

What is a College Degree? – Teacher Version

Grade level: 9

Suggested Duration: 1 or 2 class periods, depending on how much research is required and how much of the writing is done outside of class

Target Audience: Any student who needs to evaluate career choices and where to go to college

§112.34. Biology

(2) Scientific processes. The student uses scientific methods and equipment during laboratory and field investigations. The student is expected to

(H) communicate valid conclusions supported by the data through methods such as lab reports, labeled drawings, graphic organizers, journals, summaries, oral reports, and technology-based reports.

Alex wasn't sure what he wanted to do or what degree he needed initially. It's a good point—there are several types of college degrees.

<p>Teacher will introduce the lesson either with each of the following sections on small strips of paper or altogether on one page. Give students a few minutes to read and discuss. Ask students their level of familiarity with the various degrees described. Ask if they know of any examples of people who hold the various degrees. Provide examples if none are given by students.</p>	<p>Depending on their backgrounds, students respond with knowledge of these types of degrees, or may need many additional examples to understand them.</p>
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What is an Associate Degree?

An associate degree is typically a two-year degree awarded by community colleges, technical schools, and universities in the U.S. When you earn an associate degree, you usually complete about 60 college credits—roughly two years of coursework. You must typically complete general education courses, core classes required for the college major, and electives. Some people complete an associate degree and earn licenses or certifications in specific occupations, or they sometimes go to a four-year college and complete a bachelor's degree. Also, you can save money by attending a junior or community college for the first two years of your college career, and an associate degree usually transfers quite easily to a more expensive four-year college. If you may need to raise your GPA before applying to a four-year university, you can do this while working toward an associate degree.

What is a Bachelor's Degree?

A bachelor's degree typically is a four-year degree, meaning that it usually takes four years of full-time study to achieve. In those four years, you should expect to complete 120 semester credits, or about 40 college courses. This degree is the standard for entry into most professional careers. In most cases, more than half of a bachelor's degree consists of general education or liberal arts courses in such areas as English, psychology, history, or mathematics. These are sometimes referred to as a "breadth" requirement, meaning that the university (and society as a whole) believes you need a broad range of educational experiences to be considered an educated person. As a result, less than half of your required courses will actually be in your field of study (or major), and most of these will be taken in your last two years. You generally cannot attend a professional graduate school in law, medicine, or teacher education unless you hold a bachelor's degree first.

What is a Master's Degree?

A master's degree is the first level of graduate study, and is therefore called a graduate degree. To apply for a master's degree, you usually must already hold a bachelor's degree. A master's degree typically requires a year and one-half to two years of full-time study—although many people already employed as a result of holding a bachelor's degree complete their master's degree by going to school at night and working full time. To earn a master's degree, you usually need to complete about 36 semester credits of study. This equals 12 to 18 college courses. One of the most popular online master's degrees is the master's in business administration (MBA). Many managers today earn the MBA to qualify for competitive management positions in areas as diverse as technology management and healthcare records administration.

What is a Ph.D.?

A Ph.D., or a doctorate degree, is the highest level of graduate degree. Usually associated with a medical doctor, one can actually earn a doctorate in almost any subject area. Many university professors hold doctorate degrees in the area they teach and research. In fact, the Ph.D. is primarily a research degree. The time to degree varies a lot from subject to subject, but usually takes three to four years to complete beyond the master's degree. 30-40 college courses and a frequently book-length study called a dissertation are required.

If you have decided on your career pathway, it's time to do some research on your college career. *U.S. News & World Report* frequently releases research on best schools for various professions. Here's an example:

<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-business-schools>

On the web, see if you can find the top schools in your interest area. Then go to the school's website and see what the degree requirements are for the level you would like to attain. If you aren't sure how far you'd like to go in your chosen profession, start with bachelor's degree requirements.

Teacher lays out the following assignment. Students may need some help in understanding exactly what they are looking for.	Students research, ask questions, pre-write, draft.
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In a brief essay, include the following:

- What your pathway is
- What the best school you found is, and what types of evidence were cited (for example, qualifications of professors, student success after graduation, etc.)
- What required courses you think sound the most challenging
- What your highest degree will be

Still undecided on your career pathway? Before you attempt the above, go to www.texasgearup.com and follow the "no clue" path.

What is a College Degree? – Student Version

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