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# Choosing A Vocational School

Autumn means back to school for many people and for a great many of them, it means choosing a vocational school. If you're considering furthering your education

initivity is a second of the s the Better Business Bureau suggests you do some homework first.

A good vocational school can offer sound training and prepare you for a satisfying career. But some schools are not so good. If you're not careful, you may discover too late that only a few people complete courses at the school (because course content, facilities or instruction is inadequate), that the school doesn't or won't help you find job, or that potential employers think the training is worthless.

So when you talk to a school sales representative, ask these questions and get the answers:

plete the course in comparison to those who drop out?

\*Ask for names and addresses of students who have graduated from the school in the past six months. Get in touch with them and find out what they say.

\*Will you be able to cancel the contract within a specified time period if you change your mind? The Federal Trade Commission has a three-day cooling off rule which gives you three business days in which to cancel any contract

over \$25 that you sign in your home, with no obligation (if the school is involved in interstate commerce - and most are). Your state also may have a cooling-off law that 

\*Is there a refund policy if you can't complete the course?

\*Is the school licensed to do business by the state?

\*Is the school accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Office of Education? Remember, though, that this is no guarantee that the school is good.

\*Who will hold your installment contract for collection? Sometimes contract is sold to a bank or finance company, and if you have questions about the money later, you won't be able to deal directly with the school.

Don't give in if the salesperson says you must sign a contract immediately while they still have openings. A reputable school will give you time to check around. If the salesperson says you are guaranteed a job when you complete the course, be skeptical. No school can promise that, says the BBB.

If you are told that you scored amazingly high on the aptitude test or entrance exam, be suspicious. And don't believe a salesperson wo implies that the school is somehow connected with a major industry or governmental organization.

Don't get answers only from the school. Contact prospective employers. Ask these questions: Does the employer hire graduates of the school? How many graduates has the employer actually hired in the past year? Were they hired because of school training? Did the training make any difference in starting salary?

You can contact high school, military or V.A. counselors for advice. You can get in touch with unions and trade and professional associations to determine what the job situation is in the field you want to enter. Find out if these people think the training you have in mind would be valuable. And contact a Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints against the school have been filed.

Unreputable schools sometimes mask a contract by calling it an "Application for Enrollment" or an "Enrollment Agrement." Read the fine print: if you sign it, it's a legally binding contract.

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