Pay for College** to learn about costs and funding. Use the grade-level checklists on Explore Careers, or **My BigFuture > My Checklist**, to identify planning steps.

Useful resource	What it does / how to use it
Scholarship Search	Find scholarship opportunities to investigate. Read each sponsor's current eligibility rules, deadline, required materials, and application instructions.
BigFuture Scholarships	A separate program with drawings tied to eligible students' planning steps. Choose your graduation year and read current rules. Completing a step earns a chance, not a guaranteed award.
College cost information	Compare tuition, fees, housing, food, books, and transportation. The listed price may differ from your family's cost after aid.
Net price calculator	Estimates a college's cost after grants and scholarships using your circumstances. It is an estimate; confirm with the college.
Grade-level checklists	Planning tasks for grades 9-12. Choose your grade and discuss which steps apply to your plans.
My Career / College / Scholarship List	Keep options together when using your account. Review your lists with a family member or counselor.
For Parents / Community Library	Guidance families can read or watch together. Find these under Resources & Programs.

Simple words to know

Financial aid: Money or other funding used to help pay for education.
Grant or scholarship: Funding that usually does not need repayment when its conditions are met.
Loan: Borrowed money that must be repaid.
Net price: Cost of attendance minus grants and scholarships. Loans do not reduce this cost; they help finance it.

Questions for every education option

What will I study? How long will it take? What will it cost us? What funding may apply? Will my credits count? What credential will I earn? What work can it prepare me to do?

Use school guidance too: Discuss graduation requirements, dual enrollment, TOPS, and financial-aid steps with your CHS counselor. BigFuture is one planning resource; your school and the program can answer questions specific to your student.

Try It Together: Compare Two Paths

Read our examples, then choose a career that interests your student. You can explore a technical route, a four-year route, or both. You do not have to decide today.

Question	Electrician example	Civil engineer example
What is the work?	Work with electrical wiring and equipment.	Plan and design projects such as roads and bridges.
Education category on profile	Certificate	Bachelor's degree
Education option to explore	Current electrical training and apprenticeship options.	A Civil Engineering major at a college.
One next step	Ask CHS/Nunez about training and ask employers about entry requirements.	Use College Search by major; ask about admissions and how credits apply.

Your turn: Explore a career

Career: _____

Find or discuss	Your response
What would you do at work?	
One task or skill that interests you	
Pay figure and selected location	
Education / major / training option	
One school or program to contact	
One question and next step	

Talk together: Which part sounds interesting? What would help you explore it now - a class, project, college visit, or conversation with someone who does the work?

Sources: College Board BigFuture Explore Careers, Career Quiz, Career Search, Electricians and Civil Engineers profiles, College Search, college-account guidance, scholarship guidance, net-price guidance, and Career Insights help. Screens and examples viewed October 2, 2026. Numbers may change. **Explore Careers** | **College Search** | **Pay for College**