

Career tips for teens

by Jon Sargent

Finish high school. *Nearly every job requires basic communication and math skills. Compared to workers at higher education levels, high school dropouts have more difficulty getting and keeping jobs. They also have lower earnings throughout their lives.*

Plan your career. *Seek out information about occupations with favorable career prospects, high earnings, and other attributes that are important to you. Having a solid career plan can affect your future prospects more than how much education you have. True, college study increases opportunities for careers with above-average earnings—but not in all fields. Good opportunities await workers without college degrees who spend several years learning a sought-after skill or craft.*

Learn how to conduct a good job search and develop a résumé. *No matter what you do after high school, you will have to market your skills as you search for a job. Learning about résumé preparation and job search techniques will help you get through the process more easily. Workers average more than 8 different jobs by age 32, so prepare to change jobs—even careers—until you find the one that's right for you.*

Consider continuing your education. *The more education you get, the higher your earnings are likely to be. On average, high school graduates earn more than high school dropouts. Those who receive postsecondary training earn more than high school dropouts and graduates. And workers who have bachelor's or higher degrees usually earn more than those with less education.*

Develop basic computer skills. *Take advantage of every opportunity to acquire computer proficiency. Regardless of whether you continue your education beyond high school, chances are that you will need at least minimal computer skills to do your job.*

Gain experience early. *Learning by doing is a great way to approach a prospective career. Internships, part-time jobs, and volunteer work are some examples of ways to get hands-on experience while still in school. Not only do these opportunities help you make smarter career decisions, they may help you get hired after graduation; most employers value work-related experience.*

Research career information. *A small investment of your time will help you make an informed career choice that could pay dividends throughout your life. There are hundreds of occupations, so choosing and planning a career is a lot more complex than it may appear. The ideal career for you might be something you've never heard of or thought about. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and other career publications are loaded with helpful information.*

Value your personal interests and abilities. *You shouldn't be dissuaded from a career that interests you just because it's competitive. If your interests and abilities draw you to a field like acting, journalism, law, piloting, or some other competitive occupation—go for it. Just be prepared for the challenges that may lie ahead.*

Keep learning. *Take every opportunity to learn new skills. The more you upgrade your skills to the constantly changing world of work, the more likely you—and your career—will adapt along with it.*

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