

GET THE JOB

Building Skills for Career Growth

Practical Paths to Credentials, Online Courses and Professional Training

The American workplace keeps changing, and many workers want to move up without stepping away for a full degree program. Across the country, people are turning to short-term credentials, online learning and structured on-the-job training to build skills while staying employed.

These options are not new, but they have become easier to access. Broadband expansion, remote instruction and a growing menu of industry credentials let workers fit learning into evenings, weekends or slower seasons on the job.

CREDENTIALS THAT COUNT

One starting point is professional certification. In many fields, certifications signal specific abilities that employers can verify, such as safety training, project management fundamentals or information technology support.

For workers, the appeal is focus. Certifications often target a defined skill set rather than a broad course of study, which can make them a practical fit for someone balancing work, family and a budget.

Consumers can check whether a credential is widely



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recognized by looking for third-party standards and clear exam requirements. Certifications that require continuing education can also help workers keep pace with changing tools and regulations.

ONLINE LEARNING OPTIONS

Online courses have become a common way to build skills in everything from spreadsheet analysis to basic coding to workplace communication. Many community colleges, public universities and established training providers offer remote classes that mirror in-person coursework, includ-

ing instructor office hours and proctored testing.

For working adults, online learning can be a bridge between interest and action. Taking one course can help a person confirm whether a field is a good fit before committing more time and money.

Quality matters. Prospective students should look for transparent syllabi, clearly stated time commitments and student support such as tutoring or career services. It also helps to choose programs that provide a transcript or documented completion, which can be useful in hiring or

promotion conversations.

LEARNING ON THE JOB

On-the-job training remains one of the most direct ways to gain experience. Apprenticeships, employer-run training programs and mentorship arrangements allow workers to earn a paycheck while building skills under supervision.

The U.S. Department of Labor recognizes registered apprenticeships, which combine paid work with classroom instruction and lead to a nationally recognized credential. Apprenticeships are asso-

ciated with the building trades, but they also exist in fields such as health care, manufacturing and information technology.

Even outside formal apprenticeships, many employers offer structured training for new equipment, software systems or safety procedures. Workers can take an active role by asking what competencies are required for advancement and what internal training is available to meet those expectations.

A practical plan often combines several approaches. A worker might complete an online course to learn terminology, earn a certification to document skills and then apply that knowledge in a supervised role at work. That mix can create a clear story for a resume and a clear roadmap for a manager.

For communities, these pathways support a stable workforce and help local employers fill roles with people who already have roots in the area. For individuals, they offer a way to keep moving forward while staying connected to work, family and the daily responsibilities that make going back to school full time a hard choice.