

Do you really need a degree?

It's not uncommon these days to hear people dismissing the value of an arts or other generalist degree. But how important is it? And how does having – or not having – a degree affect your career prospects? Here are a couple of things to consider.

Firstly, it's a good idea to know what profession you want to go into. Some will require that you have a degree – think medicine, law and teaching, for example. In these instances, you don't have a choice; you most certainly do need a degree.

However, if you plan to enter a profession in which a degree may not be required, or if you're unsure about what you'd like to do in the future, there are some points you need to consider.

- **A degree can help you develop new skills.** You shouldn't think about a degree simply as a piece of paper that will help you with career advancement. Tertiary education is designed to give you additional skills so that you're better equipped when you enter the workforce.

These will, of course, vary depending on what you study. But they might include things like: researching; writing; critical thinking; problem solving; working in a group; public speaking; and time management.

As Lauren Taylor from [SEEK Learning](#) explains: "Having a qualification can be a key differentiator for candidates looking for a new job. Having a qualification ensures graduates have a level of knowledge (as well as experience, for courses that contain practical units) about the role and industry they are looking to enter. This can help to reassure the employer that the applicant has a level of understanding around the industry and role they are looking to move into."

She adds: "Studying for and obtaining a qualification also demonstrates persistence, overall ability as well as a passion for that industry – all key attributes employers are looking for in new hires."

- **Some careers require on-the-job training.** There are, additionally, some things to consider that may dissuade you from getting a degree. Indeed, some

professions prefer young employees to do on-the-job training instead – tradespeople, hairdressers and chefs come to mind. If this is the kind of career you'd like to pursue, it's a good idea to speak to someone in the industry to find out what the expectations are on those entering the workforce for the first time.

Moreover, some people – having studied in school for years – know that further study isn't something they enjoy or want to do. That's okay too.

Whether you pursue a degree or prefer on-the-job training, it's important that you have a plan. Have a goal in mind and set about mapping out a way that you're going to achieve it.

It's also a good idea to think about other ways you can bolster your resume. Prospective employers value life experience. Think about how you can demonstrate that you possess the kind of qualities that a workplace may seek. It might mean coaching junior sport to improve your leadership credentials or completing an endurance event to show that you're a hard worker who can commit to a challenging task.

Whatever it may be, choose something that you're interested in, reflect on how you can sell it to future employers, plan for the future and go out and do it.

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