What Drives Your Paycheck

Skills, training, and reputation, on and off social media, shape future earnings.

Name: _____ Date: _____

OBJECTIVE

Identify workplace skills that drive earnings, evaluate how a social media footprint affects career and finances, and compare the return on different education and training paths.

1. Rate your employability skills

Honestly rate yourself 1 (needs work) to 5 (strong) on each.

Skill	1	2	3	4	5
Positive work ethic					
Punctuality					
Time management					
Teamwork					
Communication					

2. Audit your social media footprint

A hiring manager searches your name. Would they find anything that could hurt your chances? Circle one for each, then explain your lowest-confidence answer below.

- ☐ My public posts reflect how I'd want an employer to see me — Yes / Not sure / No
- ☐ My privacy settings limit who sees personal posts — Yes / Not sure / No
- ☐ I know what shows up if I search my own name — Yes / Not sure / No

Explain: _____

3. Compare education and training paths

Path	Typical cost	Typical training time	Est. median earnings
High school diploma only	$0	0 years	$32,000
Technical certification	$3,000-$8,000	6-18 months	$42,000
Associate degree	$7,000-$15,000	2 years	$46,000

Free classroom resource. Educational use only; not financial, tax, or legal advice.

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Path	Typical cost	Typical training time	Est. median earnings
Bachelor's degree	$40,000+	4 years	$60,000

THINK IT THROUGH

Higher median earnings don't automatically mean a better choice for everyone, factor in the cost, the time out of the workforce, and how in-demand the field is (SSEPF8c).

4. Which path from the table above looks like the strongest fit for you right now, and why?