

I. DISCOVERING YOUR PATH TO COLLEGE



Do you know what you want your future to look like?

Going to college is the best way to help ensure a bright and rewarding future. College gives you the freedom to discover your interests and develop skills that will connect you to a good job -- one that's rewarding and makes you happy.

You may not have all the answers today—and that's okay. Figuring out what you love and what you're good at is a powerful way to shape your future.

This guide will provide you with tips and tools you can use to be sure you graduate high school prepared to succeed in the next stage of your life.

Let's get started!



THE BIG PICTURE

Discovering your path to college

First things first: *You deserve a college education. And you can do it.*

You'll have to work for it, but it's worth it. College grads get the best jobs, are the least likely to be unemployed, and earn a whopping \$23,868 more every year than people who only graduate high school.

Your path to college starts right now, by getting to know yourself better—so you can make smart decisions that will open doors for your future.

This section will help you connect the dots between what makes you happy, your strengths and gifts, your ideal path to college, and ultimately to your dream job and the future you want.

01**TUNING IN TO YOUR STRENGTHS AND INTERESTS****02****EXPLORING YOUR ASPIRATIONS****03****CONNECTING ASPIRATIONS TO A PLAN**

UNDERSTAND

Exploring your aspirations

An aspiration is a version of your future self that you want to achieve.

Where do you see yourself in the future?
What do you want to know and be able to do?
How can you build on your strengths while remaining open to discovering new things about yourself and your possible future?

By selecting classes and activities in high school that allow you to develop your strengths and explore new possibilities, you'll get a better sense for what you want to study in college and the future you want for yourself.



FACT:

**Setting specific,
challenging goals
helps you grow
more, learn more,
and achieve more.**



UNDERSTAND

Connecting aspirations to a plan

An aspiration without a plan is just a fantasy.



You can begin to build a plan that gets you to college and leads you to the kind of career you want right now. A good plan won't narrow your choices or close off possibilities—it will open them up.

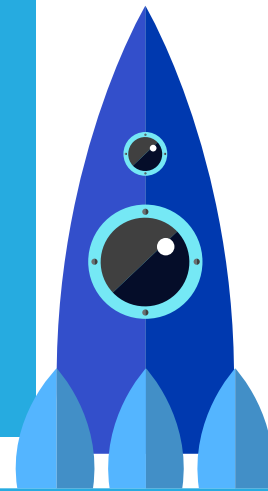
To develop a plan, ask yourself:

What college majors and jobs align with my interests and skills?

Finding careers that connect to what you already enjoy doing will help you better select subjects to explore and possible college majors. Learn more in the resource section on [page 9](#).

What will it take to reach my goal?

Each career requires a unique combination of education and skills. Some professions require a two-year technical degree, while others require a bachelor's or even graduate degree.



Keep in mind: Aspirations are not fixed

You don't have to know everything right now. College will give you many opportunities to expand and refine your aspirations.

THE PLAN

Understand myself and my aspirations to guide my learning and future career

THE STEPS I WILL TAKE

1. Assess my strengths and interests

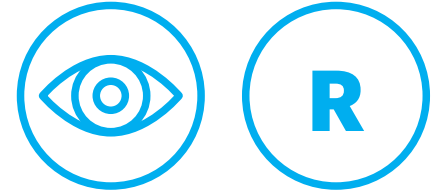
2. Try new things to expand my interests

3. Research college majors and careers that align with my aspirations

4. (Write my own)

Want to learn more?

These resources will help you get started.



DISCOVER YOUR ASPIRATIONS

Inspiring stories

Read this student's perspective on connecting to passion and applying to college.

[→ Explore](#)

Find your aspirations

Use the tools created by InspirED to learn about and find your passions and purpose.

[→ Explore](#)

Discover your future

Answer these ten questions to begin learning about who you are and where you might want to go.

[→ Explore](#)

CONNECT YOUR ASPIRATION TO CAREERS

Career paths

XQ has partnered with Sokanu to help you learn about careers related to your interests—now and as they change over time.

[→ Explore](#)

Career finder

Explore career options based on your interests at Inside Jobs and learn what schools offer the classes to get you there.

[→ Explore](#)

WORKSHEET: EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS

I'M GOOD AT THIS

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 15%;">TOPIC</th> <th>How can I apply this to something interesting?</th> </tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </table>	TOPIC	How can I apply this to something interesting?							<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 15%;">TOPIC</th> <th>How can I focus on this and become an expert?</th> </tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </table>	TOPIC	How can I focus on this and become an expert?						
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I'M NOT GOOD AT THIS YET

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THIS YET

I'M INTERESTED IN THIS

TOPICS

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| + MUSIC | + FASHION | + ART | + HISTORY | ADD YOUR OWN | ADD YOUR OWN |
| + ANIMALS | + POLITICS | + MOVIES | + TRAVEL | + | + |
| + HEALTH | + SPORTS | + SCIENCE | + LANGUAGES | + | + |
| + COMPUTERS | + NATURE | + THEATRE | + TEACHING | + | + |

DIRECTIONS

This exercise will help you think through your interests and skills and how to work to get better based on where you are.

- STEP 1:** Look at the list of topics—if you want, add others.
- STEP 2:** As you read through the list, write topics in the four tables.
 - Box 1: You're not interested yet, but you're good at it
 - Box 2: You're interested, and you're good at it
 - Box 3: You're not interested yet, and you're not good at it yet
 - Box 4: You're interested, but you're not good at it yet
- STEP 3:** For each table, answer questions about the topics you listed.

Continue your journey, grow your knowledge.

Don't forget to check out these other XQ College Pathfinder resources.



There's more to come.

We will keep adding new tools and resources.

We'd love to hear from you!

What do you think of this guide? How can we make it better? Are there other resources you're looking for? Please let us know!

[→ Send Feedback](#)