

DEGREES 101

BACHELORS? MASTERS? WHAT?

Looking to go to college but not sure about degree terminology? You're not alone! The college search can be very confusing and overwhelming. If you are pursuing college, many high school graduates enter 2 year (associate's), or 4 year (bachelor's) programs. There are also a number of trade schools and certificate programs students can enter directly after high school.

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE

An associate's degree typically consists of about 60 credits and takes 1-2 years to complete. While there may be a handful of general education requirements, the majority of the courses will be specific to your major. Students can graduate with an A.A (Associate's of Arts), A.S. (Associate's of Science), or even something more specific such as A.A.S. (Associate's of Applied Science). Let's say you study social work. Your degree would be an Associate's of Arts in Social Work. Sometimes schools offer a major in both the A.S. and A.A. track. The main difference is that Arts degrees tend to be more focused on philosophy and theory, where Science degrees are more focused on application of skills. This difference applies to all degree levels.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

High school graduates can also apply directly to undergraduate programs or Baccalaureate programs, where you can earn a bachelor's degree. These programs typically require 120 hours of coursework and take about 4 years to complete. Again, there are Bachelor's of Science, and Bachelor's of Arts, but some are more specific, such as, B.F.A. is a Bachelor's of Fine Arts.

It's also important to note that students have a major and a minor. Their major is the core subject they are studying, while the minor is secondary. An example would be someone majoring in Business Administration and minoring in Finance. Occasionally colleges offer dual degree programs where students can have two majors, but this can sometimes prolong graduation.

MASTER'S DEGREE

Students who graduate with a Bachelor's Degree are eligible to apply to Master's Degree programs, also known as graduate school. Master's Program requirements vary greatly but typically require 30-60 credits of coursework, and 1-3 years to complete. Typically by this time students are working and attending school simultaneously. While there are still Master's of Arts and Master's of Science, because these programs are more specified, there are a large number of Master's degrees such as M.P.H. (Master's of Public Health), and M.S.W. (Master's of Social Work).

DOCTORAL DEGREE

Students who have completed a bachelor's degree, and/or a master's degree qualify to apply to doctorate programs. Some students go directly into Doctorate programs following completion of their bachelor's degree. In many doctoral programs you complete your master's along the way if you do not already have that degree. If you are entering a doctoral program and already have your master's degree, you are typically able to finish the program quicker. It's common for doctoral programs to have two tracks- one for students who have a bachelor's and another for master's level students.

CERTIFICATES

Certificate programs are more common at trade schools, but still exist in the traditional college realm. Certificates programs are available at all levels. For instance, there are post bachelor certificates meaning you first need to have your bachelor's degree to apply to the certificate program. Often times certificates are highly specialized, and can be completed in a shorter time frame. If you are particularly interested in working in the technology industry a number of large companies now offer their own certificate programs (Google & Amazon). Keep in mind that financial aid is typically not available for certificate seeking students.

[Google Certificates](#)

[Amazon Training](#)

[Coursera](#)

[Picking a major](#)

[Career Finder](#)