# Trade School vs Traditional College

It has been drilled into students' heads for ages that college is an absolute must. Sure, everyone needs a skill to support themselves, but do those skills need to come from four-year universities? (No: See [highest paying trade school jobs](https://toptrade.school/highest-paying-careers/).)

Not to mention, not everyone interested in four more years of school. There is another option; one that makes so much sense practically and financially: trade schools.

One of the top reasons to choose trade school over traditional college is how fast you can train for a career. Get into the workforce quickly—as few as 6-9 months for [nursing assistant](https://careerschoolnow.org/colleges/programs/cna-certified-nursing-assistant), [medical assistant](https://topnursing.school/degrees/medical-assistant-training-programs/), and 3-6 weeks for [CDL driver](https://careerschoolnow.org/colleges/programs/class-a-cdl-driving).

So, why else should anyone consider choosing vocational training over college? Read on; we will provide you with the many benefits of attending trade school.

## What Is Trade School & Why Is It Good?

There are [online programs](https://toptrade.school/programs/online/), plus evening and weekend classes, and you'll come out of trade school with practical, hands-on experience in your chosen profession.

Vocational school education gets you into many well-paying careers. In 2019, for example, [dental assistants](https://dentalcareernow.com/careers/dental-assistant) in had an average annual pay of **$41,170** (bls.gov). [Electricians](https://electricalcareernow.com/careers/electrician) averaged an annual pay of **$60,370**, and [HVAC technicians](https://hvaccareernow.com/careers/hvac-technician) made an average annual pay of **$51,420** (bls.gov). There are dozens of industries with hundreds of career roles to chose from; these are just the tip of the iceberg.

Additionally, the trades have many open positions, and since trades deal with essential life elements, they typically come with job stability. Skilled trades such as [plumbing](https://careerschoolnow.org/careers/plumber), electric, and welding are experiencing shortages of qualified people, creating vacant spots in need of being filled. [Healthcare](https://careerschoolnow.org/careers/healthcare-administration)—which many of the fast-growing occupations fall under—and technology are also experiencing the same problem: more jobs opening and no one to fill them.

Those coming out of trade schools have good opportunities. Your specialized training will leave you career-ready, with the necessary certifications to take on an entry-level job.

The average cost for a bachelor’s degree is $25,000-$50,000 per year, which adds up to $100,000-$200,000 for 4 years of attendance. That price tag is just tuition, and doesn’t include room and board.

There's good news: Trade school runs, on average, around $33,000 from start to finish, with many students only carrying a loan of around $10,000.

Not to mention, having a bachelor's degree doesn't even guarantee a high-paying jobs in your field of study. But because there is such a need for skilled tradesmen and women, vocational school grads are often immediately find employment in their field, letting them start earning pay right away.

## Trade School Scholarships & Grants

Read our [list of scholarships for trade school](https://careerschoolnow.org/careers/list-of-scholarships-for-trade-school).

Professional trade organizations, community colleges, and the state and federal government offer money in the form of grants and scholarships for students entering vocational programs. Trade school grants are a great option because, as with any other grant, they don’t have to be paid back. Grants are stackable, which means you can combine more than one to lower the cost of trade school.

There are traditional school loans available, as well as school payment plans.

## How Long is Trade School?

One benefit of trade school is the speed to a diploma or degree. Traditional colleges and universities generally take 4 or more years to complete.

Cue in trade school. Programs can be completed in as few as **3-6 weeks** for trucking, and as few as **6-10 months** for many other careers, depending on which trade and whether you attend full or part time. On the table below, we summarize the length of the most common trade school programs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Program](https://careerschoolnow.org/colleges/programs)s | Length |
| [HVAC Technician](https://hvaccareernow.com) | as few as 6 months |
| [Dental Assistant](https://dentalcareernow.com) | as few as 10 months |
| [Cosmetologist](https://cosmetologycareernow.com) | 1,500 - 2,100 training hours |
| [Massage Therapist](https://massagecareernow.com) | as few as 10 months |
| [Welder](https://weldingcareernow.com) | as few as 10 months |
| [Electrician](https://electricalcareernow.com) | as few as 10 months |
| [Mechanic](https://mechaniccareernow.com) | as few as 9 months |
| [Commercial Truck Driver](https://www.cdlcareernow.com) | 3-6 weeks |

Furthering your education is always a fantastic idea, and it’s best to explore your options when it comes to going to a trade school or college. So, from public service careers in [criminal justice](https://careerschoolnow.org/careers/criminal-justice) to jobs with solid growth potential like [certified nursing assistant](https://careerschoolnow.org/colleges/programs/cna-certified-nursing-assistant), don't forget to consider trade schools.

# Highest Paying Skilled Trade Programs

## Top Paying Skilled Trade Programs

These are the highest paying jobs that are considered “skilled trades”. You’ll find [fast trade school programs](https://toptrade.school/1-month-1-year-trade-school-programs/) for some of these high paying skilled trade jobs. Examples of the fastest programs include CDL truck driver, hvac technician, and mechanic.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Career | Starting Salary | Median Pay | Top 10% |
| [Construction Mgmt](https://toptrade.school/programs/construction/) | $56,140 | $95,260 | $164,790 |
| [HVAC Technician](https://toptrade.school/programs/skilled-trades/hvac/) | $30,610 | $48,730 | $77,920 |
| [Welder](https://toptrade.school/programs/skilled-trades/welding/) | $29,470 | $42,490 | $64,240 |
| [Aircraft Mechanic](https://toptrade.school/programs/mechanic/aircraft-mechanic/) | $37,890 | $64,090 | $101,070 |
| [Auto Mechanic](https://toptrade.school/programs/mechanic/auto-mechanic/) | $24,400 | $42,090 | $68,880 |
| [Electrician](https://toptrade.school/programs/skilled-trades/electrician/) | $33,410 | $56,180 | $96,580 |
| [Truck Driver](https://toptrade.school/programs/cdl/) | $29,130 | $45,260 | $66,840 |
| [Sheet Metal Worker](https://toptrade.school/programs/skilled-trades/welding/) | $29,260 | $50,400 | $88,070 |

### More Top Paying Trade School & Technical College Programs

These jobs are not generally considered “skilled trades”, but you can often find these programs at trade schools and technical colleges. These high paying trade school programs generally take from about two years to four years to complete.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Career | Starting Salary | Median Pay | Top 10% |
| [Civil Engineering](https://toptrade.school/programs/engineering/civil-engineering/) | $55,380 | $87,060 | $144,560 |
| [Computer Science](https://toptrade.school/what-a-computer-scientist/) | $69,990 | $122,840 | $189,780 |
| [Mechanical Engineer](https://toptrade.school/programs/engineering/mechanical/) | $57,130 | $88,430 | $138,020 |
| [Engineering Tech](https://toptrade.school/what-a-mechanical-engineering-tech-does/) | $35,140 | $56,980 | $88,640 |
| [Dental Hygiene](https://topnursing.school/degrees/dental-hygienist-programs/) | $53,130 | $76,220 | $103,340 |
| [Electrical Engineer](https://toptrade.school/programs/engineering/electrical-engineering/) | $63,020 | $101,250 | $155,880 |
| [Information Systems](https://toptrade.school/programs/business/information-systems-management/online-information-systems/) | $87,480 | $146,360 | $208,000 |
| [Economics](https://toptrade.school/programs/liberal-arts-humanities-literature/economics/) | $59,450 | $105,020 | $185,020 |
| [Computer Engineer](https://toptrade.school/programs/engineering/computer-engineering/) | $68,460 | $117,220 | $185,240 |
| [Computer Programmer](https://toptrade.school/programs/it/programming/) | $50,150 | $86,550 | $140,250 |
| [Electronics Engineer](https://toptrade.school/programs/engineering/electrical-engineering/) | $63,020 | $101,250 | $155,880 |
| [Exec Pastry Chef](https://toptrade.school/programs/culinary-arts/baking-pastry/) | $26,320 | $48,460 | $81,150 |
| [Radiation Therapist](https://toptrade.school/programs/medical/x-ray-technician/) | $59,280 | $85,560 | $128,630 |
| [RN Nurse](https://medcareernow.com/rn-registered-nursing) | $52,080 | $73,300 | $111,220 |
| [Accountant](https://toptrade.school/programs/business/accounting/online-accounting/) | $44,480 | $71,550 | $124,450 |
| [Healthcare Admin](https://toptrade.school/programs/medical/healthcare-administration/online-healthcare-admin/) | $58,820 | $100,980 | $189,000 |
| [Business Admin](https://toptrade.school/programs/business/administration-management/online-business-admin/) | $55,210 | $96,940 | $166,330 |

A few of these careers may pay even more than current government statistics show, especially if you live in a fast growing area where there’s a lack of skilled workers. I know where I live in a growing area of [Florida](https://toptrade.school/find/florida/), welders, HVAC technicians, CDL truck drivers and electricians can make more than this table indicates.

### Why top students are choosing trade school over traditional college.

Raelee Nicholson could have had her pick of prestigious four-year universities. The high school junior from just outside of Pittsburgh is a member of the National Honor Society, is earning A’s in her honors classes, and scored very highly on her college board exams.

So naturally, a top-notch private college, an elite public university, or maybe even an Ivy was the next logical step for Nicholson after high school. Right?

Wrong. The stellar student decided that the path she wanted to choose was a trade school to train for a career as a diesel mechanic.

### ****Welcome to the realities of higher education in the year 2018.****

Nicholson’s story was told in a recent issue of [The Wall Street Journal](https://www.wsj.com/articles/college-or-trade-school-its-a-tough-call-for-many-teens-1520245800). It obviously turned many heads, and as much as traditional four-year colleges and universities don’t want to hear it, it’s becoming more and more common.

Of course, to many parents, a decision like this would come as a surprise. But when you step back, throw conventional norms aside, and take a close look at the rationale for choosing a two-year technical or trade school education over that of a traditional four-year, it’s a decision that actually makes perfect sense.

The case against traditional colleges and universities…

### ****Four-Year College Costs Continue Rising****

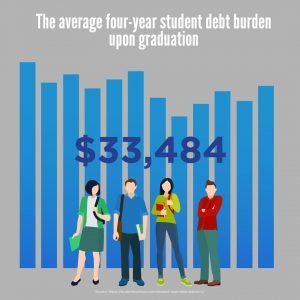
Tuition and fees at colleges and universities continue to rise. The rates of those increases have slowed significantly. For example, while in 2009-2010 public four-year institutions on average raised their tuition and fees by 9.5 percent, in 2017-2018 the hike at public four-year schools was just 1.3 percent. However, in 2017-2018 the amount of student grant aid and tax benefits didn’t keep pace even with those smaller price increases. So the net prices for full-time students still continue to rise, with this year being the eighth straight year net costs have gone up.

No matter what way you look at it, the cost for your son or daughter to attend a traditional four-year university is outrageous.

### ****“Four-Year” Colleges in Name Only****

While “four-year” is the typical way traditional colleges and universities are described, the truth is that students are taking more than four years to earn their undergraduate degree, and many don’t graduate at all. [Recent statistics show](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ctr.asp) that just over half of the entering freshman class at traditional colleges and universities earn their degree, with many of them taking five or even six years to do it. And more than 40 percent aren’t graduating at all. So while the annual net costs of attending continue to rise, the number of years it takes to graduate also is climbing increasing the overall cost of attendance—which means more money out of your family’s pocket.

### ****A Mountain of Debt****

So the result of those key factors is obvious—students leave traditional colleges and universities buried under a mountain of debt. These staggering student loans are another reason a shorter, focused vocational education is so attractive. With a current burden of $1.48 trillion spread amongst 44.2 million Americans, student debt has reached an all-time high. The average four-year student carries a burden of $33,484 in debt upon graduation, paying a little over $351 a month, for 10 years. And 20 percent of four-year degree grads owe more than $50,000.

The case for a trade school program…

### ****Focused Education and Training****

While students at four-year colleges and universities pay big money to attend classes that have nothing to do with their majors, trade school students take only the courses they need to enter their career field of choice. And trade schools are constantly re-evaluating their program curriculum, working directly with business and industry to ensure students are [gaining the most relevant knowledge and skills](https://penncommercial.edu/joining-skilled-trade-profession/) that can be applied to day-one after graduation.

### ****Getting Into Careers Faster****

A key benefit of the focused education and training that trade schools offer is the accelerated nature of the learning experience. No unnecessary courses. No time wasted. That means your son or daughter can get out into the professional world and start earning what they deserve in a fraction of the time it would take if they attended a traditional college or university. At Penn Commercial Business/Technical School in Washington County, some of its [trade and technical programs](https://penncommercial.edu/programs/trade-technical/) can be completed in as little as nine months.

### ****High-Growth Professions and Career Fields****

Trade schools are focused on offering programs in career fields that are projected to have a high need for employees well into the future. Good examples of this include HVAC Technicians and Electricians.  Both are projected to be in high demand through 2024 with excellent earnings. And although entry-level wages will be much lower than the median salaries quoted below—by the time your student’s friends finish traditional college after six years, and with thousands in debt, your son or daughter could easily be commanding the median wages reported below.

* From 2014 – 2024, [job growth for electricians in Pennsylvania](https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/47-2111.00) will be 14% (High demand) with median pay of $55,470 ($34,690 entry level)
* From 2014 – 2024, [job growth for HVAC technicians in Pennsylvania](https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/49-9021.01) will be 11% (High demand) median pay $47,390 ($29,450 entry level)

### ****So what’s your son or daughter’s best next step after high school?****

A place where they can finish fast. Position themselves to earn good money. And avoid racking up a mountain of student loan debt.

For many parents in your shoes, the answer has been [Penn Commercial](https://penncommercial.edu/).

With several programs that can be completed in 18 months or less and are designed to prepare students for excellent earnings upon completion, Penn Commercial has been meeting the needs of students and families in Pennsylvania for more than 85 years.

Programs include:

* Computer Aided Drafting & Design
* Electrician
* HVAC-R
* Network Administrator
* Welding Technology
* Medical Assistant
* Medical Billing & Coding
* Medical Office Administration
* Pharmacy Technician
* Practical Nursing
* Business Office Administration
* Spa & Salon

You’ve seen the research. There’s no denying the reality that it is, in fact, a brave new world when it comes to higher education. A world where students have a viable, logical path toward rewarding careers that don’t involve the wasted time and money of four-year colleges and universities.

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**\*\*\*\*\*\*** Benefit #1: Vocational Schools Have **Higher Employment Rate**

**Dental Hygiene**

**Medical Assistant**

**Medical Office Administration**

**Physical Therapist Assistant**

**Surgical Technology**

**Vocational Nursing**

**Vocational Nursing**

## Achieve an Associate Degree in as few as 18 months\*

As a Dental Hygienist, you’re an integral part of the dental team working directly with patients, helping them with their oral care. Hygienists clean teeth, examine patients for oral diseases, take and develop x-rays, and provide other preventive dental care. Most Dental Hygienists work in dental offices, but some work in a physician’s office or with the government.

### Serve your career by serving dental health

The accredited Dental Hygiene Associate Degree program offers practical skills and knowledge in extraoral and intraoral exams, periodontal and dental exams, patient history reviews, and risk assessments.

### Join our family

Do you want to serve the needs of dental patients and dentists in an exciting, fast-paced work setting? Are you searching for a Dental Hygiene school near you? **ID Future Stars** can help. Request more information email **(hello@idfuturestars.com)** us today to start on the path to a rewarding career in dental health. Dental Hygiene programs may be completed in as few as 21 months.

Get Started

A Medical Assistant (MA) performs clinical and administrative tasks in a physician’s office, hospital and other healthcare facilities. MAs interact with patients to take medical histories and vital signs, prepare them for procedures, and explain different experiences during their visit.

**A career path that sustains family and community**

The Medical Assistant prepares you for a diploma with hands-on classes and externships that teach you skills such as scheduling and receiving patients, preparing and maintaining medical records, infection control and much more.

**Join our family**

Have you been thinking about becoming a Medical Assistant? Have you been searching for Medical Assistant programs near you? Your search ends at ID Future Stars, where you will learn who offers Medical Assistant programs that can prepare you to achieve an exciting future in health care. School prepares students for a career as a MA in this fast-growing field with trained educators who have years of experience working in healthcare. \*Program length can vary by Location.

Get Started

# Medical Office Administration

## Achieve a Diploma in as few as 9 months\*

Being a Medical Office Administrator (MOA) means you get a chance to be the “jack of all trades” or the “fixer” that keeps the office going with day-to-day duties. The day of a MOA can be fast-paced, highly diverse and often chaotic dealing with billing, greeting patients, processing claims and maintaining records.

### A health care career path that sustains family and community

Medical Office Administration courses focus on such topics as managing daily office operations and finances, as well as being the “middle man” between patients and insurance providers. You’ll gain real-world experiences and hands-on training. Medical Office Admin classes are offered throughout the country, just contact ID Future Stars at ([hello@idfututrestars.com](mailto:hello@idfututrestars.com)).

**Join our family**

# Physical Therapist Assistant

## Achieve an Associate Degree in as few as 21 months\*

As a Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA), you can work with a Physical Therapist (PT) to help patients recover from injuries and illnesses, regain mobility, and manage pain. Being involved in the direct care of patients, PTAs get to observe patients before, during, and after therapy. Physical Therapy Assistants report observations to the PT, help with specific exercises, treat patients using a variety of techniques, including using devices and equipment and help educate patients and their families.

### Impact Your Community Through Your Work

Most Physical Therapy Assistant Associate Degree programs help prepare students with hands-on training and externships, teaching therapeutic exercises, functional, mobility and ambulation training, and activities of daily living. Find a Physical Therapy Assistant program near you at (hello@idfuturestars.com)

### Join Our Family

Do you dream of a chance to change lives through a career as a Physical Therapy Assistant? ID Future Stars will guide you to healthcare classes, which can prepare you to support patient therapy treatment and plans as a Physical Therapist Assistant.

# Dental Assistant

## Achieve a Diploma in as few as 9 months\*

As a Dental Assistant, the dental team counts on you to help assist in a variety of day-to-day duties such as preparing patients for exams, taking X-rays, sterilizing equipment, and educating patients in proper oral care. Other duties often vary by state or dentist offices worked at.

### A dental career path that sustains family and community

The Dental Assistant diploma program emphasizes both the clinical and administrative aspects of serving in a dental office environment, immersing students in practical, hands-on training including externships. The Dental Assistant program is offered nationwide contact (hello@idfuturestars.com).

### Join our family

Have you been thinking about a career as a Dental Assistant? Are you searching for a Dental Assistant school near you? Look no further! (hello@idfuturestars.com)

# Vocational Nursing

## Achieve a Diploma in as few as 13 months\*

As a licensed vocational nurse (LVN), you will work under the supervision and direction of registered nurses and doctors while administering basic patient care. LVNs may work in hospitals, long-term care facilities, hospice, or home/residential care facilities. Some LVN duties in these facilities can include wound care, helping bathe or dress patients, help deliver, care for, and feed infants, collect samples for testing, and much more.

### Achieve your dreams

While in school, vocational nurses may learn preventive, therapeutic, rehabilitative, and restorative nursing care plus nursing interventions. You can find LVN diploma programs nationwide at heelo@idfuturestars.com.

### Join our family

Are you dreaming of a career serving physicians, RNs, and their patients? Are you searching for a LVN school near you? ID Future Stars can help you begin a career as a vocational nurse through hands-on, clinical training that can prepare you to transition directly to a real-world healthcare career.