

Going Back to School

by Jan Cannon

More Education Needed?

Once you've chosen a new career direction, decide if you need more education. This might be a six-week adult-ed class in database management or a new degree in early childhood development.

You may have life or work experience that can substitute for formal classes. You'll have to decide if you know enough for your new opportunity.

Is More Schooling Necessary?

Be sure you really need to return to school before moving in a new direction. Many women find it exhilarating to return to the classroom after time away. The intellectual stimulation may be very welcome after years away from school. And being back on a college campus can feel invigorating after years of being "grown up," or it may feel threatening.

However, a return to school can be avoidance of a real career decision. Most women know how to be students and going back to school can be a regression to a role they're more familiar with. Returning to school can be a way of dealing with the anxiety of uncertainty, not with the uncertainty itself. So, although it may look as if you've made progress in your career decision, in fact you may be postponing it. If you decide to return to school it's crucial to explore whether school is a step towards a clear goal or whether it's a substitute for having a goal.

What If You Hated School?

If your earlier school experiences were unpleasant, you may not want to return to an uncomfortable setting. You may truly need additional education or training, especially on the computer, but be reluctant or unwilling to return to the classroom. If this describes you, maybe reconsidering your job choice is the best action. Before you decide, though, at least talk with some program directors at schools near you. Many classes are designed specifically for adult student and your classmates may be a lot like you.

Which Course(s) to Take?

For help choosing a program and/or school, see [Peterson's Guides](#). Call for the adult education offerings of your local school district as well as neighboring cities and towns. Don't overlook continuing ed programs at all colleges and universities. And community college programs are often the best place for technology classes. Ask to talk with graduates from any degree program you're considering. They're more likely to have the answers to your questions about job placement help once you're finished.

Education That Doesn't Occur in Schools

Don't overlook non-traditional sources for education possibilities. Professional associations offer workshops, seminars and conferences, some with Continuing

Education Units. There are on-line seminars (webinars), self-study and training/industry specific offerings. Some associations to investigate are : National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), American Society of Women Accountants (ASWA), National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) and National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC). There are associations for everything, so do an Internet search on the field of your choice and see what comes up.

Before you invest your money, invest your time to determine if you need further education or training and where to get it. Once you've investigated several education options, you can better compare and decide which is right for you. Then do what you need to for applying to the best program for your needs.