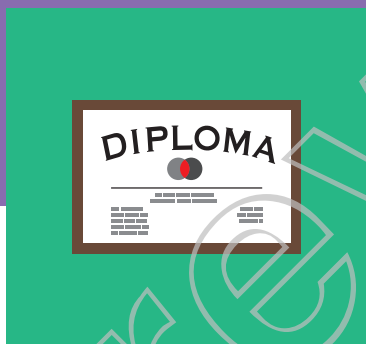


# Ways to Prepare for A Great Career



Dear Student,

There are many ways to prepare for a career. You can go to a two-year or four-year college, or you can prepare for your career by joining the military, getting an apprenticeship, or attending a trade school.

Maybe you already know which option you will choose, or perhaps you have a career in mind but aren't sure how to prepare for it. Maybe you have no idea how you'd like to prepare for your future career.

Regardless of where you are on this spectrum, taking some time now to learn about the various ways you can prepare for a career will help you plan and prepare for your future.

This booklet will help you get started!

# Ways to Prepare for a Great Career

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# How Much Do You Know?

90% of careers require education or training beyond a general high school education. 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 option is most appropriate for you.

In this booklet you will learn about a number of ways that you can prepare for a great career. But first, answer these True/False questions to see how much you know about your options.



## Two-Year College

*Two-year colleges (often called community colleges) provide career-oriented one- and two-year programs.*

1. To be accepted at a two-year college, you must take certain college-prep courses in high school. T  F
2. One year at a public two-year college and one year at a public four-year college generally cost about the same. T  F
3. You can start at a public two-year college and transfer after a year or two to a four-year college. T  F



## Four-Year College

*A four-year college education (bachelor's degree) can prepare you for a wide range of careers.*

4. You need to have at least a B average in high school to go to a four-year college. T  F
5. College students spend less time in class than high school students. T  F
6. If you pay your bills, you can continue at a four-year college as long as you like, regardless of your grades. T  F



## Career/Trade School

*Career and trade schools offer short-term training in a variety of career fields.*

7. Career/trade schools all cost about the same. T  F
8. Career/trade school programs are all two-year programs. T  F
9. All career/trade schools provide their students with a quality education. T  F



## Apprenticeship

*Apprentices learn a skilled trade through class instruction and on-the-job training.*

10. Apprentices don't earn any money the first six months. T  F
11. Most apprenticeship programs are four-year programs. T  F
12. Apprenticeship programs generally require that an applicant be 18 year old and a high school graduate. T  F



## The Military

*The U.S. military offers enlistees free job training in over 2,000 job specialties.*

13. If you enlist in the military, you are obligated for ten years of active duty. T  F
14. As an enlistee, you get free medical care and housing. T  F
15. The U.S. military is the nation's largest employer. T  F

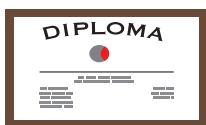
Check your answers on page 14 and give yourself one point for each right answer. **Your Score** \_\_\_\_\_

**Regardless of your score, you'll learn a lot about each of these five options in the coming pages.**



# Ways to Prepare for a Career

*To help you make career and education choices that will be right for you and your future, learn all you can about the different ways you can prepare for a career.*



## Two-Year Colleges

*Two-year colleges include community, junior, and technical colleges. These schools provide career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less.*

### Students prepare for a specific career

Students in certificate and associate degree career programs (one- and two-year programs) spend most of their time taking the courses they need to prepare for a specific career field. For example, art students focus primarily on art courses, while students studying business spend the majority of their time taking courses in math, communications, and accounting.

### Colleges are affordable and the classes are small

It generally costs much less to attend a two-year college than it does a four-year college. While tuition and fees at an in-state public four-year college average about \$11,250 a year, tuition and fees at a public two-year college average about \$4,000 a year.

Two-year colleges keep their classes small, and their instructors are often people who have worked in a related career field. A law enforcement instructor, for example, might be a current or retired police officer. Because colleges and programs vary greatly, it's very important to visit any college you are seriously considering. While you're there, check out their facilities, equipment, and accreditation.

## All high school graduates are welcome

Two-year colleges generally accept all students who have a high school diploma or GED. While students need only a high school education to enroll in most programs, some programs may have additional academic requirements. For example, to enroll in a nursing program, a student may need to have a year of biology and chemistry.

## A variety of programs are available

These are a few of the career fields you can prepare for at a two-year college.

Accounting	Fire science technology
Art	Interior design
Automotive technology	Law enforcement
Business management	Nursing
Computer information systems	Paralegal
Dental hygiene	Paramedic
Early childhood education	Physical therapy assistant
Engineering technology	Radiologic technology
Fashion design	Veterinary technology
Hospitality management	Web design

## Two-year colleges offer a variety of services

While two-year colleges generally don't have dorms, and they seldom offer the social life and campus activities found at four-year colleges, they do provide athletic programs, clubs, and social activities, as well as a variety of support services such as counseling, career services, and tutoring.

## Students can transfer to a four-year college

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

As long as students choose their courses carefully, the credits they earn at a two-year college should transfer. However, it's up to the four-year college to decide which credits they will accept. Two-year colleges have counselors available to help students choose courses that will transfer.



## Four-Year Colleges

*A four-year college education, or bachelor's degree, can open doors and prepare students for financially rewarding careers. While all colleges hope to attract bright, well-prepared students, colleges vary greatly in size, costs, admission requirements, and majors offered.*

### Four-year colleges offer a wide variety of majors

All four-year college students must choose a major (the subject they want to study in-depth). Students take about half of their courses in their major, so it's very important that they choose a major they're going to enjoy and do well in.

Here are some of the most popular majors.

Accounting	Education	Nursing
Architecture	Engineering	Physics
Art	English	Political science
Biology	Finance	Pre-med
Business	Information sciences	Psychology
Communications	Journalism	Social work
Computer science	Mathematics	Theater
Criminal justice	Music	Zoology

To ensure that students receive a well-rounded education, most four-year colleges require that all students take 25–50% of their classes in general education courses such as English, science, math, and history. Students who attend college without having decided on a major can use their first year of college to take their required general education courses. This gives them time to consider all of the majors that are offered at their college.

### Colleges have specific requirements for admission

College entrance requirements vary greatly. Colleges with an open admissions policy accept all high school graduates until spaces are filled. In contrast, highly selective colleges seek students with impressive academic records. Students should look for colleges that accept applicants with academic records (grades and test scores) similar to their own.



## Students need to be academically prepared

In order to be prepared for college-level work, most four-year colleges recommend that students take the following college prep courses in high school: 4 years of English, 3–4 years of math (including Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II), 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies, 2–3 years of one world language, and 1 year of fine or performing arts.

Students planning to attend college should work hard in their classes and try to get the best grades possible. The more impressive a student's high school record is, the more college options and opportunities they'll have.

## College admission tests

Some four-year colleges no longer require ACT/SAT scores as part of the application process; however, many colleges do. College-bound students should take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring of their junior year unless they are absolutely certain they will not need to submit test scores.

## Choosing a college

The first step in choosing a college is to determine what's important to you with regard to size, location, majors offered, admission requirements, and cost. Once you know what you are looking for in a college, you can search for the colleges that meet your criteria at [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org).

## Research four-year colleges carefully

Students and parents should learn as much as they can about the colleges they're considering. In addition to [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org), the following websites also provide excellent information: [educationplanner.org](http://educationplanner.org); [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov); and [nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator).

*While there is a great deal of information available in print and online, making a college visit is the best way to learn about a college.*

## Four-year colleges can be expensive

While college can be expensive, it's important to note that most students receive some sort of financial aid—and do not pay the full published “sticker” price.

*For information on financial aid, watch this short video.*





# Career and Trade Schools

*Career and trade schools offer short-term training in a wide variety of career fields. While some programs last only a few weeks, others take up to two years to complete. Career and trade schools generally accept any student with a high school diploma.*

## Students receive hands-on training

Students at career and trade schools spend most 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 instruction.

To find the schools located in your area, visit [nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator) or do an online search for the career/trade schools in your city and state.

Here are some of the careers you can prepare for at a career or trade school.

Administrative assistant	Interior designer
Auto mechanic	Legal secretary
Bookkeeper	Licensed practical nurse
Carpenter	Massage therapist
Child care worker	Medical assistant
Computer service technician	Medical/dental receptionist
Cosmetologist	Medical lab technician
Dental assistant	Nursing assistant
Dental laboratory technician	Pharmacy technician
Drafter	Photographer
Electrician	Plumber
Fashion merchandiser	Surveyor
Floral arranger	Tool and die maker
Graphic artist	Truck driver
Heavy equipment operator	Veterinary assistant
HVAC technician	Welder

## Career and trade schools need to be checked out

While there are many excellent career and trade schools, not all of these schools are reputable. It is very important for you to thoroughly investigate any school you are considering.

The following guidelines will help you evaluate a career or trade school.

- ▶ **Licensing and accreditation** – If a school is accredited, it means that it meets the minimum standards of the accrediting agency or organization. Check to see if, and by whom, a school is accredited. Be very wary of any school that is not accredited.
- ▶ **Facilities** – Take a tour. Is the equipment up-to-date and adequate for the number of students enrolled? Do students receive instruction on the same equipment they'll be using in the workplace? What are the buildings, classrooms, and facilities like?
- ▶ **Placement** – Does the school help its students find jobs? What percentage of the school's graduates find a job in the field in which they received training? Who hires them? What are their starting salaries?
- ▶ **Cost** – What is the total cost of tuition, fees, books, and supplies? What is their refund policy? Is financial aid available?
- ▶ **Quality of instruction** – What are the qualifications and credentials of the instructors? Are their courses and books up-to-date? Do students get actual hands-on training?
- ▶ **Reputation and stability** – Find out how long the school has been in operation and what percentage of the students finish the program. Check out what area businesses think of the school.

## Career and trade schools can be expensive

Career and trade schools are usually privately owned and in business to make a profit. While these schools can be expensive, costs vary depending on the type and length of the program.

## Credits generally do not transfer

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



# The Military

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

The four major branches of the military are the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. There are also military opportunities in the Coast Guard, National Guard, and the Reserves.

ROTC programs are available for those students who want to attend college before they enter the military, and military academies provide excellent educational opportunities for the students who qualify. Through the delayed entry program, students can be sworn in during their senior year in high school and enter the military after they graduate.

## **The ASVAB**

Students who are serious about exploring their military options should take the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). The ASVAB is a three-hour test designed to identify a student's aptitudes and strengths. Taking the ASVAB in no way obligates a student to the military; however, one must obtain a minimum score on the ASVAB to enlist in the military.

## **Training and education**

All new enlistees are required to go through basic training, which includes 6-12 weeks of intense physical and mental preparation involving classroom instruction, field exercises, and physical training. After basic training, enlistees typically go to Advanced Individual Training where they receive instruction and training for a specific job.

*There is a wealth of information online at sites such as [todaysmilitary.com](http://todaysmilitary.com) and [usa.gov/join-military](http://usa.gov/join-military). However, 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, so talk to recruiters representing two or more branches of the military.*



# Apprenticeships

*Students who prefer a hands-on approach to learning may want to consider an apprenticeship program. Apprentices learn a trade through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Apprenticeship programs are considered to be the best way to receive training in the skilled trades.*

## **Apprenticeships are an excellent way to learn a trade**

Apprenticeships are agreements in which employers pay individuals while they learn a trade. Apprenticeship programs demand hard work and dedication; however, those who receive training through an apprenticeship program often find that they have greater job security, earning power, and opportunities for advancement.

While approximately half of the apprentices work in the construction trades, apprenticeship programs are available in over 1,000 different occupations. Popular apprenticeship occupations include bricklayer, carpenter, chef, dental assistant, electrician, firefighter, painter, plumber, roofer, tool and die maker, and truck driver.

## **Apprentices receive training and instruction**

Working under the supervision of experienced journeyworkers, apprentices receive 2,000+ hours of on-the-job training each year. While apprenticeship programs can last anywhere from 1–6 years, most are 4-year programs. Apprentices receive almost 150 hours of instruction each year on safety measures, theories, and techniques. After completing the program, an apprentice becomes a journeyworker.

## **It can be difficult to get an apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship programs have a limited number of openings and the competition can be fierce. Therefore, apprenticeship programs are often difficult to get into. As a rule, applicants must be 18 years old, physically fit, and have a high school diploma or GED. When competing for apprenticeship openings, applicants with vocational training and/or job experience have an advantage.



# On-the-Job Training

*Students who get a job directly after they graduate generally receive some sort of on-the-job training.*

## **OJT programs provide limited opportunities**

On-the-job training is provided by the employer, and it can last anywhere from a few hours to several months. These short-term training programs are not meant to prepare individuals for a career—they are designed to teach employees what they need to know to perform a specific job.

On-the-job training programs most often prepare people for minimum wage jobs with limited opportunities for advancement. Of course, employees who are hard-working, polite, punctual, well-groomed, willing to learn, and able to get along well with others have the best chance for advancement.

High school graduates seeking employment right after high school should try to find a job in a field they're considering as a career. For example, a student who wants a career in the fashion industry should consider getting a job at a clothing store, a student interested in being a chef should work in a cafe or restaurant.

For a quick review of your education options,  
watch this short video.



## **Answers to questions on pages 4 & 5**

1. **False** - 2-year public colleges do not require specific courses for admissions.
2. **False** - A year at a 4-year college generally costs more than twice as much as a year at a 2-year public college.
3. **True**
4. **False** - 4-year colleges look for students with good grades, but they do not have specific grade requirements.
5. **True**
6. **False** - All 4-year colleges have academic requirements students must meet to stay enrolled.
7. **False** - Costs vary greatly.
8. **False** - Some programs last a few weeks; others can last years.
9. **False** - Some career/trade schools aren't reputable. Career and trade schools need to be checked out carefully.
10. **False** - Apprentices start off earning about one-half of what experienced workers earn.
11. **True**
12. **True**
13. **False** - You are most often obligated for 4 years of active duty.
14. **True**
15. **True**

# What Do You Think?

## Given what you know now, what do you think?

### How do you want to prepare for your career?

Check **yes** (this is how you want to prepare for your career), **maybe** (you'd like to learn more), or **no** (you don't think this option is for you).

- |                        |                              |                                |                             |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Two-year college    | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 2. Four-year college   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 3. Career/trade school | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 4. Apprenticeship      | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 5. The military        | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> no |

What can you do between now and the time you graduate to help you achieve your career and educational goals?

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## Want to learn more?

The following websites will provide you with excellent information and help you determine which career preparation option will be best for you.

- ▶ [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org)
- ▶ [apprenticeship.gov](http://apprenticeship.gov)
- ▶ [nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator)
- ▶ [todaysmilitary.com](http://todaysmilitary.com)

## Final Words

Sometimes when people are confused about what to do, they do nothing. They decide to wait and see what "comes along." These people later realize that doing nothing is in itself a choice.

Things happen for people who make them happen. Take control of your life, make a plan, and work hard. You are sure to find both happiness and success!

# Ways to Prepare for A Great Career

This booklet goes over  
the various ways you can  
prepare for a career—  
to help you choose the option  
that will be right for you!

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