

Prepare for a Career

Four-Year College



Why attend a 4-year college?

A four-year college education, or bachelor's degree, can open doors and provide graduates with more choices and opportunities in life. A four-year college diploma provides students with more career opportunities, greater earning potential, and the pride that comes with earning a college degree.

How do I prepare for 4-year college?

Take college prep courses

Most colleges recommend that students take the following college prep courses in high school:

- 4 years of English
- 3–4 years of math (including Alg I, Geom, & Alg II)
- 3 years of social studies
- 3 years of science
- 2–3 years of the same foreign language
- 1 year of fine or performing arts

Students who haven't taken several of the above courses may want to start at a community college or at a college's branch campus, where the admissions requirements are less competitive.

Get involved

Colleges are looking for students who are involved in meaningful activities. Look for ways to develop your interests and talents—and get involved in your school and community.



For the differences between high school and college, watch this quick video.

VIDEO

How do I choose a college?

When choosing a college, consider each of the following:

Size

Do you want to go to a large college with lots of majors and activities, or to a small college with fewer students and a more personal atmosphere?

Academic Programs

While most colleges have popular majors such as business, not every college has every major. If there's a specific subject you want to study, you need to find the colleges that offer that major.

Location

Do you want to go to college close to home or in your home state? Near a big city? Close to nature?

Admissions Requirements

Look for colleges that accept students with grades and test scores similar to yours.

Cost

If cost is a concern, keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Public colleges (in-state) are generally less expensive than private colleges.
- ▶ You can save money by living at home and commuting, or by starting at a community college.
- ▶ There is a great deal of financial aid available.

For additional information, visit these websites:

collegeboard.org

act.org

educationplanner.org

studentaid.ed.gov

finaid.org

collegesavings.org

If attending a four-year college is your goal, share this goal with your family, and ask for their help and support. Keep this goal in mind as you go to class, do your homework, and study for tests.

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Two-Year College



Why attend a 2-year college?

Two-year colleges are an increasingly popular college choice. They provide affordable, career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less.

- ▶ Two-year colleges offer programs in high-growth career fields such as healthcare, computer science, and business.
- ▶ Going to a two-year college can be an excellent choice for students who have specific career goals.
- ▶ Students who want a bachelor's degree can start at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college.

What is a 2-year college like?

They are affordable and classes are small

- ▶ It generally costs much less to attend a two-year college than a four-year college.
- ▶ Two-year colleges keep their classes small, and hire instructors who have worked in a related career field. The law enforcement instructor, for example, might be a retired police officer.

They offer activities and services

While community colleges generally do not have dorms, most have a variety of athletic programs, clubs, and social activities, as well as support services such as counseling, career placement, and tutoring.

All high school graduates are welcome

- ▶ For most programs, students need a general high school education, though some have additional academic requirements. For example, a nursing program may require that all students have a year of biology, chemistry, and algebra.
- ▶ Two-year colleges generally don't require the ACT or SAT; however, to ensure that all students enroll in courses appropriate for their ability levels, many community colleges require that all incoming students take a placement test.
- ▶ Two-year colleges offer developmental classes to help students who aren't quite ready for college-level work.

Transferring to a 4-year college

- ▶ 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 community or technical college in order to save money.
- ▶ It's up to a four-year college to say which credits they will accept. While credits in academic courses such as English, math, and science generally transfer, four-year colleges usually don't accept credits in career-oriented courses such as dental hygiene and automotive technology.
- ▶ Community and technical colleges have counselors available to help students choose courses that will transfer. Students who have specific questions about a course or program should contact the four-year college they plan to attend.

For more information on 4-year colleges, watch this quick video!



Prepare for a Career



Career or Trade School

Why attend a career or 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.

What is a career/trade school like?

Training is available in a variety of careers

Career and trade schools offer training for a large number of careers. Many of the most popular programs are in healthcare, business, computer science, and hospitality.

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.

2-year colleges offer many of the same programs. For information on 2-year colleges, watch this quick video!



VIDEO

What should I know about career/trade schools?

Costs vary greatly

While these schools can be expensive, their costs vary depending on the school and the program.

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 and a desire to learn.

Credits usually do not transfer

Because career and trade schools vary tremendously, their credits usually are not accepted by two- and four-year colleges.

How do I choose the right school?

Not all career and trade schools are reputable. It is, therefore, important for you to thoroughly investigate the schools you're considering. Use these guidelines to help you evaluate any career or trade school.

- ▶ **Licensing and Accreditation** – Is the school accredited, and by whom? Be wary of any school that is not accredited.
- ▶ **Facilities** – Is the equipment up-to-date? What are the buildings and classrooms like?
- ▶ **Placement** – What percentage of their graduates find a job? What are their starting salaries?
- ▶ **Cost** – What is the total cost of tuition, fees, and supplies? 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 percentage of the students finish their program?

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Military

Why join the military?

The United States military is the country's largest employer. Here are some benefits of enlisting:

- ▶ The military offers training in over 2,000 jobs, most of which have civilian counterparts.
- ▶ Most enlistees begin at pay grade E-1 and receive about \$1,680 a month. Pay increases steadily with rank and years of service.
- ▶ Enlistees get free housing and free medical care.
- ▶ Under the Montgomery GI Bill, enlistees who contribute to a college fund can receive \$50,000+ for college.

What are some of the options?

Enlistees generally sign up for four years of active duty. These are the military's main branches:

Army

Founded in 1775, the Army is the oldest and largest branch of the armed services. The Army is primarily responsible for land-based military operations.

Navy

The Navy's mission is to maintain, train, and equip combat-ready naval forces, and to protect and defend our right to move freely on the oceans. The US Navy is the largest navy in the world.

Air Force

The Air Force became a separate military service in 1947. It includes aviation forces for both service and combat. Air Force troops are organized, trained, and equipped for offensive and defensive air operations.

Marine Corps

The Marine Corps specializes in amphibious operations, rapid deployment, and self-sufficiency. An elite fighting force with close ties to the Navy, the Marine Corps is often first on the ground in conflicts.

Coast Guard

The Coast Guard is primarily concerned with sea rescue, law enforcement, boating safety, and illegal immigration control. During wartime, the Coast Guard can become part of the Navy.

What are the qualifications?

Basic qualifications

- ▶ High school diploma (GED candidates have limited opportunities)
- ▶ 18 years old (17 with parental consent)
- ▶ US citizen or permanent resident alien
- ▶ Good physical condition, including appropriate weight and ability to pass a physical exam

ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery)

- ▶ The ASVAB is a 3-hour test designed to identify a person's aptitudes, abilities, and strengths.
- ▶ To enlist in any branch of the military, one must earn a minimum score on the ASVAB.
- ▶ Recruiters generally make the testing arrangements and interpret ASVAB scores. Each military branch has its own score requirements.
- ▶ The higher a person's scores, the more career and training options they will have.

For more information

The best way to learn about the military is to talk to a recruiter. The career, training, and educational opportunities are different for each branch. For more information on opportunities in the military, go to todaysmilitary.com.



VIDEO

To review, watch this quick video!



Apprenticeship

What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship programs are an excellent way to learn a skilled trade.

- ▶ Apprenticeships are available in over 1,000 occupations. While they are available in a number of career fields, the majority of programs are in construction and manufacturing.
- ▶ Apprentices start off earning approximately half of what experienced workers earn. As their skills improve, their wages increase.

Qualifications

- ▶ Most programs require that an applicant be 18 years old and a high school graduate.
- ▶ Some programs require that applicants take an aptitude test; others require a physical exam.
- ▶ Applicants who have had experience, training, or a related job generally have an advantage.

How does an apprenticeship work?

Apprentices learn their trade through a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction.

On-the-job training

- ▶ Apprentices start by doing simple tasks under the guidance and supervision of a journey worker. Apprentices are given more difficult work to do as their skills and knowledge increase.
- ▶ Apprentices must have at least 2,000 hours of structured, supervised work experience.
- ▶ While apprenticeship programs can last anywhere from one to six years, most apprenticeships are four-year training programs.

Instruction

- ▶ Apprentices take classes to learn techniques, theories, safety regulations, etc. For example, an apprentice carpenter is likely to receive instruction in basic math, carpentry techniques, first aid, blueprint reading, and safety.
- ▶ Most apprenticeship programs require at least 144 hours of classroom instruction per year.

How do I become an apprentice?

Step 1 – Find a program

- ▶ Do an online search for the apprenticeship programs in your area.
- ▶ Contact trade associations, unions, and other professional organizations.

Look for a *registered* program. A certificate from a registered program is a nationally recognized credential.

Step 2 – Complete the application

Once you've found a program, contact the program directly and ask if they are taking applications. Complete the application and take any required tests. Be sure to follow all of the instructions.

Step 3 – Interview for the position

An apprenticeship interview is like a job interview. Arrive early and be courteous and friendly to everyone. Emphasize that you are eager to learn and willing to work hard. Write a thank you note.

What happens after the interview?

After the interview, an applicant is given a numerical rating based on their employment history, education, test scores, and interview. Applicants are ranked and put on a waiting list. An applicant may have to wait weeks or months to be placed in an apprenticeship program.



VIDEO

To review, watch this quick video!

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Education Alternatives

What is an education alternative?

Some students may not be mentally or financially ready for the rigors of college, the military, or another post-graduate option. These students may choose to get a job and receive on-the-job training, or put their plans on hold and take a gap year. Here are some tips on how to make the most of these two options.

On-the-Job Training

Students may choose on-the-job training (OJT) to gain experience in a job field, while also making some money for college. OJT is short-term training designed to teach you what you need to know to perform a specific job. To make the most of your training, 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 still take a course or two, even though you don't want to attend college full-time just yet. Taking an online or in-person class will help you keep your skills sharp.

**For info on education options,
watch this quick video!**



VIDEO

Gap Year

A gap year is a “break” that some students choose to take in between graduating from high school and beginning a career or going to college. A gap year can last anywhere from one semester to one year, and may include travel, an internship, volunteering, and/or experiential learning.

Gap Year Positives

A gap year can have many positive personal and academic benefits. It can...

- ▶ help you gain a better understanding of what you want to study.
- ▶ give you time to become more independent, confident, and mature.
- ▶ provide opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the world and other cultures.
- ▶ give you time to recharge and recover after the rigors of high school.

Gap Year Negatives

Here are a few negative aspects to consider.

A gap year can...

- ▶ cause you to lose academic momentum.
- ▶ allow your academic skills to become rusty.
- ▶ be expensive.
- ▶ cause you to feel out of sync with your peers.

It's important to remember that a true gap year is not a year “off.” Rather, it's a time for learning, exploration, and growth—a “bridge” between high school and your next step, whether that's beginning a career or going to college.

If you are thinking about college following a gap year, check with the schools you are considering to find out their gap year policy. Some schools will allow one year of deferred admission.

Visit gapyearassociation.org for more information, and to see a list of gap year opportunities.