

Choose a School Carefully

Going to school is a lifetime investment

Statistics show that getting training after high school will help you get a better-paying job doing work you like. But going to school is a big investment. You're investing your time. Chances are you'll also have to invest your own money or take out a student loan to go to school. So you need to be sure that you're choosing the right school.

1. Visit our Web site.

Go to www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/choosing. You'll find a tool that lets you search for a school based on its location, size, degree offerings and other factors. Just enter your choices, and the search tool will tell you which schools fit your preferences.

2. Talk to your counselor.

Counselors can help you focus on your needs and goals, and they have information about different types of schools. Your counselor also can help you collect or prepare application materials.

3. Shop around.

Contact more than one school. If you're looking for vocational training, check the Yellow Pages under "Schools" for phone numbers. If your area has a community college, call the admissions office or check the school's Web site to find out what kinds of training the college offers.

4. Visit the school.

Contact the school and schedule a visit, preferably while classes are being taught. Get a feel for the school; make sure you're comfortable with the facilities, the equipment, the teachers and the students.

5. Don't be afraid to ask!

A good school will be happy to answer your questions about its programs. Ask the school about its students: How many graduate? How many get jobs because of the training they received? What kind of job placement services does the school offer?

6. Check the cost.

Make sure the school gives you a clear statement of its tuition and fees. Remember that any financial aid you get will be applied first to paying the school's tuition and fees. If there's any money left over, the school will give it to you to help you pay for things such as food and rent.

7. Call.

Call your local Better Business Bureau (or visit www.bbb.com), state higher education agency, or consumer-protection division of your state attorney general's office to find out whether there have been any complaints about the school. Call the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Information Center's toll-free number (1-800-4-FED-AID) if you have any questions about your financial aid at the school. You also can access our Web site at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov.

