

# Exploring life after high school in the skilled trades

Students research a career in the skilled trades on a U.S. Department of Labor website to gain insights on what that career involves and how they might prepare for it.

## Learning goals

### Big idea

Planning now for life after high school can help set you up for success after you graduate.

### Essential questions

- What are my career options in the skilled trades?
- What are some higher education options I might consider to help me prepare for a career in the skilled trades?

### Objectives


- Choose a career in the skilled trades to research
- Answer questions about what the career involves and options for preparing for it

### NOTE

Please remember to consider your students' accommodations and special needs to ensure that all students are able to participate in a meaningful way.

### KEY INFORMATION

Building block:

 Financial knowledge and decision-making skills

Grade level: High school (9-12)

Age range: 13-19

Topic: Earn (Learning about careers, Making money)

School subject: CTE (Career and technical education)

Teaching strategy: Blended learning, Cooperative learning

Bloom's Taxonomy level: Understand, Apply

Activity duration: 45-60 minutes

### National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021

Earning income: 8-1, 8-2, 8-3, 8-4, 12-2, 12-3, 12-4

These standards are cumulative, and topics are not repeated in each grade level. This activity may include information students need to understand before exploring this topic in more detail.

## What students will do

- Choose a career in science to explore on the U.S. Department of Labor’s [careeronestop.org](https://www.careeronestop.org) website.
- Answer questions to better understand that career pathway.
- Explore at least one education or training program that may help them prepare for that career.

## Preparing for this activity

- While it’s not necessary, completing the “[Picturing your future self](#)” activity first may make this one more meaningful.
- Print copies of all student materials, or prepare for students to access them electronically.
- Become familiar with [careeronestop.org](https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/careers/occupations/occupation-profile.aspx)’s “Occupation Profile” page at <https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/careers/occupations/occupation-profile.aspx>.
- Obtain computers or tablets with Internet access so students can conduct research.

### What you’ll need

#### THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- Exploring life after high school in the skilled trades (guide)  
[cfpb\\_building\\_block\\_activities\\_exploring-life-after-high-school-trades\\_guide.pdf](#)

#### STUDENT MATERIALS

- Exploring life after high school in the skilled trades (worksheet)  
[cfpb\\_building\\_block\\_activities\\_exploring-life-after-high-school-trades\\_worksheet.pdf](#)
- Computers or tablets with Internet access

## Exploring key financial concepts

As you start thinking about life after high school, you can explore a career you’d like to pursue and how you might prepare for that career. This can help set you up for success after you graduate. Understanding the knowledge and skills different careers require, the opportunities those careers might provide, and the education or training options available can help you decide what’s best for you and plan for the future.

It's helpful to know that a career and a job are different. A job is a specific task that someone does to earn money. A career is a type of work someone has for many years or their lifetime. For example, someone may have a career as a writer and different jobs writing books, news stories, or web pages during their career.

#### **TIP**

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Because career requirements change, students should be encouraged to always look for the most up-to-date information.

## Teaching this activity

### Whole-class introduction

- Introduce the activity by explaining to students that when beginning to plan the future they want for themselves, it can be helpful to consider how the school subjects they're most interested in can lead to a successful career choice.
- Ask students to share careers in the skilled trades they might be interested in.
  - Answers may include becoming a mechanic, an electrician, or a plumber.
- Read the "Exploring key financial concepts" section to students.
- Tell students that the words "career," "job," and "occupation" are often used interchangeably; ask them to quickly list some of the similarities and differences between these terms.
- Be sure students understand key vocabulary:
  - **Career:** A profession that may span your lifetime and includes your education, training, professional memberships, volunteering, and full history of paid work. Can be a synonym for occupation.
  - **Job:** A specific arrangement where you do tasks for an employer.
  - **Occupation:** Describes a type of work with associated tasks, education and training, typical wages, work settings, and more. Can be a synonym for career.
  - **Post-secondary education:** Includes all forms of schooling after high school, not just college.

#### **TIP**

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Visit CFPB's financial education glossary at [consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/](https://consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/).

## Group work

- Explain that students will visit the U.S. Department of Labor’s [careeronestop.org](https://www.careeronestop.org) website to select a career in the skilled trades, learn what that career involves, and explore education or training options that might help them prepare for it.
- Distribute the “Exploring life after high school in the skilled trades” worksheet.
- Ask students to form pairs or small groups to complete this activity.
- Give computers or tablets to each pair or group.
- Direct students to visit [careeronestop.org’s “Occupation Profile” page at https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/careers/occupations/occupation-profile.aspx](https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/careers/occupations/occupation-profile.aspx).
- To choose an occupation to explore, students can click the “List of Occupations” link and select one of the occupations listed, or type a school subject or related occupation in the search field, like “carpenter,” “electrician,” “plumber,” or “roofer.”
- Ask the pairs or groups to agree on an occupation from the list.
- Have students click on that occupation and enter their location to get an occupation profile for their area.
  - You might consider having the students use the school’s location or a nearby city.
- Ask students to review the occupation profile to answer the “Exploring a career” questions on their worksheet.
- Optional: The occupation profile includes links to colleges and training institutions that may help prepare students for their selected occupation. If there’s time, students can explore these schools and answer the “Digging deeper” questions on their worksheet.
  - In the “Education and experience: to get started” box on the occupation profile, direct students to click on one of the education or training programs listed. This will bring up links to colleges or training institutions that offer programs in this area.
  - Students can choose a college or training institution and explore the school’s website to find out more about the program.
  - Students can list reasons why they would or wouldn’t consider enrolling in the program.
  - Apprenticeships are available for some occupations. Students can click the link in the “Apprenticeships: learn on the job” box on the occupation profile to see if any are available in their area or a nearby city. If any are listed, students can review one or two of them and write a sentence or two on how an apprenticeship may help to prepare them for the occupation they chose.

- Students interested in apprenticeships can also visit <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/>, another U.S. Department of Labor resource.
- Be sure students understand that internships and on-the-job training are also available for some occupations.

Note: While the colleges and training institutions listed will have education or training programs that are relevant to the students' selected occupations, not all schools will have programs that directly relate to those occupations. Encourage students to look for general courses or programs that are still relevant to their end goal.

## Wrap-up

- Bring the students back together and ask a few volunteers to share their selected occupations and what they learned.
- For the optional activity, ask a few students to share information about the program they explored.

## Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other [CFPB activities](#) that address the topic of earning, including learning about careers or making money. Suggested activities include "[Saving for post-secondary education](#)" and "[Learning how federal financial aid can help you pay for higher education](#)".

You may also consider having students use the O\*NET Interest Profiler, an online tool from the U.S. Department of Labor that helps people find out what their interests are and decide what kinds of careers to explore. The tool is available at <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>.

## Measuring student learning

Students' answers on their worksheets and during discussion can give you a sense of their understanding. **Keep in mind that students' answers may vary, as there may not be only one right answer.** The important thing is for students to have reasonable justification for their answers.