Deciding what to do after high school is a big decision that you will have to make over the next few years. The activities in the following pages will help you think about your education and career goals. Do as many of the activities as you can each year to begin to better understand yourself and your career interest. When graduation day comes, you will be ready to make the most of your future.
**Middle School**

*During the School Year*

- The learning pace increases during middle school, so brace yourself and maintain good grades the whole year.
- Take challenging courses to prepare for high school.
- Take a career interest inventory at school or online to find out how your skills and abilities relate to careers.
- Talk with adults about their work to learn about how to get and keep a job and make a living.

**Freshman**

*During the School Year*

- Get a good start on your schoolwork and continue it throughout the year.
- Visit a guidance counselor to begin to map out a 4-year curriculum.
- Choose the most challenging courses that you can handle.
- Join clubs and do activities to explore your interests and abilities.
- Imagine your ideal career and write down your ideas.

**Sophomore**

*During the School Year*

- Continue to make good grades and take challenging courses.
- Participate in clubs and activities that help you develop communication, teamwork, and leadership skills.
- List college majors or training programs that interest you, and review your course load to make sure you take the courses that are consistent with your career interests.

**Junior**

*During the School Year*

- Stay focused on your grades. Get serious about your schoolwork if you have not already. Choose classes that are as rigorous as you can handle.
- Find out, from a counselor or the Internet, which standardized tests (SAT, ACT) you should take for college admissions and scholarships. Meet application deadlines and take the tests.
- Get involved with school or community organizations to gain leadership and community service experience.
- Look at your grades and activities and honestly evaluate with your parents and counselor what your options will be after high school.
- Gather information about different schools and training programs through special events, brochures, and Web sites.

**Senior**

*During the School Year*

- Don’t let your grades slip. It is time for a big push to ensure that you graduate with the highest grade point average possible.
- Finalize the list of schools or training programs you will apply to and review it with your counselor and parents.
- Check your course list to make sure you will have the credits required by the schools or training programs you selected.
- Schedule visits with admissions and financial aid offices as well as with faculty and students involved in the program of study you selected.
- Register to take the ACT or SAT if you haven’t already. Be sure you take the test required by the colleges or training programs you plan to apply to.
Middle School

* Be willing to try things you have never done before to find out what you like.
* Ask your friends what careers interest them.
* Learn about the different kinds of jobs available in your community.
* Select 8th grade courses with the help of your counselor and parents.
* Build your work ethic by doing tasks with family members around the house.

Freshman

* Search books and online for information about careers that interest you.
* Talk with your parents about your interests and goals.
* Identify people who work in fields you find interesting and talk with them about their careers.
* Talk about different careers with your friends.

Sophomore

* Visit recruiting offices to find out what colleges, job training programs, and the military have to offer.
* Talk with your counselor to find out when to take standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT. Ask about study aids or practice tests to help you prepare.
* Attend a career fair with a friend.
* Complete a career assessment. A counselor or teacher can help you find one, or you can complete one online.
* Discuss your grades with your counselor, and figure out what to do to improve if necessary.

Junior

* Job shadow if possible.
* Consider which is right for you: 2- or 4-year college, job training program, military, on-the-job training, etc.
* Start researching scholarships and student aid programs.
* Continue to build your computer skills.
* Make a list of campuses to visit and write down questions to ask during the visits.
* Select your top career choices and find which academic majors you need for those careers.

Senior

* Research scholarships and financial aid. Fill out applications and provide requested materials.
* Ask your school to send your transcript and records to colleges or training programs you selected, if required.
* Apply for federal and state financial aid. Also apply for aid programs offered by the school you will be attending.
* Do not give in to senioritis. The last semester of high school is no time to slack up. Stay focused on grades.
* Evaluate financial aid offers with your parents and decide where you will go. Inform other schools or programs that you will not be attending.
* Know when payments, such as tuition and room and board, are due.
* Finalize your plans to finance your education or training.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the Summer</td>
<td>During the Summer</td>
<td>During the Summer</td>
<td>During the Summer</td>
<td>During the Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participate in enrichment programs or volunteer.</td>
<td>• If you decide to earn some money, be sure to choose a job that meets the federal guidelines for teen employment.</td>
<td>• Talk with adults about their careers. Job shadow if possible.</td>
<td>• If you decide to work, find a job that provides experience in the field you are interested in and sharpens your leadership skills.</td>
<td>• Try to get an internship or a job in the field you have selected, and consider saving some of your earnings to help with educational expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read as much as you can.</td>
<td>• Volunteer to gain experience and learn new skills.</td>
<td>• Learn to use a computer software package.</td>
<td>• Request applications for post-secondary education and training. Begin to think about essay topics for the applications.</td>
<td>• Spend leisure time on activities that keep your reading, writing, and computer skills sharp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read about successful entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>• Read about how to start a business then try setting up one of your own.</td>
<td>• Check out career Web sites designed especially for teens.</td>
<td>• Visit college campuses.</td>
<td>• Have fun! You earned it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watch some educational programs on television.</td>
<td>• Think of something you are interested in, and participate in an enrichment program to learn about it.</td>
<td>• Look for constructive ways to spend the summer: get a job, participate in enrichment programs, volunteer in the community, travel.</td>
<td>• Compile a resume of your activities, honors, leadership positions, and job experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If you decide to earn some money, be sure to choose a job that meets the federal guidelines for teen employment.</td>
<td>• Read for pleasure and to build your vocabulary.</td>
<td>• Explore different types of post-secondary education and training such as community colleges, 4-year colleges, the military, on-the-job training, etc.</td>
<td>• Talk to adults about their education, training, and work experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work on your computer skills. Learn to use a new software package.</td>
<td>• Talk with your friends about careers that interest them.</td>
<td>• Seriously think about the lifestyle you hope to have some day and talk with an adult about what you need to do to achieve it.</td>
<td>• Read several books and work on your writing skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If you decide to work, find a job that provides experience in the field you are interested in and sharpens your leadership skills.</td>
<td>• Read for pleasure and to build your vocabulary.</td>
<td>• Request applications for post-secondary education and training. Begin to think about essay topics for the applications.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I Can’t Talk to Adults About Careers!
It’s easy! These simple questions will help you get started:

What job do you do?
How did you get started in that kind of work?
What do you enjoy most about your job?
What do you like least about your job?

What Careers Interest You Most?

Arts & Humanities – People working in this field engage in literary, cultural, artistic, athletic, and entertainment activities. They interpret and communicate concepts and ideas through writing, painting, drawing, speaking, dancing, musical expression, and a wide variety of other communication techniques.

Business & Information Systems – People working in this field support public and private enterprises by managing people and information. They perform activities such as planning, training, promoting, consulting, researching, and reporting. They create, store, retrieve, and distribute information.

Engineering & Technology – People working in this field use technical knowledge and skills to assemble, inspect, design, maintain, and repair. They provide scientific and diagnostic skills to maintain and repair computer equipment, aircraft, automobiles, buildings, roads, bridges, and manufacturing machinery.

Health Services – People working in this field provide health care and support services to address the physical, mental, and emotional needs. They use their skills to diagnose and treat illness, document care, provide a therapeutic environment, and maintain the health of their clients.

Human & Public Services – People working in this field provide protection and social, educational, and community services. They provide assistance to individuals and families in need.

Natural & Agricultural Sciences – People working in this field apply technical and scientific knowledge to the study of the earth. They care for and protect the environment, harvest natural resources, and raise animals.
Ways to Learn About Work

Field Trip – An organized visit to a location to learn about something of interest
Job Shadowing – A short-term visit to a work site to learn about someone’s job.
Mentorship – A relationship in which an adult teaches a student about a career.
Internship – A hands-on experience in which the student learns about a job by actually doing it. The student may or may not receive payment.
Service Learning/Volunteering – Work that is done free of charge in order to help someone or benefit the community.
Entrepreneurship – The experience of setting up and running your own business.
Youth Apprenticeship – Combining classroom learning and on-the-job training, often leading to a certification of accomplishment for students 16 years and older.

Skills and Characteristics Employers Look For

Skills

Communication (written and verbal)
Computer
Teamwork
Organizational abilities
Good grades
Motivation/initiative
Leadership skills
Entrepreneurial skills/risk taker
Analytical skills
Flexibility/adaptability

Characteristics

Tactful
Honest
Well-mannered/polite
Good interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
Detail oriented
Creative
Strong work ethic
Self-confident
Friendly/outgoing
Sense of humor
# Education Pays!

The more you learn, the more you earn.

(U.S. Department of Labor, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Average Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree</td>
<td>$81,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>$73,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>$58,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>$48,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>$36,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College (no degree)</td>
<td>$34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma (including GED)</td>
<td>$30,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School (no diploma)</td>
<td>$21,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county’s name to find the number.

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