

If you're looking to return to school, but the idea of a four-year degree just doesn't fit with your time or budgetary constraints, there are many high-paying jobs that only require a two-year degree. These two-year programs are often referred to as associates degrees. If making the big bucks is something you put a high value on, you might want to [invest](#) your time into one of these high-paying career options that only require two-years education. (University payment plans are a great option for reducing student loan borrowing, but only if you know the details. Refer to [Student Borrowing: University Payment Plans Vs. Federal Student Loans](#).)

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Registered Nurses

Though there is quite a bit of variance when it comes to [nursing programs](#) and the length of time it takes to complete them, many of the two-year nursing programs lead to high-paying jobs. One of the best things about nursing is that this career choice offers lots of opportunities for growth. This profession is also quite stable through [recession](#). Individuals in this career can expect to earn an average salary of about \$55,000 per year.

Engineering Technicians

Those with good math and science skills may [choose a career](#) as an engineering technician, though within this field there is a wide range of types of engineering to specialize in. Industrial engineering technicians can earn in the range of \$47,000 annually, while environmental engineering technicians can earn about \$41,000 per year. Electrical engineering technicians can expect to earn an annual salary of about \$47,000 per year, while aerospace engineering technicians can expect to earn even more, approximately \$52,000 per year.

Dental Hygienists

This career option may only require a two-year degree, but it also generally requires workers to obtain a license or certification on top of the educational requirement. Despite the added hurdle to cross in obtaining a position as a dental hygienist, it's definitely worth it when the pay checks start to come in. The average yearly income for a dental hygienist comes in at over \$57,000 per year, with some hygienists earning well over \$60,000 annually. Also of note, the demand for this position is expected to increase over the coming years.

Computer Support Specialists

In our modern high-tech world, those with the know-how when it comes to computers can expect to earn a good wage. Two-year computer support specialist programs can cover everything from IT positions or network security to computer support and help desk-type positions. These jobs tend to offer yearly incomes anywhere in the range of \$46,000 to \$60,000. They generally come with the added perks of flexible schedules or the ability to [work remotely](#).

Paralegal

Good lawyers depend on good paralegals to provide administrative support. Though paralegals won't earn as much during their careers as a lawyer will, they still earn a great wage considering this career only requires a fraction of the education. Individuals working in this field can expect to take in an average annual salary of about \$46,000.

Searching for 2 year degrees?

Diagnostic Medical Imaging and X-Ray Technicians

Employment in this segment of the medical field is expected to increase in the coming years, which is great news for those that have an interest in working this field without [investing](#) the huge amount of time and money required to become a doctor. Diagnostic medical imaging staff and x-ray technicians may work in either clinics, hospitals or labs that use imaging technology to assist in diagnosing medical issues. These medical staff can expect to earn in the range of \$52,000 per year after completing a two-year program. These positions are also great for those that wish to work in a flexible work environment.

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Web Designer

If you've got a creative mind mixed with strong [technical skill](#), graphic or web design is a great career option for you. Companies always require talented designers to modify or create websites, and this career option also offers great potential for workers to start their own businesses. According to PayScale, website designers can expect to earn an average salary in the range of \$49,000 annually, though the sky is the limit if you go into business for yourself or work freelance.

Physical Therapy Assistant

The medical field is always a fairly stable career option, and physical therapy is no different. Jobs in this field are definitely on the rise, especially as the population continues to age and has an increased need for physical therapy. Individuals in this field can expect to earn over \$46,000 per year on average.

The Bottom Line

It's definitely true that no education is ever wasted, so whether you opt for the four-year degree or if you decide that two years is all you're willing to invest, those that go to college often have greater earning potential than those that don't. However, some two-year programs can definitely lead to high paying jobs; at times perhaps even higher paying than some four-year programs. Some employers in particularly high-demand industries may even offer incentives to those that complete educational programs that enable them to work in the field. These incentives can come in the form of tuition rebates or tax breaks.

Do your homework before you head back to school and know what the prospects are in the industries you're considering. (Effectively using your commute time could place you miles ahead of your competition. Check out [Commuters' University: On-The-Road Learning.](#))

by [Janet Fowler](#)



Janet Fowler studied business education at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada. She has written a number of business resources for high school students, and continues to write and edit in various capacities today. Janet is a self-proclaimed shopaholic, with a particular love for high-quality merchandise, but she also appreciates good value and knows where and when it's appropriate to save a buck. When Janet is not writing, she is either travelling or planning her next adventure.

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