

Choosing a school is a lifetime investment!

Statistics show getting training after high school will help you get a better paying job doing work you like. Going to school is also a *big* investment – you are investing your time and investing your own money or taking out a student loan to go to school. Here's how to be sure you are choosing the right school:

1. Visit the following websites:

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools> has a tool that lets you search for a school based on its location, size, degree offerings and other factors. Enter your choices and the search tool will tell you which schools fit your preferences.

OR

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> allows you to search for and compare colleges on all sorts of criteria including costs, majors offered, size of school, campus safety, and graduation rates.

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 or research more than one school. If your area has a community or local university, check the school's website or call the admissions office to find out what kinds of training the college offers. If you are looking for vocational training, check the Internet – or the Yellow Pages under "Schools" – to find options. You should also check your state higher education agency, the consumer protection division of your state attorney general's office or the Better Business Bureau (<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> includes this data) to find out whether there have been any complaints about the school(s).

4. Visit the school.

Contact the school and schedule a visit, preferably while classes are in session. Take a formal tour, attend a couple of classes, and then tour on your own. Get a feel for the school; make sure you are 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?

About its teachers: How many tenured professors? Are classes taught by teaching assistants?

6. Check the cost.

Make sure the school(s) gives you a clear statement of the tuition and fees (Cost of Attendance or COA). Remember that any financial aid you get will be applied first to paying the school's tuition and fees. If there is money left over, the school will give it - known as a "refund" - to you to help you pay for things such as food and rent. Find out about school, major or program specific scholarships, grants, etc.