How to Talk With Your Teen or Young Adult About a Career in the Trades

If your teen or young adult is considering a skilled trade, your support matters more than you might think. Exploring the trades is not a step down from college. It is a different path to a stable, skilled career, and for many people it is the right one. **This guide is not here to sell the trades. It is here to help you have a clear, honest conversation and look at the facts together.**

1 QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is drawing you to this kind of work?
- Have you talked with anyone who does it, or seen it up close?
- What would the first step look like, and when?
- What would you want to know before committing?
- How do you picture your life five years in?

2 LOOK INTO IT TOGETHER

For any trade or program, find out:

- What it pays at the start, mid-career, and at the top (use real state data)
- Whether training is an apprenticeship, trade school, community college, or on the job
- Whether the program is registered or accredited
- What licenses or certifications are required, and in what order
- How a person applies, and when applications open

3 WHAT TO AVOID SAYING

- × **"It's a fallback if college doesn't work out."** It frames the trades as second place.
- × **"You're too smart for that."** Skilled trades demand real problem-solving.
- × **"There's no money in it."** Often untrue, and easy to disprove with the data.
- × **"You'll change your mind."** It tells them you are not taking the idea seriously.

4 SIGNS IT MIGHT BE A REAL FIT

- ✓ They would rather build, fix, or make something than sit at a desk
- ✓ They want to earn while they learn, not take on debt first
- ✓ They are drawn to a concrete, in-demand skill
- ✓ They light up talking about the work itself, not just the paycheck

5 A FEW MYTHS WORTH CLEARING UP

- **"The trades are a fallback."** Many trades are competitive to enter and take years to master.
- **"There is no room to grow."** Skilled workers move into supervision, inspection, teaching, or running their own business.
- **"It is a dead end financially."** Many trades reach a solid middle-class income, and some go well beyond it. Pay varies by trade, region, and experience, so look up the specifics.

→ YOUR NEXT STEP THIS WEEK

Pick one trade your teen or young adult is curious about and look up, together, what it pays in your state and how someone trains for it. One concrete look at real numbers does more than a dozen general conversations.