



Your Future, Your Path

Trade School vs. College

There is more than one path after high school.

Students often hear that college is the only option after graduation, but other opportunities, such as trade schools and apprenticeships, are also possible. You might feel like you're expected to choose college by default because that's what gets the most attention. But the truth is, there are many different paths after high school. The important thing is finding the one that fits you best.

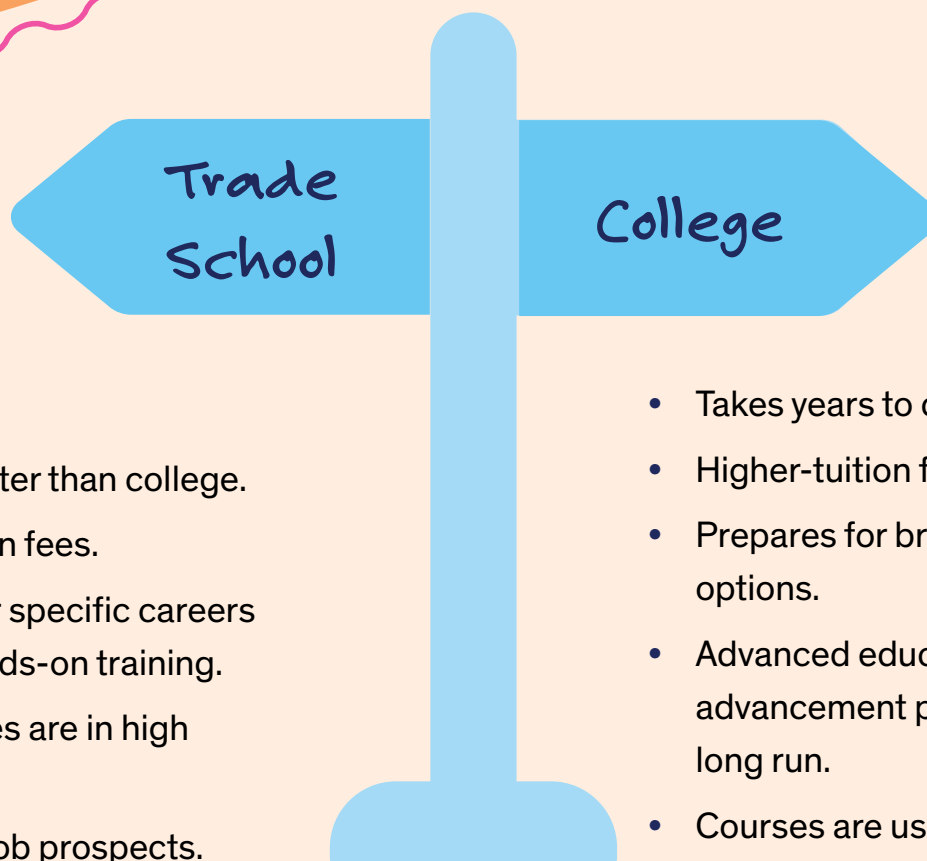
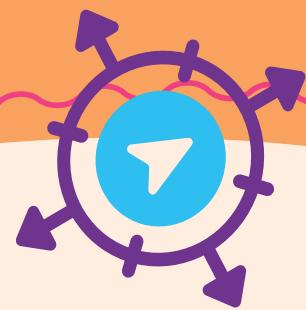
Choosing whether to attend college or trade school is a tough decision. It is important to weigh the benefits of each before deciding. Use the information below to weigh your options.

Trade, Vocational (Career) and Technical Schools all give you hands-on training to prepare for specific jobs. These terms are often used interchangeably, but each might teach slightly different skills or focus on different types of jobs.



Colleges and Universities offer programs where you study many subjects to earn a degree. You take general classes like math, science, English, and history, plus classes related to a specific career, such as teaching, nursing, or business.

The diagram below shows important things to think about when choosing between **trade school** and **college**. It can help you compare the two and decide which option might better fit your goals.



- Usually shorter than college.
- Lower-tuition fees.
- Prepares for specific careers through hands-on training.
- Skilled trades are in high demand.
- Immediate job prospects.
- Career-focused, hands-on courses.
- Earn a certificate or diploma.
- Some can start working right away, while others may need to take a test or work as an apprentice first.

- Takes years to complete.
- Higher-tuition fees.
- Prepares for broader career options.
- Advanced education and advancement potential in the long run.
- Courses are usually more lecture-based, involving reading, writing, and tests.
- Earn a degree, such as an associate's degree (about two years) or a bachelor's degree (about four years).
- Some jobs require a college degree to apply.














Trade School Resources

- In Illinois, **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** is available for middle and high school students. It focuses on hands-on, skills-based learning that better prepares students for future education or entering the workforce. CTE is taught in high schools, area career centers, community colleges and middle schools throughout Illinois.
 - *The Illinois State Board of Education Career Guide* educates students, parents, counselors and teachers on various career paths available to students in Illinois. Find it online at: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/vvpnp/lrrk/>

Examples of Trade, Career and Technical Options

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|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
|  | Automotive Technology |  | Legal and Business Supports |
|  | Construction Trades |  | Agriculture |
|  | Healthcare Programs |  | Information Technology (IT) |
|  | Cosmetology and Beauty |  | Culinary Arts |
|  | Welding and Manufacturing |  | Electrical Trades |
|  | HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) |  | Plumbing |

References:

Learn more about trade school vs. college: <https://research.com/universities-colleges/trade-school-vs-college#:~:text=Program%20Duration:%20Trade%20school%20programs,simpler%2C%20more%20straightforward%20admission%20processes.>

Explore another overview of trade school vs. college: www.coursera.org/articles/trade-school-vs-college.