

## Choosing a Career

Some people simply have jobs, while others have careers. What's the difference? With a career, the kind of work you do is based on your interests. It's a long-term path you've chosen. Make sure you set career goals and understand what you need to do to reach them.

The Career Search at [StudentAid.gov/careersearch](https://studentaid.gov/careersearch) offers options to find and explore careers by keyword search, browsing by type of industry, and discovering potential careers by indicating your interests. Let's look at things you can do to choose a career and how the Career Search can help you with each activity.

### Think about what interests you.

Once you give some thought to your interests and passions, you will be able to narrow down your career options. The Career Search at [StudentAid.gov/careersearch](https://studentaid.gov/careersearch) offers an interest profiler (in the "Tell us what you like to do" section) in which you'll indicate how much you enjoy various types of activities that you might do on the job in different careers. The results summarize your interests, indicating how they relate to the world of work.

### Learn about your chosen career.

For each career that you find via the keyword or industry browsing options in the Career Search, you'll be able to see such information as

- what people do on the job;
- the types of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the career;
- the level of education usually needed;
- the average annual salary; and
- the expected demand for this career in the future.

Bonus tip: If you'd like to explore another source of job outlook information, check out the Occupational Outlook Handbook at [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco).

Once you've narrowed your career choices, talk to people who are working in that field or, if possible, find a part-time or volunteer job in that field. You also might want to ask a school counselor or other mentor to help you investigate internships in your chosen career field.

### Consider how much training you will need for your chosen career.

Here are some examples of the level of education needed for various careers:

- High school diploma: cashier, receptionist, retail salesperson, security guard, waiter
- Special career training (e.g., career school, apprenticeship): auto service technician or mechanic, cosmetologist, police officer, truck driver
- Bachelor's degree: accountant, engineer, forensic science technician, registered nurse, pilot, teacher, public relations specialist, video game designer
- Graduate or professional degree: college professor, doctor, dentist, lawyer, veterinarian, research scientist, architect

If you want to find a college or career school that offers the education or training you'll need, you can either use the "Find Training" link in the Career Search or go to College Navigator at [nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator) for a more detailed college search.

For information about federal student aid to help pay for college or career school, visit [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).