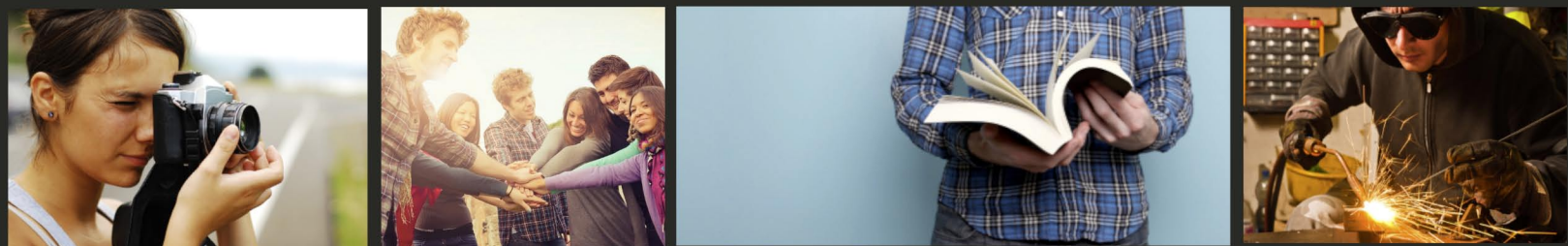


Career Exploration for Teens

A Parent Guide to Starting the Career Conversation



Welcome!

You want to prepare your teenager for a bright future. But how do you start?

Welcome to Inside Jobs' *Career Exploration for Teens: A Parent Guide to Starting the Career Conversation*. We teamed up with certified youth career coach Natascha Saunders to give you the exercises, tips, and online resources you need to kick off a successful career conversation with your teenager.

Why Parents are so Important

When it comes to exploring career options and opportunities, teens need support. And you're one of the best people to help.

Parents have a huge impact on their teenagers' career choices. In fact, research has shown that parents are the biggest influencer on their teens' career choices.

That's a lot of responsibility. But don't worry! Even if you're not a career expert, you can have a large positive impact. And this short guide can get you started.



78% of high school students say parents are their biggest career influence.
Ferris State University

What is in This Guide

- **Why Spend Time on Career Exploration?**
- **A Short Note on Attitude**
- **Five Easy Steps to Start the Career Conversation**
 - #1 Use Dreams as a Starting Point
 - #2 Share Your Story
 - #3 Find Interests and Strengths
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 - #5 Connect the Dots Between Education and Careers
- **Seven Things to Do Right Now**

[Why Spend Time on Career Exploration ? >>](#)

Why Spend Time on Career Exploration?

Career exploration is critical to helping your teen prepare for a successful future.

This process can help your teenager choose a career that matches their interests, skills, and personality, and can increase their chances of financial success, personal fulfillment, and happiness.

Career exploration can ...

Open up Horizons

How many careers can your teen list? How many can they actually describe? Career exploration can open up their mind to whole worlds of work they didn't even know existed.

Give a Reality Check

Many teens' initial career ideas are not well informed or realistic. *How much training will I need if I want to be a _____? How much money will I make? How competitive is this career field?* Finding answers to these basic (and important!) questions can help teens create realistic action plans to get where they want to go.

Save Time and Money

Many teenagers believe they should choose a college, then a major, then a career. But putting off career planning can be a huge mistake. At today's prices, you don't want your college student switching majors in their senior year. By discovering career interests early on, teens can identify educational options that will support their future—and save them time and money.

Build Confidence, Motivation, and Achievement

Students who have been exposed to career exploration have more self-confidence, more motivation to achieve goals, and higher grades.* They feel better prepared for their future.

*Source: *The Educational, Social, and Economic Value of Informed and Considered Career Decisions*

A Short Note on Attitude

Your attitude matters. A lot.

- **Remember: this is your teen's future, not yours.** While you are a huge part of helping your teenager explore careers, the process isn't about you. Your job is to coach them to successfully attain their goals.
- **Don't start with no.** Shooting down your teen's ideas is one of the fastest ways to shut them down. If they have a big or unrealistic career dream, encourage them to gather as much information as possible, then draw their own conclusions.
- **Above all...be positive!** Career decisions can seem scary or overwhelming— especially when you're 16 or 17. Your positive and encouraging attitude will make a big difference.

[Five Easy Steps to Start the Career Conversation >>](#)

Five Easy Steps to Start the Career Conversation

1 Use Dreams as a Starting Point

At some point in their life, your teen has dreamed about their future. As a parent, it's your job to encourage your teen to think big and express their ideas. Imagining the future is the very first step to making it a reality.

Don't worry if your teen initial career ideas seem impractical or unrealistic. Remember, dreams aren't a commitment: they are simply a starting point to talk about the future.

Ask the Right Questions

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" can be an overwhelming question. Instead, start with related—but easier—brainstorming topics. You can then use the answers to lead into a bigger discussion. Some ideas to help you get talking with your teen:

- If you could have anyone's job in the world, what would you choose?
- Would you ever want to work for yourself?
- How much money do you imagine yourself making when you're older?
- What activities are you most excited about or committed to?
- Would you ever want to work outside? At a desk? On the road?

GOAL: Start your teen thinking about career ideas.

These unstructured conversations help your teenager to start focusing on career planning without getting overwhelmed.

[#2 Share Your Story >>](#)

2 Share Your Story

One of the best ways to begin career exploration is by talking about your own career.

You've Got a Career...Even if You Don't Think You Do

You might think about your career only in terms of the paying jobs you've had. But a career is bigger than that: it's how you incorporate work—including volunteer, at-home, and paid—into your life. So whether you're employed, self-employed, underemployed, or a stay-at-home parent, you've got a career!

What to Share

Your teen probably doesn't know much about your work. Sharing your experiences is a great way to give an example of how career goals or dreams are shaped and changed.

Start with these kinds of topics:

- What your day-to-day job involves.
- What decisions led to your career. Be honest about things you might have changed or choices you made that really paid off.
- What you like most or least about the jobs you've had.
- How skills learned in a variety of settings help you in different ways.
- How your education connected to your career path.

GOAL: Give your teen a close-to-home example of a real career path.

#3 Find Interests and Strengths >>

3 Find Interests and Strengths

Your teen's interests and strengths—like their top classes, sports, or hobbies—can offer clues to what kind of work they might enjoy.

These interests might not directly translate (just because your teen likes crime shows doesn't mean they should be a forensic scientist), but they can be a good place to start pinpointing what activities, environments, or work styles your teen connects with. The more a career meets their interests and strengths, the more likely they will find it satisfying and rewarding.

How to Identify Career Interests and Strengths

There are many of ways to identify interests, skills, and personality strengths. They range from the simple (sitting down and brainstorming a list) to the more complex (taking a career aptitude test like the Keirsey Temperament Sorter or the Jung Typology Test).

One easy way to get started is by asking outside-the-box questions:

If you had your own TV show, what would it be about?

What lights you up enough that you'd want to share it with the world? *This question can help your teen zero in on their passions.*

In your ideal world, what would your work location look like?

Is it in an office? Outdoors at a national park? Are you on the road? Are you surrounded by people? Or are you by yourself, quietly working away?

Fill in the blank: When my friends need help with _____, they come to me.

Are you usually the one to settle arguments? Are you always asked to proofread your friends' papers? Or do they come to you for news on the latest video game to hit the shelves? *This question can help pinpoint specific skills and talents like having an eye for details, being able to resolve conflicts, or possessing a knack for social situations.*

GOAL: Help your teen identify interests and strengths they can apply to a career.

Using the above questions, encourage your teen to create a list of their top interests and strengths.

#4 Research Careers >>

4 Research Careers

At Inside Jobs, our mission is to bring together accessible and reliable information about thousands of career choices. On our website, we feature 15,000+ career profiles that detail what a job involves, average salary, education requirements, and more.

Your teen can discover new careers, or gather information about jobs they already find interesting.

Get Ideas with the Career Finder

The **Career Finder** (www.insidejobs.com/careers) tool lets your teen sort careers by category (like Science and Computers), interests, skills, favorite school subject, and more. Your teen can click different categories to create a personalized list of careers.

Research and Explore Specific Careers

Teens can research specific jobs by checking out the detailed career profiles. To give a better idea of what a career is really like, many profiles include videos of professionals working in the field.

Key Points for Comparing Careers

When your teen is researching careers, they'll need to keep track of key points to evaluate the information they find:

- **Work Activities/Environment:** What would I actually do in a typical day on this job?
- **Training and Qualifications:** For this career path, will I need a certificate, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, or a higher degree?
- **Salary:** Will this job give me enough money to do what I want in my life?
- **Job Outlook:** Will there be a good chance of getting a job in this area? Or will there be lots of competition?

GOAL: Help your teen discover a career area of interest.

Encourage your teen to create a list of the top five careers, or career areas—like marketing or engineering—that they find interesting.

In-Person Career Exploration

To get hands-on experience of a career field, encourage your teen to:

- Talk to people in the industry. Most people are happy to share their experiences!
- Set up a job shadow to get a first-hand glimpse.
- Volunteer or intern at an organization to get a feel for the general work environment.

#5 Connect the Dots Between Education and Careers >>

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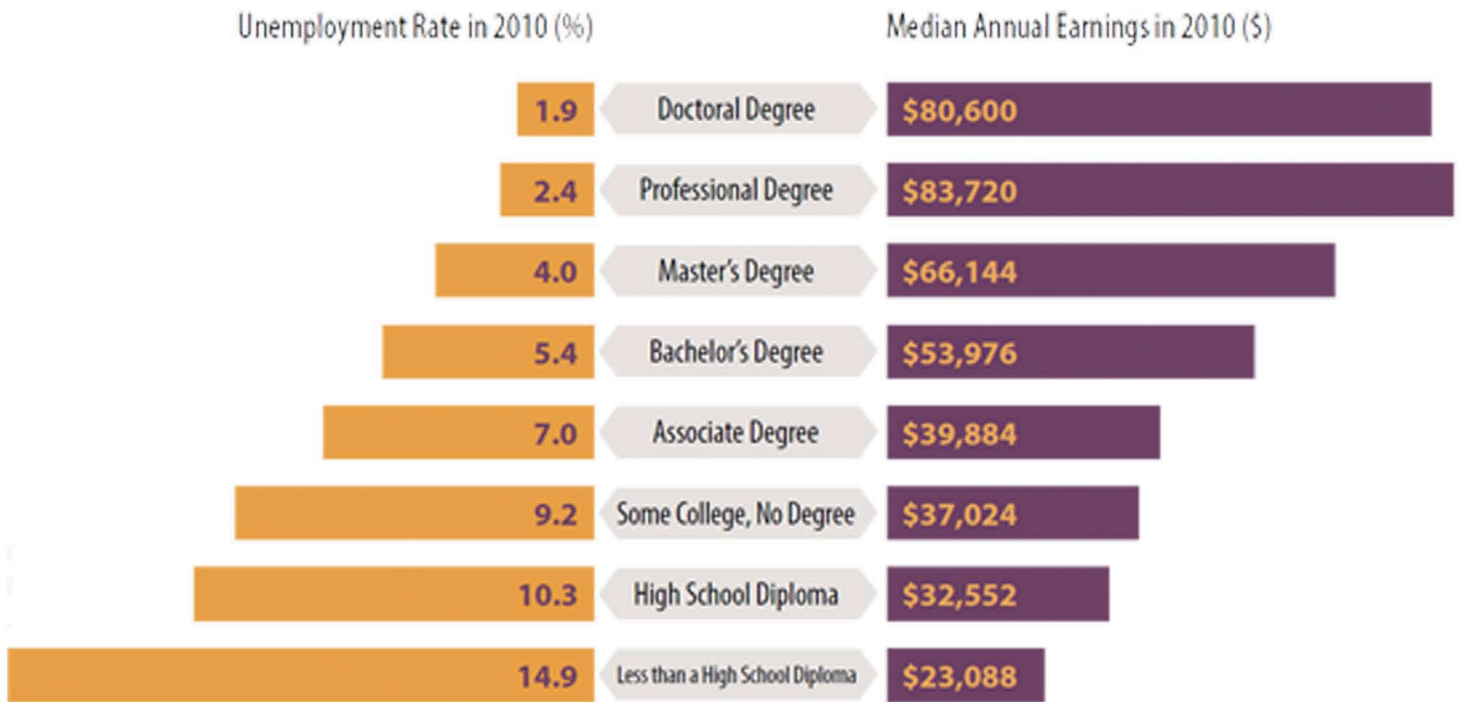
Once your teen has found a career area that appeals to them, the next step is to figure out what education your teen will need to succeed.

At Inside Jobs, we make it easy to see the relationship between careers and education. For each career profile, we show you schools across the country that offer related educational programs.

Why Post-High School Education is Crucial for Your Teen’s Career

Not all jobs require education after high school, but getting a certificate or degree opens the door to more career choices, higher paying jobs, and bigger opportunities for your teen. Whether through a technical institute, community college, or university, the majority of jobs in the future will require some kind of education after high school.

This idea isn’t always easy to communicate to a teen, but this chart can help hit the message home. Bottom line: the more education, the higher the salary.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

GOAL: Help your teen see the connection between education, career goals, and financial success.

[7 Things to Do Right Now >>](#)

7 Things to Do Right Now

Here's a short summary of what you can do right now to support your teen's career exploration.

- 1. Start with the right attitude.** Your encouraging attitude can boost your teen's confidence and excitement about their future.
- 2. Talk with your teen about their career dreams.** No judgments!
- 3. Share information about your career.** Tell them about experiences and decisions that had an impact on your career.
- 4. Help your teen pinpoint their interests and strengths.** Talk about which skills and activities could be useful for a career.
- 5. Ensure that your teen has explored career information** using online resources like Inside Jobs.
- 6. Encourage your teen to plan for training after high school** whether it's through a technical institute, community college, or university.
- 7. Keep talking with your teen.** Have an open door policy for changing ideas. Planning for the future is not a one-time conversation, it's ongoing!

By starting the career conversation, you are setting your teen on the road to success.

Thanks for Reading!

Now it's your turn to share your experiences, questions, or ideas. Find us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/insidejobs) or Twitter (www.twitter.com/insidejobs) to join the conversation, and connect with other parents.

About Inside Jobs

Inside Jobs helps young adults figure out their future. With our interactive website and in-person workshops, young adults can discover career ideas and connect with the right education to realize their potential.

Learn more at www.insidejobs.com.

About Natascha Saunders

Natascha Saunders is the CEO of The Youth Career Coach Inc. She helps students clarify their purpose, write their vision, and take action to achieve their goals.

Learn more at www.theyouthcareercoach.com

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