



HOW TO CHOOSE AND FUND YOUR STUDIES

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ONCE YOU'VE DECIDED TO FURTHER YOUR STUDIES, YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT TWO THINGS: WHAT YOU STUDY AND WHERE YOU STUDY IT. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DECISION AND IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BIGGEST REGRETS MANY PEOPLE HAVE IN THEIR LIFE.

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WHY YOUR COLLEGE MAJOR ISN'T AS IMPORTANT AS YOU THINK

As much as we tend to get stressed out about what we study, it doesn't matter as much as we think. Of course, if you want to become a doctor or a lawyer, you'll need to study medicine or law. But if your career plans are less defined, you can choose any challenging course that's aligned with your personal interests.

HOW TO FIND A UNIVERSITY THAT MEETS YOUR ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL NEEDS

There's a lot to think about when it comes to picking a school, including location, costs, courses and so on. In some cases (especially with advanced degrees), what you want to study might only be available at a few places, which makes the decision easier. But in other cases, there are dozens of options to choose from. That's why it's important to cast the net wide when applying to colleges. Applying to several schools (including some long shots) will give you choices to fall back on.

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COLLEGE
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WHAT YOU CAN GAIN FROM STUDYING ONLINE

Whether you've got your heart set on a particular college or are still unsure, it's a good idea to consider the possibility of studying online. The benefit here is that you get to work in a flexible environment and at your own pace, which is ideal for people who already have fulltime jobs. Plus, it's a lot cheaper than traditional education. So check out some free courses online before deciding what's best for you.

HOW TO FUND YOUR STUDIES

The average cost of an American college has risen by almost five times the rate of inflation since 1983, which has led to a doubling of debt per student in the past 15 years. It's gotten to the point where student debt now stands at over \$1 trillion, which is even more than the debt on credit cards.

The first way to fund your studies is to decrease the amount you'll need in the first place. By taking classes in the summer, you can cut a year or more off your degree.



That means less tuition and a quicker start with your career. But it also means additional pressure from more intense study, so take the time to think it through.

SCHOLARSHIPS: These are the best way to fund your studies because, unlike loans, they don't have to be repaid. There are a ton of scholarships available so spend a good deal of time searching and applying for as many as you can find.

GRANTS: These are also 'free money' but are typically only given to students of certain ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Spend some time searching and applying for those that fit you.

FAMILY: Ask your parents and other relatives if they're able to help. They might not be able to fund your studies completely, but every little bit will make a difference.

EMPLOYER: If you already have a job but want to further your studies, your employer might be able to help. But this will depend on how well you explain why what you want to learn will benefit them too. However, there will probably be a limit on when they allow you to study. Also, they might require that you pay them back should you leave the company or fail your course.

EMPLOYMENT: If nobody else can help you fund your studies, you'll have to do it yourself. This might mean taking on a part-time job while you study. Just make sure you still dedicate enough time to the books and have some time left over to enjoy yourself too.

LOANS: These should be your last resort because paying them back can be difficult in the long-term. Spend some time doing proper research into loans offered by your government, banks and even the college or university you're applying to.