

# What Are Postsecondary Options?

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## Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities Benchmark:

Explore postsecondary opportunities, including college/university and other occupational training programs that lead to industry recognized credentials (e.g.: certification, license).

### Note to those providing service:

These activities are developed in a way that allows the learner to gradually build upon their skills. Each student has different foundational skills so some students may need more support or instruction than others. With that being said, you can choose what activity you start with based on your learner's strengths and needs.



### Extended Pathways

Students who are interested or enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) or postsecondary education, regardless of disability (remember to presume competence!), may or may not need some of the information that seems introductory in nature. Take as much or little time as needed based on student knowledge. More specific activities related to CTE and postsecondary education are identified as extended activities and pathways.

## Preparation and Materials Needed:

- Know the student's knowledge or awareness on postsecondary education and training opportunities (this helps with knowing how much time you may need to spend on an activity)
- Prepare needed assistive technologies and/or accommodations (ex: communication supports (visual, objects, pictures, voice output devices, etc.), physical supports/space access needs, vision supports, hearing supports, sensory needs/supports).
- Computer to access videos. Print materials in advance if necessary.
- There are many Click and Explore resources in this lesson. Be sure to explore them yourself so you can help match students with any additional resources that may help their learning.



### Print

- [Postsecondary Education Vocabulary](#)
- [Exploring Postsecondary Options](#)
- [Comparing Postsecondary Options](#)
- [Exploring Postsecondary Options - Scoring Key](#)
- [Comparing Postsecondary Options - Answer Key](#)

# Activities to Meet Benchmarks:

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## Activity 1: Postsecondary Language

This activity aims to review vocabulary related to postsecondary options.



**Discuss:** The decisions you make about postsecondary options can shape your future, opening doors to exciting career opportunities and personal growth. Whether you are considering pursuing a degree, obtaining certification, enlisting in the military, or entering the workforce directly, understanding your postsecondary options is crucial in aligning your education with your goals and aspirations.

In this activity, we will look at different types of postsecondary programs, including vocational training, military enlistment, community college, and university degrees. By the end of this activity, you will have a clearer understanding of the choices available to you and how they can impact your life beyond high school.




**Watch:** [Post-Secondary Education \(2:13\)](#) - this video provides a brief overview of postsecondary options with a focus on apprenticeships and certification programs

*[Note to Instructors: You can end the video at the 1:43 mark if it does not end there automatically, as the end of the video does not pertain to Ohio.]*



**Review:** [Postsecondary Education Vocabulary](#) (PowerPoint) Feel free to modify the vocabulary to meet your students' needs.

- **Postsecondary Education:** Education or training you receive after leaving high school. There are many ways to continue learning and advancing toward your career goals after high school ends.
- **Certification:** Certification programs typically take a few months to a year to complete. These programs are focused on specific skills within particular career fields (e.g., certified forklift operator, certified phlebotomy technician (CPT), emergency medical technician (EMT), CompTIA A+ (foundational IT skills)).
- **Licensure:** Some occupations require workers to have a permit, typically issued by government agencies. Requirements for different types of licenses vary but usually include completing training, earning a degree or certification, and/or passing an exam (e.g., barber or cosmetologist, commercial driver's license (CDL), nurse, or teacher).
- **Degree:** You can only earn a degree from an accredited school. Most degrees come from colleges or universities. Degree programs typically take longer to complete and require at least 2 years of full-time study. These programs have a broad focus to prepare students for a variety of careers within or across specific industries (e.g., Associate of Science (AS), Bachelor of Arts (BA), Master of Business Administration (MBA)).

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- **Vocational Technical Education:** A type of school where you learn specific job skills by practicing them. You can learn things like fixing cars, cooking, or using computers for work (e.g., auto mechanic, chef, computer technician, cosmetologist (hair stylist), dental hygienist)
  - **Trade School:** A school that teaches you how to do a specific job, usually with your hands. It's shorter than college and prepares you for careers like being a plumber, electrician, or hairstylist (e.g., plumber, electrician, welder, HVAC technician (heating and cooling), medical assistant).
  - **Apprenticeship:** A program where you learn a job by working with someone who's an expert. You get paid while you learn at the jobsite (e.g., construction worker, plumber, electrician, farmer, software developer).
  - **Journey-level:** A professional who has completed an apprenticeship and associated training along with passing any necessary exams for their license or certificate (e.g., welder, plumber, electrician, roofer, HVAC Technician).
  - **Military Enlistment:** Joining a military branch such as the Army, Navy, or Air Force to serve and protect our country. You can learn job skills, travel, and get money for school.
  - **Community College:** A school close to home where you can take classes for two years. It's often less expensive than other colleges and can help you get ready for a job (e.g., nurse, paralegal, graphic designer, preschool teacher, bookkeeper) or to go to a college or university later. Classes may be in-person or virtual.
  - **College/University:** A school where you study for about four years to get a degree. You can learn about many different subjects and prepare for various careers (e.g., teacher, engineer, accountant, social worker, business manager). Classes may be in-person or virtual.

## Activity 2: Exploring Vocational Schools and Apprenticeships

This activity aims to help students learn more about vocational schools and apprenticeships.



**Discuss:** Career and technical education (CTE), vocational schools, and trade school are great options for gaining hands-on skills and preparing for careers in fields like healthcare, technology, construction, and many others. These programs are often classroom based, short term, career focused, and cost less than college. These training programs may lead to a certificate or licensure.



**Watch:** [What is Career and Technical Education \(CTE\)? \(2:14\)](#) and [Trade School: Why You Should Consider It – Vocational School \(3:31\)](#). Learn what makes a trade or vocational school different from other types of postsecondary education programs and how to choose a trade school.

CTE is an opportunity that may be available to you while you're in high school or as an adult learner out of high school.



**Watch:** [The Adult Career Tech Education Route to a Rewarding Career \(4:15\)](#). This video is of educators and adult students who share insights about adult career tech education programs in Ohio.



**Click and Explore:** Here are some sites to check out for more information about specific opportunities that are available in your area

- [Exploring Trade School Opportunities](#) – This site provides guidance and resources to help students explore options and learn about how to select and apply for programs.
- [Career Technical Education & Ohio Technical Centers](#) – This resource includes general information and guidance about technical education along with an interactive list of schools and programs in Ohio.



**Discuss:** Apprenticeships are a career pathway that allows you to learn a skill while working and earning money at the same time. Unlike traditional college programs, apprenticeships provide hands-on training in real workplaces, where you can gain experience, learn from people who do that type of work, and even earn industry-recognized certifications.

Apprenticeships are available in a wide range of fields, from construction and healthcare to IT and manufacturing. This is a potential option for you if you learn by doing and want a direct path into a career. Apprenticeship programs may have the option to also make money while you are learning. You may need to pay for things like uniforms or tools.



**Watch:** [Apprenticeships \(4:42\)](#) – Learn about apprenticeship options across the state that provide students with rigorous academic coursework along with on-the-job training to help them prepare for an in-demand career, all while helping to save money.



**Click and Explore:** Here are some sites to check out for more information about apprenticeships and specific opportunities that are available in your area

- [Preparing for an Apprenticeship | Pinnacle Career Institute](#) – this resource gives guidance on choosing and successfully preparing for an apprenticeship
- [ApprenticeOhio | Ohio Department of Job and Family Services](#) – this site provides information about how to search for and apply to available apprenticeships in Ohio. [Kickstart Your Career with an Apprenticeship \(3:39\)](#) this video shares information about ApprenticeOhio and how to use the website.
- [Apprenticeship | Ohio State Building and Construction Trades Council](#) – This site focuses on building trades like plumbers, electricians, and roofers.

### Activity 3: Understanding College Options

This activity aims to help students learn more about community college and four-year college / university.



**Discuss:** Community college tends to be a more flexible and affordable option compared to a four-year college or university. Community colleges offer a variety of programs, including two-year associate degrees, career certifications, and transfer pathways to four-year universities. You can use community college as a steppingstone to earn credits before transferring to a four-year college or university or go straight into the workforce with job-ready skills. Community colleges also provide smaller class sizes and hands-on training.

A four-year college or university is a higher education institution where you can earn a bachelor's degree, which typically takes about four years to complete. These schools offer a wide range of academic programs, from business and engineering to education and the arts. A four-year college / university offer the opportunity to dive deep into a subject area, gain critical thinking skills, and build connections that can help in your career. Many universities also offer campus life experiences, including clubs, internships, and networking opportunities.



**Watch:** Here are various video options to learn more about college:

- [The Benefits of Community Colleges: Student Voices \(3:42\)](#) – Watch community college students and alumni from across the country share their experiences of community colleges and the positive impact they have had on their lives.
- [Cuyahoga Community College - Why Tri-C? \(5:29\)](#) – Learn more about this specific community college, as well as how community colleges across the state prepare students for their future careers.
- [Youth In Transition: Postsecondary Education and Training \(4:23\)](#) - This video includes perspectives of young adults with disabilities on their community college and university experiences.
- [To College or Not to College \(4:13\)](#) – This video gives an overview of what college is and what types of degrees are available [Note to Instructors: You can end the video at the 5:41 timestamp. The information presented after this point may be helpful but is not necessary to complete the activity].



**Click and Explore:** Here are some sites to check out for more information about what to expect

- [College Planning Checklists](#) – These checklists are designed to help students prepare academically, socially, and financially for higher education.
- [School Finder | OhioMeansJobs](#) – (You will need to sign in to your Ohio ID account first.) Use this site to explore what colleges are near you.
- [Ohio's Campuses | Department of Education and Workforce](#) – Shows the location of public universities and community colleges.

## Activity 4: Understanding Postsecondary Options

This activity aims to help students understand key elements and differences between postsecondary options.



**Discuss:** There are many different paths you can take and choosing the right one involves thinking about your career goals and interests as well as your individual preferences and needs. Whether you dream of going to college, learning a trade, becoming an apprentice, or entering the workforce, each option has its own opportunities and requirements. Exploring these options early is important because it helps you understand what's available, what steps you'll need to take, and how your decisions now can shape your future.

Many times, when people think of postsecondary education, they automatically think of college. Remember that postsecondary education is actually any education after high school. Think about what you have learned about trade school / vocational programs, apprenticeships, community college, and college / university. What do you already know about each of these options?

*[Note to Instructors: Present each option one by one and allow time for students to give responses. Provide prompts as needed, such as "Do you know of any colleges in our area?" and "What are some career fields that offer apprenticeships?" If available, use a white board or other visual resource to list each option and student responses.]*



**Resource:** [Comparing Postsecondary Options](#) is a sorting activity to help compare the different postsecondary options. This can be completed with students while watching the various videos. The [Comparing Postsecondary Options - Answer Key](#) is available to help with this activity.

Instruct and assist students to complete the sorting activity. Choose the activity structure that will work best for your students:

- 1. Instructor Assisted:** Instructors can help students complete the worksheet based on information known about each student's interests, preferences, and needs.
- 2. Guided Activity:** Assist students to consider each question and complete the worksheet.
- 3. Independent Activity:** Students can complete the worksheet on their own.

## Activity 5: Exploring Postsecondary Options

This activity aims to help students map out a postsecondary path of interest.



**Discuss:** There are many different directions you can go with postsecondary options. With so many postsecondary options to choose from, it might feel difficult to figure out which pathway is right for you. Each option has its own benefits, and the right choice depends on your interests, strengths, and career goals. This activity will ask you questions to help you consider what is most important to you when choosing between options.



**Resource:** [Exploring Postsecondary Options](#)

Instruct and assist students to complete the worksheet. Choose the activity structure that will work best for your students:

- 1. Instructor Assisted:** Instructors can help students complete the worksheet based on information known about each student's interests, preferences, and needs.
- 2. Guided Activity:** Assist students to consider each question and complete the worksheet.
- 3. Independent Activity:** Students can complete the worksheet on their own.

Once students have answered all questions on the worksheet, assist them using the [Exploring Postsecondary Options - Scoring Key](#) to calculate their scores and record them on the table provided. The columns with the highest totals show which postsecondary options students may want to explore further





## Extended Pathways

### Activity: Informational Interview

This activity aims to help students explore a postsecondary path by interviewing someone with firsthand experience.



**Discuss:** An informational interview is a great way to learn more about a postsecondary path you're interested in and gather advice. Choose someone whose postsecondary experience interests you. This could be a family member, friend, teacher, or professional in your desired field. Reach out to them to ask if they would be willing to meet with you to share their experiences and insights.

Prior to your interview, prepare a list of questions to guide the conversation. Some examples of questions you may want to ask are:

- What motivated you to choose this path?
- What was your experience like during your studies or training?
- What skills or qualifications did you gain, and how have they helped you in your career?
- What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?
- What advice would you give to someone considering this path?

During the interview, listen actively and pay close attention to the person's answers. Ask questions about what they have shared if something is not clear or if you would like more details. Record the interview and/or take notes to help you remember important points.

As you wrap up the interview, thank the person for sharing their time and insights. Ask if they would be willing to answer any follow-up questions if you have them later.



**Reflect:** Review your interview recording and/or notes and reflect on what you learned. Did the person share anything that might influence your choice of postsecondary option? Write a brief summary or list of key takeaways from the interview and any next steps you plan to take based on what you learned.



### Wrap-Up:

There are many options for continuing your education and career training after high school. In this lesson, we learned about apprenticeships, military enlistment, trade school, vocational tech, community college, and traditional colleges/universities. Each of these options offers unique opportunities and benefits, allowing you to choose the postsecondary journey that is the best fit for you.