

# Grade 9

## Start Down the Right Path

### Is College for Me?

You're just starting high school. Maybe you're already thinking about what you'll do when you graduate, or maybe graduation seems too far away. Maybe you're certain you want to attend college, or maybe you're not. Maybe you know what kind of job you would like to have in the future but don't know what you need to study to prepare for it.

There are some very good reasons to consider college. Try this True/False quiz below. Then, look at the answers that follow. You may learn some good reasons why college really is for you.

True or False:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ If no one in your family has gone to college, you can't go either.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Only rich people can afford to go to college.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Anything that is taught in college, you can learn on the job.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ If you don't know what you want to study, you shouldn't go to college.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ If your grades aren't very good, you can't get into college.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ You don't need to go to college to get a good job.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ If you don't know how to apply to college, you can't go.

### Answers:

1. **"If no one in your family has gone to college, you can't go either."** False. Many students attend college even though no one in their family has ever gone before. In fact, in 2003 more than half of all the high school graduates whose parents didn't attend college started college that fall.
2. **"Only rich people can afford to go to college."** False. College can be expensive (see the box at right), but that doesn't mean you can't afford to go.

There are many ways to pay for a college education. You might qualify for financial aid, which is money given to students to cover college costs based on students' financial need. Types of financial aid include grants and scholarships, loans, and college work-study. The state and federal governments, private organizations, and colleges are all sources of financial aid. Sometimes, more expensive colleges have more financial aid available to give to students.



Many students find additional ways to afford college, including:

- Participating in co-operative education programs where work is included as part of the curriculum
- Taking part in community service programs such as AmeriCorps that provide educational awards upon completion of service
- Joining ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) or the U.S. Armed Services, which provides college scholarships and educational opportunities
- Starting their studies at a less expensive community college, then transferring to another institution for the final two years
- Attending school part-time while working

Average college costs per academic year

2-year public colleges: \$2,272

4-year public colleges: \$5,836

4-year private colleges: \$22,218

Source: The College Board®, 2007

Note: Costs are subject to change each year.

3. **“Anything that is taught in college, you can learn on the job.”** False.

Most jobs require some on-the-job training. However, for many jobs, you will need a certain level of technical or analytical skill before you are hired, and that may require you to obtain some education after high school.

In addition, many employers won’t consider you for employment without a college degree. That’s because employers expect people to have transferable skills. Transferable skills are skills that can be used at (or transferred to) any job. Employers know that college is one of the best opportunities for young people to develop transferable skills. For example, in college, students learn:

**Organizational skills**—College students have to independently learn how to manage their time, finances, and academic workload.

**Communication skills**—Homework, essay writing, and class discussions help college students develop strong written and oral communication skills.

**Interpersonal skills**—Interpersonal skills enable individuals to get along and work together with many different types of people. College students have many opportunities to participate in study groups, student clubs, internships, study-abroad programs, and more—all of which develop their interpersonal skills.

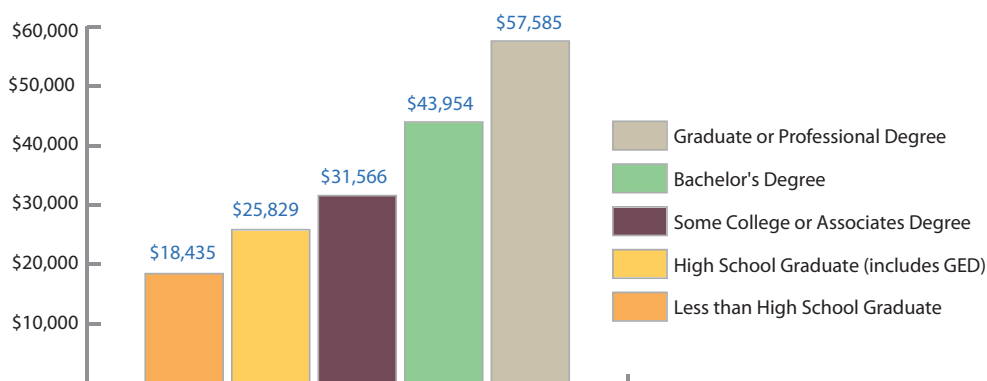
How would you rate yourself? Which skills are you strong in and which do you need to improve? Which transferable skills might be important for the jobs you are interested in? What steps could you take to improve these skills?

Source: University of Cambridge (England)  
website, <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/skills/>

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4. **“If you don’t know what you want to study, you shouldn’t go to college.”** False. College is a good place to explore the academic areas that interest you and think about the career you want to have after you graduate. At many colleges, you can spend your first year (and sometimes the second year) taking a variety of different courses before you decide what your major will be. Most colleges have academic advisors and career counselors to help you make these decisions.
5. **“If your grades aren’t very good, you can’t get into college.”** False. Different colleges have different requirements for admission. They also look at other qualities besides your grades, such as activities, involvement in the community, hardships you’ve had to overcome, etc. If you want to strengthen your skills and improve your grades, you may want to consider attending a community college for your first year or two and then transferring to a four-year college to finish up your last couple of years. In many cases, a high school diploma or GED will qualify you for acceptance to a community college.
6. **“You don’t need to go to college to get a good job.”**

True and False. If a “good job” means a job you really like, you don’t necessarily have to go to college—but you will have more career options available with a college degree. If a “good job” means a job that pays well, statistics show that on average, the more education you have, the more money you earn (see chart to the right).



Source: US Census Bureau 2005

7. **“If you don’t know how to apply to college, you can’t go.”**

False. If you don’t know how to apply to college, there are many places to turn for help—your guidance counselor, college access centers such as TERI’s College Planning Centers, and booklets like this one!

**ACTIVITY:** List three careers you might be interested in. Research them in the Occupational Handbook (available at your local college access center, library, or online at [www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm)). Answer these four questions:

1. What level of education is required?
2. What do people actually do on the job?
3. What are the average salaries?
4. Will there be more or less need for these jobs in the future?

