

ADDITIONAL POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS

Taking a Gap Year

While the gap year option is generally not popular with American parents, it is a common tradition in Europe for students to take a year off between high school and university. The common fear is that students will not return to school if they don't go straight through. However, if the gap year is spent gaining a greater knowledge of the world through working, volunteering, traveling, or generally growing up, the opportunity to return to school can look very attractive. Colleges look favorably upon applicants who have pursued a personal passion, or who can evaluate what they want out of a college education from a more mature perspective. A process called "deferred admission" at some schools allow students to apply to college in the fall of their senior year, and in the spring ask permission of the college they wish to attend to defer their admission for one year. Admission can also be deferred until the following January. In other words, students wanting to pursue this option may be able to maintain their acceptance to a college, but not begin for six months to a year later. A student and a family who are considering this option should check the schools on their list to see if they offer a deferred admissions program.

Trade and Tech Schools

Also known as "for profit" schools, trade and tech schools offer specialized training to accelerate getting into a specific career path. Students enrolling in these schools often finish their course of study in 12-18 months and are prepared to apply for jobs in their chosen field. In most cases they do not attain an academic degree, but rather become certified, apprenticed, or licensed. Some trade and technical schools do confer degrees on their graduates for accomplishment in a certain field of study.

These schools can be expensive and families should always compare what is offered in similar curriculums for less money at local Community Colleges. Financial Aid for trade and tech schools should be clearly understood before any commitments are made by the student to attend.

Military Options

Students interested in pursuing work within the United States Military have many choices.

The country's five service academies include:

- West Point (Army)
- Annapolis (Navy)
- Air Force Academy
- Merchant Marine Academy
- Coast Guard Academy

Candidates for these high-level academic programs must have a rigorous high school curriculum and excellent grades to be considered. The process of applying to one of these schools should begin in the sophomore year of high school so that all prerequisites can be met in a timely fashion.

Students intending to pursue a college degree outside the academies can look into ROTC Programs offered at various colleges and universities. Once again, these scholarship programs are very competitive, but allow the student to graduate from college, earn a degree and become a

commissioned officer before s/he begins serving in the military. Not all branches have a program on every campus, so check the schools' websites or go directly to the ROTC website on the internet.

Joining the Reserve or National Guard is another way to be a part of the military. This commitment is classified as reserve duty, unless your unit is called for support during a crisis or military action. Then, you will be called away from whatever you are doing to serve active duty. When joining these programs, you attend a boot camp training, serve one weekend a month, and two weeks in the summer. It is common for people serving in the Reserve or National Guard to be students or to hold a full-time job. Usually these programs offer stipends to be applied to college costs.

Enlisting in a branch of the military means you will go directly to active duty. If you decide to enlist in the Army, Navy, Marines or Coast Guard following high school graduation, you will sign a contract to serve for a certain number of years. All branches will train you for a career, depending on what you are interested in, what you are qualified to do through a testing assessment and, most importantly, what jobs they need filled at the time of your service. **If you are considering enlistment, be sure to consider all of your choices.** Recruiters are good salesmen. Shopping around and making the best choice for yourself is up to you.

Apprenticeships

Various trade unions offer apprenticeships for high school graduates. If you are interested in going into one of the trades, such as plumbing, electrical, welding, and construction trades in general, log onto this website and explore your options: <http://www.coworkforce.com/EMP>

Working

Going straight to work out of high school is an option some students choose. With a high school diploma most jobs pay low wages to start, and it is advisable to always consider going to college or some kind of further education to enhance credentials and open up more job opportunities. It is a well-known fact that people who attain a certification, associate's degree, bachelor's degree and so on, have many more job prospects and earn more money over their lifetimes than high school graduates.