Getting There

What is career and technical education?

The key to a successful and productive society is found in maintaining a highly qualified, skilled and educated workforce. Technical jobs are very much in demand today. Nearly half of the jobs on the market today require advanced technical training, which can be acquired at any two-year college or technical school.

Career and technical education, or CTE, is dedicated to providing secondary students with the education and skills they need to be successfully employed after graduation or to advance to postsecondary education.

Pennsylvania's 84 career and technical centers are in approximately 200 school districts, and are required to offer a sequence of courses supplemented by work-based experiences such as internships or apprenticeships. The work-based experiences are offered during the senior year, as long as a student meets the local requirements.

CTE students have the opportunity to earn recognized industry credentials while still in high school. These credentials can help students find jobs and be successful within their field of study.

How do students benefit from CTE programs?

Research shows that about 60 percent of students hold a job at some time during high school, and by doing so gain valuable experience in the work world. Those who were enrolled in a CTE school had a higher likelihood of finding a paid job and of attending a postsecondary CTE school in the years soon after high school.

How do I learn more about career and technical education?

The first step would be to talk to your school counselor or employment counselor about whether this type of education fits in with your career plans. If possible, visit a nearby CTE school and see firsthand what it offers. You can also find out more online at www.pacareerzone.com or at www.education.state.pa.us

Pennsylvania Skills Certificate

If you pursue career and technical education in high school, you will graduate with a diploma and education in a specific career. That makes you a desirable job candidate, but earning your Pennsylvania Skills Certificate will make you even more attractive to potential employers. To do this, you must complete and pass a test that demonstrates technical skill and knowledge in your career program of study.

This certificate serves two purposes. It rewards you for good performance in your technical studies and is also a credential for obtaining a job after high school. Employers know that a prospective employee with a Pennsylvania Skills Certificate has the skills to do the job well. An instructor or counselor at a CTE school can provide you with the necessary details on achieving Pennsylvania Skills Certification.

CTE Programs of Study

The CTE Programs of Study are educational plans that connect the secondary career and technical programs to postsecondary degree, diploma or certificate programs. These programs prepare today's students for High Priority Occupations (HPO) which include career categories that are in high demand by employers, have higher skill needs and are most likely to provide family-sustaining wages.

Benefits of CTE Programs of Study:

- Saving money on college tuition
- Saving time by shortening college attendance
- Getting on the right career pathway
- Entering the job market ready
- Getting an education

ADDITIONAL CAREER RESOURCES

To learn more about the different careers in Pennsylvania visit the PA Career Zone. **www.pacareerzone.com**

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency provides assistance for individuals interested in higher education.
www.pheaa.org

To learn more about the careers available in the Pennsylvania Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field, visit the following site.
www.pasteminitiative.org

The Pennsylvania Career Education & Work Standards site provides resources, references, crosswalks and other tools to assist elementary, middle and high schools teachers and administrators in implementing academic standards.
www.pacareerstandards.com

Registered Apprenticeship

As you explore your career options, you may want to consider a registered apprenticeship. As an apprentice, you'll receive paid, on-the-job training and academic instruction that develops the skills needed to advance in your chosen career. In other words, you will be paid to learn!

Benefits of enrollment in a registered apprenticeship:

- Learn and earn: You will be paid while you develop your skills.
- Increase in wages: The pay progresses as you do.
- On-the-job training: A mentor will work with you in a real-world setting.
- Related classroom instruction: Class work provides the knowledge to supplement the training experience.
- Completion certificate: Employers everywhere recognize a journey worker's license.

Facts about Apprenticeships:

- In 2006, more than 15,000 individuals participated in Pennsylvania apprenticeship programs.
- The average starting wage for Pennsylvania apprentices is $12.50 per hour.
- Upon completion, the average wage for an apprentice in Pennsylvania is $23.75 per hour ($49,400 per year).
- The construction and manufacturing industries make up almost 50 percent of all apprenticeships.

So, if you want to become a highly paid and valued employee, relish the challenge of learning a new skill and like to earn while you learn, entering a registered apprenticeship training program could be for you.

Top Apprenticeships for Pennsylvania

Machinist
Electrician
Tool & Die Maker
Plumber
Cook
Maintenance Mechanic
Heating & Air Conditioning
Mechanic
Pipe Fitter
Sheet Metal Worker
Corrections Officer

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship

Military Training and Careers in the Armed Forces

In today's world, there are hundreds of occupations from which to choose, and it's important that you spend some time exploring the options available to you. The United States Armed Forces is one alternative you may want to consider.

The U.S. military has changed dramatically over the past several decades. Today's military is more professional, more technologically advanced and offers more benefits and rewards than ever before.

Maintaining a strong national defense includes such diverse activities as commanding a tank, running a hospital, repairing a helicopter and programming a computer. The military provides full-time and part-time training and work experience for more than 4,100 different jobs, 88 percent of which have direct civilian counterparts.

In the military, you can learn marketable job skills, make good friends, and develop a positive, winning attitude. The pay scale is competitive with many starting salaries in the private sector, and many allowances paid out by the military are tax-exempt. If a college education is one of your priorities, tuition support programs are one of the ways that the military can help you with the rising cost of postsecondary education.

If you want to go to college before joining the military, consider a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program. These college-based, officer-commissioning programs produce 60 percent of all officers serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. If your high school has a Junior ROTC program, it will teach you problem-solving, ethics and leadership skills before you enlist.

Serving in the military is really what you choose to make of it. It can simply be a means to an end – money for college or technical training and the development of life skills – or it can be a lifelong career path, giving you a structured environment, a defined purpose and many opportunities to advance and grow.

In order to join the service, you must be 18 (or 17 with permission from your parent or guardian) and a U.S. citizen or legal immigrant holding permanent resident status. Most enlisted personnel need at least a high school diploma, while officers need a bachelor's or an advanced degree. Enlisting in the military is a major step in a person's life. Before you make a decision to join, gather as much information as possible about the branch of the service that interests you. Each one differs in specific programs, terms of duty and enlistment options.

Explore websites like www.myfuture.com and www.todaysmilitary.com to learn more about military life and careers. Make certain your military commitment is based on sound information and realistic expectations. Do your homework so there won't be any surprises.

For more information, contact your nearest recruiter (listed in the phone book) or call one of the following toll free numbers:

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Service	Toll-Free Number	Web Site
U.S. Army	800-USA-ARMY	www.goarmy.com
U.S. Navy	800-USA-NAVY	www.navy.com
U.S. Air Force	800-423-USAF	www.airforce.com
U.S. Marine Corps	800-MARINES	www.marines.com
U.S. Coast Guard	877-NOW-USCG	www.gocoastguard.com
Air National Guard	800-T0-GO-ANG	www.ang.af.mil
Army National Guard	800-GO-GUARD	www.nationalguard.com

Veterans' Benefits

The benefits of military service don't end once you leave the military and enter civilian life. In fact U.S. military veterans are entitled to a wide range of educational, career and employment services.

One of the best known – and most popular – of these benefits is the G.I. Bill, which was signed into law in 1944. This program was updated in 2009 to implement a new GI Bill called the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The new GI Bill is designed to enhance and expand educational benefits to service members and veterans who served on active duty following Sept. 11, 2001. Since the program began, more than 21 million veterans have benefited from the GI Bill. In 2005 alone, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs helped pay for the education and training of 499,000 veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists, National Guardsmen and survivors.

Financial aid for education isn't the only benefit of having served in the military. Veterans also receive free assistance with finding and obtaining a job. By law, PA CareerLink® offices and the State Civil Service Commission must give priority to veterans over other job seekers. Each PA CareerLink® has specially trained Local Veterans Employment Representatives who provide veterans with a full range of employment services. Disabled veterans also receive additional priority and assistance. PA CareerLink® representatives focus on helping those veterans with service-connected disabilities readjust to civilian life.

Planning on leaving the service?

Check out Pennsylvania's Transition Assistance Programs (TAP). The state offers job-search assistance and related services to separating service members during their period of transition into civilian life.

More information on the GI Bill and other veterans' programs can be found by contacting the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Pennsylvania CareerLink®
www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us

Veteran Affairs
Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veteran Affairs
www.milvet.state.pa.us
800-54-PAVET

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
www.va.gov
800-827-1000

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Standardized Testing

While good grades in high school are important in helping you get into the college of your choice, colleges also strongly consider each applicant's scores on usually one of two standardized entrance tests, the SAT Reasoning Test and the ACT (American College Test). The chart below shows the differences between the two. Check with the colleges to which you are applying to see which test they require for admission. Colleges take these standardized tests very seriously when determining admission, scholarships, financial aid and even enrollment into some specific programs of study. If at all possible, regardless of the exam you take, try to take it twice. Keep in mind that colleges generally place more weight on the higher set of scores.

Being overly anxious could prevent you from performing your best on SATs or ACTs. Here are some tips to ease anxiety and make sure you're prepared:

- Know the instructions and format thoroughly before going in. This helps avoid losing time rereading the instructions when you could be answering the questions or rechecking your answers.
- Take a pretest, either on paper or on a computer, become familiar with both the format and the types of questions that will be asked.
- Take a preparatory course for a fee, or buy or borrow one of the many books focused on SAT or ACT preparation. These test-prep methods are useful in learning tips and techniques for improving your score.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before the test, and have a healthy breakfast the morning of the test.
- Take a snack to eat during test breaks, preferably something that will give you an energy boost.
- Remember that all questions are weighted equally, so if you can, finish answering the easy questions first.
- You have a limited amount of time for the test. If you get hung up on a particular question, mark it so you can come back to it later, and then move on.
- Be extra careful that you don't accidentally skip a question in the test booklet, and thereby inadvertently begin providing "right answers" to wrong questions all the way forward. Throughout the exam, vigilantly monitor that the question number you're working on in the booklet, matches that found on your answer sheet.
- If time permits after answering all the questions, go back and check your work.
- Be sure to erase any stray pencil marks on the test sheet or booklet after completing the test.

ACT		SAT
The ACT tests your skills in English, math, reading and science, with an optional writing portion.	What do the tests focus on?	The SAT tests your critical reading and mathematical reasoning skills, with a mandatory writing portion.
The ACT composite score is based on an average of the various sections of the test and ranges from 1 to 36. The national average score in 2009 was 21.1. You decide which scores are sent to your schools of choice.	How is scoring handled?	Each section of the SAT has a range from 200 to 800, making the total range 600 to 2400. The national average SAT score in 2009 was 1509. Your entire score history will be sent to your schools of choice.
There is no wrong-answer penalty in the ACT. If you do not know an answer and can't eliminate possibilities, you may as well try your best guess.	Is there a penalty for wrong answers?	The SAT penalizes test-takers for incorrect answers. If you don't know the answer and can't eliminate a few options, it's probably better to leave the answer blank.
$32 (plus $15 for writing); 3 hours, 25 minutes (including optional 30-minute writing test)	How much and how long are the tests?	$45; 3 hours, 45 minutes
The ACT is administered six times a year. You should register at least four weeks before the test date.	When should I register?	The SAT is administered seven times a year. You should register at least six weeks before the test date.
www.act.org	websites	www.collegeboard.com

Source: American College Test (www.act.org) & College Board (www.collegeboard.com)

The Costs of College

The pursuit of higher education is an increasingly popular decision. For many, it is also an increasingly expensive one. Depending on the institution, tuition combined with room and board charges can total anywhere from $6,000 to more than $40,000 a year.

And don't forget all those additional costs...

While budgeting for a college education, there are many costs that parents and students tend to overlook. Here's a list of some of them:

- Laundry
- Transportation
- Basic toiletries
- Cable TV/internet/phone
- Computer and school supplies
- Social activities such as artistic events, athletic tickets and nights out on the town
- Textbooks: According to the Washington Post, books and supplies cost students nationwide an average of nearly $900 – and this continues to rise.

	2010-2011	
	In-State Tuition	Room & Board
College of Technology	$6,560	$7,650
Community Colleges	$3,432	N/A
Private Colleges and Universities	$27,487	$9,688
Private State-Aided Institutions	$30,002	$9,929
Private Two-Year Colleges	$15,845	$7,849
State-Related Commonwealth Universities	$12,742	$8,946
State Universities	$7,766	$7,967
Theological Seminary	N/A	$7,155

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

The table shows the average costs of undergraduate education in Pennsylvania at different types of schools. It provides the costs of both in-state tuition & room and board per year (for community colleges, only the cost of tuition is available).

Financial Aid

Education after high school can be quite expensive. So if you haven't been saving for college since birth, how will you pay for it? You'll be glad to know that there are many financial aid options available for postsecondary education. Essentially, there are five options for financial assistance, each differing in terms of repayment and eligibility:

Grants: Typically, grants are based on financial need and do not have to be repaid.

Scholarships: Like grants, scholarships do not have to be repaid. They can be awarded based on financial need, academic merit or athletic ability.

Loans: Loans are a form of aid that must be repaid with interest after leaving school. The most common of these are the Perkins and Stafford loans, although private and alternative loans are also available.

Work-Study: Based on financial need, work-study programs provide employment opportunities to students both on and off campus.

Military Funding: Several military branches offer substantial financial aid packages in exchange for varying terms of service.

For more information on how to apply for financial aid, visit the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency website at www.pheaa.org. For additional information about the education benefits available to military veterans, visit the U.S. government student website at www.students.gov.

To-Do List for High School Students

When you're in high school you have a lot to think about, especially during your junior and senior years:

What am I going to do after graduation?

Am I headed for college, vocational training or right into the workforce?

How am I going to navigate the path I choose?

This section of the ***Career Guide*** offers you some help by giving you a general to-do list to follow. When dealing with specific matters, such as application or financial aid deadlines, pay particular attention to the school's requirements, rather than these suggestions. Consider this list more of a guide than actual rules.

The to-do list is divided into two sections:

- A brief overview of what you should be doing prior to your senior year to prepare for life after high school.
- A month-by-month planner that is divided into three categories: for college-bound students, for students seeking other postsecondary school training and for students seeking to immediately enter the workforce.

1. What to do before your senior year begins:

- Take a skills or interest assessment to learn a bit about yourself. What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing?
- When you find a career path that interests you, learn more about it. You might find it's exactly what you want to do or find that the day-to-day work would bore you.
- Talk to your school guidance counselor about your options or prospective plans.
- Make sure you take classes that fit your career goals.
- Take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT), which is good practice for the SAT. A good score on the PSAT could qualify you for a National Merit Scholarship.
- Be sure to get involved in part-time or volunteer work and extracurricular activities. These can give you valuable insight about yourself and look good on a résumé.
- Consider taking the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery(ASVAB) test, especially if you plan to enlist in the military after high school.
- Attend college fairs, career fairs and job fairs held at or near your school. These are great ways to gain information on prospective careers, as well as network with people in the field.
- Near the end of your junior year, review your transcript to make sure you will complete the classes you need to graduate.
- Finally, during the summer between your junior and senior years, if you plan on going to college, begin to narrow down your list of choices. This will keep your application fees to a minimum down the road. Also, if you are considering a school out of the area, the summer might be a good time to make a campus visit.

  Accomplishing these things before your senior year will give you a sense of direction and purpose as you complete your high school education. Now, here's a look at what you should do during your senior year, based on your chosen career path.

2. Month-by-month planner

	Key
C	Four-year college bound
T	Other postsecondary training
W	Going right into the workforce

	September
C	Get your applications and financial aid information from the schools you are interested in attending. Find out whether the schools you're looking at prefer the ACT or SAT. Register for tests and look into taking a practice exam. Now is also the time to begin asking if teachers, bosses or other people will be willing to write letters of recommendation for you. If you plan on applying through an early action or early decision program, you should begin working on these applications now. Additionally, begin working on applications to college that conduct rolling admissions. Many colleges determine housing on a first-come first-served basis, so applying early to these institutions can be advantageous. There are currently 66 colleges and universities in Pennsylvania who offer rolling admissions, including Penn State University, The University of Pittsburgh and Temple University.
T	Figure out where you want to be a year from now, and plan to get training in that field. Learn as much about that field as you can, including getting a part-time job or volunteering in that field.
W	Take an interest or skills test (similar to the one we provide in this guide) and talk to a career counselor to get an idea of what kind of work you want to do. Do your interests lie in a career that offers apprenticeships?
	October
C	This is the ideal time for college visits, especially to nearby schools. Many colleges have college fairs, which are a good opportunity to get more information and any forms you might still need. Take the ACT if any schools on your list require it. Many schools only consider the highest of any scores that you receive on these types of standardized tests. It is important to know what the policies are of the schools on your list. If you are unsatisfied with a score that you receive, taking the test again may be a good option.
T	Figure out how post-high school training fits in with your career plans. What kinds of training will you need to do what you want to do, and how long will it take? Are you looking to earn a certification or an associate degree? Will you be able to work while going to school?
W	Figure out and list for yourself your strengths, experiences and accomplishments. Also list any jobs you might have had in the past. Would your interests lead you to starting your own business? If so, look for resources on entrepreneurship.
	November
C	Begin working on your college essays or writing samples, and be sure to have someone proofread them for you. If any of the schools you are applying to require the SAT you should take it now, if you haven't done so already. Submit applications for early decision/early action programs. If you plan on entering an ROTC program, the application is due Dec. 1.
T	Start researching which schools will have the training programs that you'll need to get into your field of choice. You may be looking for degrees provided by a local community college or something more specific, such as studying electronics at a school that specializes in it.
W	Take the list of strengths, experiences and accomplishments on which you've been working on and begin assembling your résumé.

	December
C	Sign up for spring administrations of the SAT or ACT. Pick up a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form. You'll also want to check to make sure your SAT or ACT scores have gotten to your schools of choice. If you applied early to any schools, your application responses will arrive this month.
T	Begin visiting the schools you're interested in attending. Just because a school is nearby or in the same town doesn't mean you shouldn't spend the time to conduct a proper visit of the facilities. Fill out a FAFSA and look for financial aid opportunities if you have not already done so.
W	Make sure you've polished your résumé. The holiday break is a good time to put that résumé to use in getting a part-time job, hopefully in a field that interests you.
	January
C	Work on your FAFSA forms. FAFSA forms require a good deal of tax-related information, so you'll need your parents to gather that well before April 15. Also begin a serious hunt for outside scholarships. Be aware that some schools consider your first semester grades from your senior year in the form of a mid-year grade report.
T	Make a list of deadlines. Begin applying to schools and start assembling your writing samples or portfolio, whichever the case may be.
W	Work on planning a budget for yourself. Figure out what your fixed expenses are likely to be, and don't forget to budget for incidental expenses that crop up from time to time. This is good practice, whatever your future plans may be.
	February
C	If you haven't already done so, complete the FAFSA forms and send them to your schools of choice. Make a list for yourself, ranking your college choices. You should contact all colleges to which you have submitted applications and confirm that they have received all of the necessary application materials.
T	Keeping any deadlines in mind, continue the application process. Follow up with schools to ensure that nothing is missing from your application. This gives you time to provide anything you may have forgotten.
W	Work on your résumé again, including your most recent part-time employment. Remember, you're about to step up to full-time employment, so think about what it is you want your resume to say about you, and revise it again.

	March
C	Watch the mail. You should be hearing back from schools soon. You should also be receiving your Student Aid Report (SAR) in response to any financial aid applications. The SAR can also be emailed if you list an email address on your FAFSA, so watch for it there, too.
T	Time to wait. Watch the mail and look for acceptance letters as well as scholarships for financial aid that you applied for.
W	Time to start learning even more about potential employers; research companies that interest you to see what kinds of jobs they offer and how you would fit into the company. This kind of homework isn't just about learning where to apply. Having this knowledge will come in handy when you're interviewing.
	April
C	Wait until you've heard from your preferred school before you decline any offers. Also, make sure to meet any other deadlines, such as for housing or more financial aid.
T	Continue watching the mail for acceptance letters and financial aid offers from schools.
W	Talk to the people you want to use as references. Get their permission before listing them! Teachers, coaches, counselors and employers are all good choices. Make sure to get a summertime or home phone number for those who will be on vacation.
	May
C	Make your final college choice. The enrollment deadline for most schools is May 1, so make sure that you mail the enrollment form and deposit check to the school you have selected. Decline any offers that other colleges have made to you, so the spot being held for you can be given to the next person in line. Take any advanced placement (AP) Exams.
T	Be prepared to begin any training or courses that might start before the usual fall semester begins. Some year-long or two-year programs require you to begin earlier in order to complete them.
W	Get ready to get a job. Yes, that sounds daunting, but that's what you've been building up to all year long. Prepare some cover letters and practice interviewing, then get out there. A final piece of advice: Don't just jump at the first job that comes along. Be sure to choose the job that fits both your needs and your skills.

PA CareerLink®

With nearly 70 local, professionally staffed locations through Pennsylvania and with online access 24 hours a day, PA CareerLink® is there to help you find a job.

From pharmaceutical companies to hospitals, financial management institutions to software corporations, local schools to manufacturing firms – PA CareerLink® will connect you with some of the best job opportunities in the state.

Need help getting started?
PA CareerLink® has that covered too!

The PA CareerLink® staff will help you:

- Assess your skills
- Plan a career path
- Build your résumé and polish your interviewing skills
- Identify networking opportunities and jobs fairs in your area
- Locate training programs in order to gain new job skills
- Connect with financial aid options to further your education
- Find and get the right job

You can visit PA CareerLink® online at www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us to:

- Develop an online résumé
- Store multiple custom tailored résumés and track positions for which you've applied
- Access information regarding statewide training programs and labor statistics
- View tens of thousands of job openings
- Research a company's business profile
- Apply for the jobs that pique your interest
- Find the physical location of a local PA CareerLink®

Attention Job Seekers:

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) is a federal program that assists workers adversely affected by foreign imports. TAA provides workers with the means to attain competitive and marketable skills that allow them to rejoin today's increasingly competitive work environment.

Benefits include:

- Occupational training
- Wage replacement for older workers
- Relocation reimbursement
- Income support
- Out-of-area job search
- Health coverage tax credit

Additionally, weekly Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) may be payable to qualified workers following the exhaustion of state and federal unemployment compensation benefits. Workers may also be eligible for federal tax credits for the cost of health insurance. For more information about TAA or TRA, contact your local PA CareerLink® office.

"I found the PA CareerLink® service to be a valuable tool in my job hunt. The staff was helpful and provided some great resources."

– Jill Konieczko, Pennsylvania resident and job seeker

"My management team and I are enthusiastic fans of the PA CareerLink®. Over the last two years we have hired a number of quality, new agents directly as a result of the program.… I highly recommend use of the [PA CareerLink®] system for all employers to help them meet their staffing needs."

– Russell DeJulio, general manager, American General Financial Group