

The Financial Case for Trade School over College

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It's unfortunate that some of the best money saving tips have such a stigma attached to them.

Here's a newsflash — college isn't for everyone. Your level of intelligence doesn't necessarily equate to whether you got your bachelor's.

You have to be pretty smart to really understand how engines work or how to wire a house without electrocuting yourself.

Carpentry requires tons and tons of math.

5 We've held white collar jobs up on such a pedestal over the years that it's easy to forget that there's no shame in a job where you get your hands dirty.

As a matter of fact, a lot of people might be a lot happier working in a skilled trade than sitting behind a desk. The funniest part is that you're likely to make more money in many of those jobs than you could ever make in an office.

You'd also have to be living under a rock to be unaware of the college debt crisis affecting the majority of millennials. College is expensive. Over the last few decades, the cost of a college degree has tripled, completely out of proportion to standard inflation.

The average millennial has \$30,000 in college loans. I know I finished up grad school with exactly that amount of debt dangling over my head and that was after not paying a penny for undergraduate and landing a few scholarships for grad school.

As a result of those \$30,000 in loans, I wound up living full time on a cruise ship and a circus train for two-and-a-half years to pay them off. I was incredibly lucky to land these unique jobs that paid for room and board and allowed

me to funnel nearly everything I made into paying off those debts.

Few are so lucky. For the majority of millennials, the cost of paying off their student loans has wound up holding them back from living on their own, making major purchases like buying a home and even being able to start a family.

For a lot of people, it doesn't have to be like this. I don't just mean that they should've bootstrapped themselves harder during college to come out without any debt — I mean they probably shouldn't have gone to college.

Trade schools cost a fraction of what public and private schools cost. The average cost of vocational school comes out to around \$33,000 — for the *entire* education. This the average cost of a single year of college.

Additionally, people who choose vocational schools are able to enter the workforce sooner. Most programs run two years, but many can be completed in even less time. This allows you to start earning a real salary sooner.

What can you study though? Long gone are the days of trade school just being for mechanics and cosmeticians (thought both career paths are fine). These days you can study tons of different professions, including:

- Electrician
- HVAC
- Computer Networking

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- Culinary
- Massage Therapy
- Medical Assistant
- Nursing
- Pharmacy Technician
- Welding

15 You would graduate with one to three fewer years of debt. In 2014, the average mechanic's wage was a little over \$37,000 a year, which beats out most liberal arts degrees. As of 2013, the average salary for a registered nurse was nearly \$69,000 a year, which far surpasses a lot of traditional degree fields.

Trade schools also are often equipped with strong job-placement programs. If you can do well in your classes there, it can be much easier to land a job than if you attend the average state school with a lackluster job-placement program.

Additionally, while most colleges try to create strong job-placement programs, if you were thinking about majoring in a smaller subject or really anything outside of the STEM or business field, schools are likely to be less equipped to help you find a job after graduation. Vocational schools pride themselves on having strong ties to the professional world in all of the program subjects they offer.

If you're not quite ready to make the leap to trade school, but think it could work for you, community colleges can be a great option for beginning your higher education. Community colleges allow you to take basic prerequisite courses for four year institutions at a fraction of the cost and many community colleges have vocational certification programs that can sometimes be completed at an even lower cost than a trade school devoted fully to certification programs.