



THERE ARE MANY PATHS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

Going to a traditional four-year college is one way to gain the knowledge and skills needed for today's jobs, but it's not the only way. In fact, 40% of students who try a four-year college don't go on to get their degree, often because they selected a school that wasn't a good fit academically, socially or financially. Don't let this be you! If you've been worried about your future because you're not sure if college is right for you, there are several options to explore:

-  **TECHNICAL AND TRADE SCHOOLS**
-  **APPRENTICESHIPS**
-  **2-YEAR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES**
-  **MILITARY**
-  **ONLINE/REMOTE COLLEGE DEGREE**
-  **NON-COLLEGE TECHNICAL CERTIFICATION, BOOT CAMP PROGRAM OR CODING ACADEMY**

TECHNICAL AND TRADE SCHOOLS

- Training programs for specific career paths, such as medical assistants, automechanics, beauty, culinary arts, and more.
- Short-term certificate or diploma programs that last 3–18 months.
- Application process generally requires you to submit an application, pay an application fee, and prove that you have a high school diploma or GED.
- May accept federal and state financial aid, such as Pell Grants and Stafford Loans.
- BEWARE: Not all trade schools are equal! Research a school's cost, graduation rate, and average student loan debt before attending. Check to see if a nearby community college offers a similar academic program for a lower price.

■ This is a good option if:

- You know the career field you want to enter, and this type of program is required or helpful for that field.
- Your circumstances would make it difficult to invest more time or money in a longer-term education option.

APPRENTICESHIPS

- On-the-job training for a specific amount of time during which you're trained in a particular skill, as well as the soft skills.

- Can combine in-class instruction with hands-on learning.
- Traditionally associated with the trades, but now expanding to industries like health care, financial services, and IT. In Massachusetts, the **Apprenti** program is expanding tech-focused apprenticeships across the commonwealth.
- Application process may include an aptitude test, interview, and other steps, and it generally takes between 3 and 12 months to complete.
- There's no cost for an apprenticeship itself. In fact, it's the opposite: Apprentices are paid! However, there may be costs associated with travel or equipment, and apprenticeships are NOT eligible for financial aid.

■ This is a good option if:

- You know the career field you want to enter and want to earn while you learn.
- You want to earn college credit. Some apprenticeships offer college credit toward an associate degree or higher.

2-YEAR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

- Affordable career certificate, associate degree or stackable credit programs help prepare you for certain careers or to continue your education at a 4-year college or university, as well as help you develop soft skills.
- Open admissions process generally requires you to submit an application, pay an application fee, take a college readiness exam such as Accuplacer, and prove that you have a high school diploma or GED.
- Most accept federal and state financial aid, such as Pell Grants and Stafford Loans.

■ This is a good option if:

- Your chosen career requires an associate degree.
- You want more time to prepare or improve your grades before entering a 4-year college.
- You want to save money on the first two years of college before transferring to a 4-year institution (Mass Transfer & Commonwealth Commitment).

MILITARY

- Opportunities to serve in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, or Coast Guard.
- Service members can take advantage of many educational benefits during or after service, including tuition assistance and earning college credit for military training.

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- Like apprenticeships, you don't have to pay to join the military – they pay you!

■ **This is a good option if:**

- You're passionate about serving your country.
- You're interested in advanced technical training in a variety of career fields, are thinking of exploring educational opportunities after you serve, or want to build your leadership skills.



ONLINE/REMOTE COLLEGE DEGREE

- Many schools today offer online courses, certificate programs, and degrees. Often, these are the same programs offered on their brick-and-mortar campuses.
- May offer opportunity to combine in-person instruction with online classes.
- Application process is typically the same as for brick-and-mortar students; check with the individual school.
- May accept federal and state financial aid, such as Pell Grants and Stafford Loans.
- May be less expensive than brick-and-mortar, but not always. Do your research!

■ **This is a good option if:**

- You want to save money on room or board, or live in a rural area with limited education options nearby.
- You need a flexible class schedule to accommodate your work hours or family obligations.



NON-COLLEGE TECHNICAL CERTIFICATION, BOOT CAMP PROGRAM OR CODING ACADEMY

- Accelerated learning programs that teach beginners digital skills for computing jobs.
- Typically short-term programs that last less than a year.
- Application process may include a written or video application, a "culture fit" interview, and a technical interview or coding challenge.
- Most do NOT accept federal or state financial aid, such as Pell Grants and Stafford Loans.

■ **This is a good option if:**

- You're interested in a career in Information Technology, like coding.
- Your circumstances would make it difficult to invest more time in a longer-term education option.
- You don't need to rely on financial aid to pay for school beyond high school.

It's never too early to prepare

Many middle and high schools throughout the U.S. offer **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**. CTE programs give students the opportunity to explore their passions, aptitudes, and skills, and then start a path toward a desired career. CTE combines traditional classroom instruction with experiential learning, giving purpose to education by allowing students to practice their newly learned skills in real-world settings. CTE students can often take advantage of internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring to get a leg up on career preparation. In fact, **94% of CTE concentrators graduate from high school and 75% enroll in post-secondary education.**

From high school to career

It certainly is an option to begin working full-time immediately after high school graduation. But the truth is, a growing number of jobs in the U.S. today require more than just a high school diploma. Consider these facts:

- Years ago, about 66% of entry-level jobs demanded a high school diploma or less. Now, that same 66% requires at least some education or training beyond high school.¹
- Statistically, the higher your education level, the higher your income. The typical worker with only a high school diploma averages \$718 a week, while those with some college or an associate degree earn \$799 a week, bachelor's degree holders make \$1,375 per week, and those with an advanced degree make \$1,732 a week.²
- Taking time off between high school and college can also be an option. Great bridge programs like City Year Americorps and Year Up can offer hands-on training and skills development during a "gap year" after high school. But beware: studies show that students who choose to delay are at considerable risk of not completing a post-secondary program when compared with their peers who enroll immediately after high school graduation.³

Bottom line: If you want a good job with family-sustaining wages, you'll probably have to pursue some form of post-secondary education like the ones outlined above.

¹ Three Educational Pathways to Good Jobs. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/3pathways/>

² TED: The Economics Daily. United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2017/high-school-graduates-who-work-full-time-had-median-weekly-earnings-of-718-in-second-quarter.htm>

³ Waiting to Attend College: Undergraduates Who Delay Their Postsecondary Enrollment. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://nces.ed.gov/das/epubs/2005152/>

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