



College and Career Awareness

Teacher's Guide

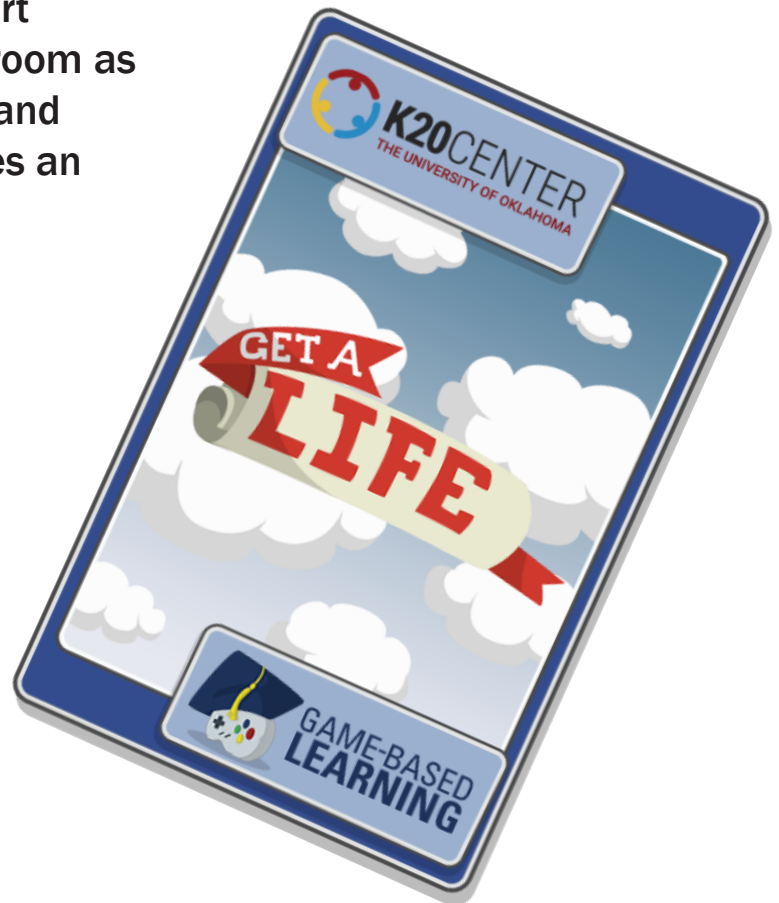


About K20 Center and GBL

The K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal is a statewide education research and development center which promotes innovative learning through school-university-community collaborations. The K20 Center's mission is to cultivate a collaborative network engaged in research and outreach that creates and sustains innovation and transformation through leadership development, shared learning, and authentic technology integration.

The K20 Center's Game-Based Learning team designs and develops engaging, research-based, interactive learning experiences for a variety of audiences.

The purpose of this guide is to support integrating *Get a Life* into your classroom as an effective tool to enhance college and career awareness. This guide provides an overview of the game's narrative, mechanics, and missions.





Contents

About K20 Center and GBL	1
Get a Life	3
What the Game Teaches	3
How the Game Teaches It	4
Play Time	4
Opportunities for Differentiation	5
For students who have a specific interest already	5
For students who are confused about or have not started exploring interests	5
For students in need of reading differentiation	6
For English-language learners	7
Connecting to other topics	7
Gameplay and interface	8
Ease of play and structure	8
Enrollment	9
Choosing a career cluster	9
Applying to colleges	10
Paying for college	11
Scoring Categories	12
Primary scoring categories	12
Secondary scoring categories	13
Turns	15
Aging	15
Life Event Cards	16
Life Events	16
Decision indicators	16
Props	17
Event phases	18
End of the Game	19
Game over	19
Retirement	19
Contacts and Other Games	21





Get a Life

A student's choices shape their character's story in *Get a Life*, a narrative-driven, college- and career-awareness game.

Guide a character from high school graduation to retirement. Decide what interest they will pursue and if they will continue in school. Then, navigate opportunities and obstacles. Balance their comfort, civic involvement, and income to make sure they lead a comfortable, satisfying life.

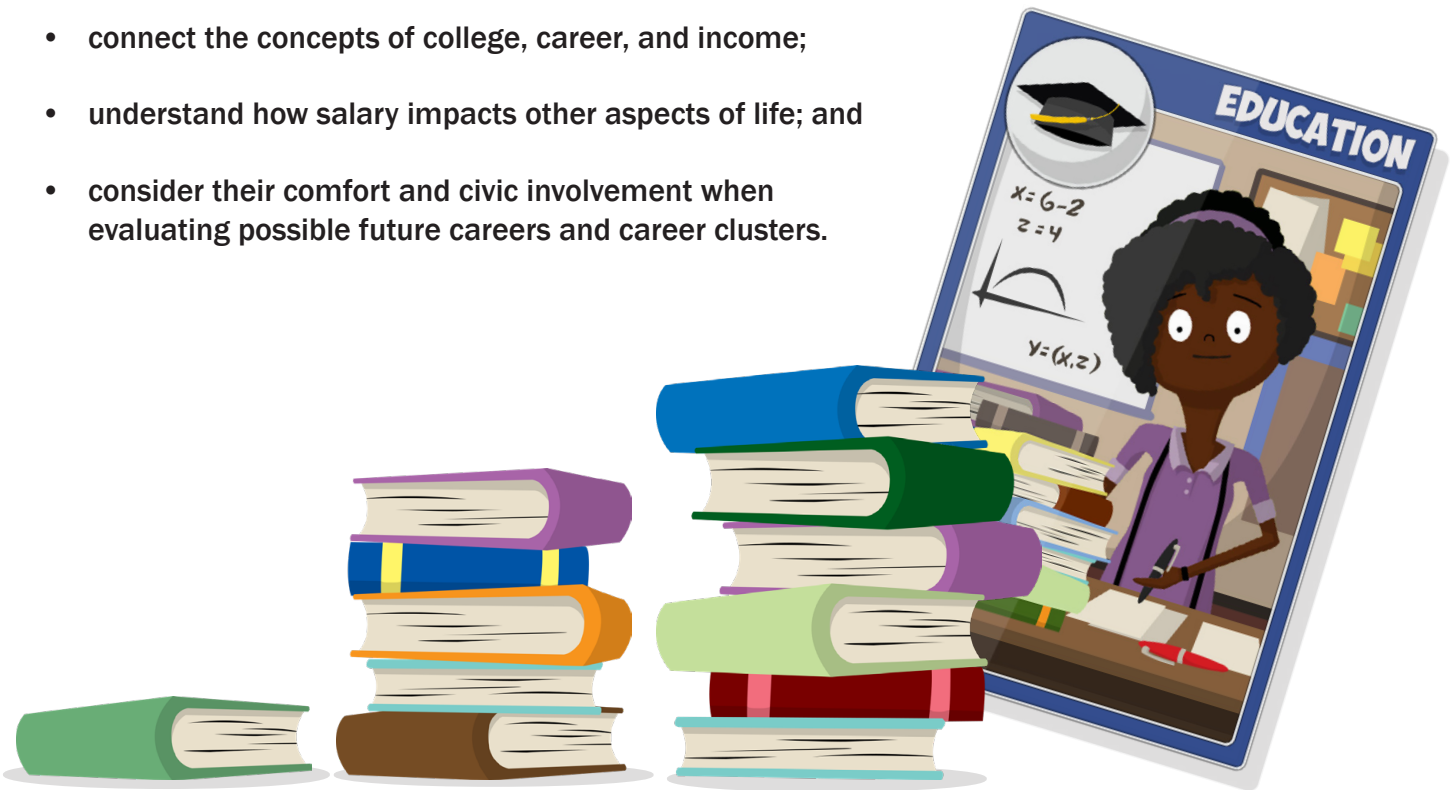
Dynamic play ensures nearly limitless storylines and outcomes, much like life.

What the Game Teaches

Get a Life is designed and written to teach middle school students about college and career options and encourage them to have conversations about their futures.

By playing *Get a Life*, students will:

- connect the concepts of college, career, and income;
- understand how salary impacts other aspects of life; and
- consider their comfort and civic involvement when evaluating possible future careers and career clusters.





How the Game Teaches It

Students are introduced to a character who has just graduated from high school and is ready to begin adult life. The character has an expressed interest, an ACT score, and a GPA. Using that information, the student must make choices on the character's behalf.

Get a Life promotes interest exploration by encouraging students to investigate options outside their comfort zone.

In *Get a Life*, students:

- consider their character's interests when making decisions, exploring options they may not have otherwise chosen for themselves;
- navigate events that demonstrate how job satisfaction is influenced by factors other than income;
- experience common challenges and setbacks in postsecondary education to gain perspective and discover the resources and support that schools offer to students; and
- manage major- and career-specific decisions that offer insight into the type of work involved with the career field they chose for their character.

Play Time

Get a Life can be completed within 10–15 minutes, so it can be ideal for many situations (including casual play and classes with limited time).

To get the most out of *Get a Life*, students should play multiple times to experience a variety of college and career options. There will always be something new to see and learn.





Opportunities for Differentiation

In *Get a Life*, teacher-directed goals direct play and control content.

You can guide students to specific pathways by using the included list of associated interests, education levels, and careers located at the end of the guide.

A *Get a Life* 5E LEARN lesson is available for free at learn.k20center.ou.edu. An easy-to-read printable version is included under Teaching Materials in the *Get a Life* section on the Games Portal. To request access, go to k20center.ou.edu/getgames.

Get a Life is available in English, Spanish, and Cherokee, offering additional learning opportunities or some ESL and language educators.

For students who already have a specific interest

- Direct students to play through the game using a different interest, one they don't know much about. Ideally, follow up with a reflection.
- Alternatively, direct students to play through the game in a career that uses their interest in a different way. A student who wants to become a visual artist could play through the game as a commercial and industrial designer, architect, or an art professor instead, for example.

For students who have not started exploring interests

The suggested activity below uses a [3-2-1](#) instructional strategy to give students an opportunity to reflect on events and tasks they encounter in the game and use that information to brainstorm relevant interests.

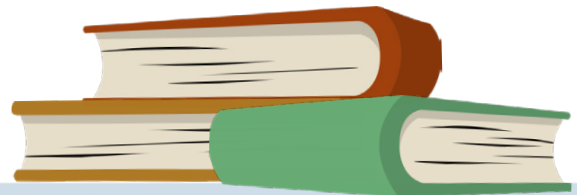
- After completing a playthrough, students list **3** things they like about the career they played, **2** things they do not like, and **1** thing they learned about it.
- After all playthroughs are complete, students identify similarities and differences between their 3-2-1s. Students record how frequently they listed the same likes and rank them in order. They do the same for their dislikes.
- Then, groups of students work together to brainstorm interests and careers for each group member. They should strive to include the student's top likes and avoid their top dislikes to make one short list of interests/careers for each group member.





For students in need of reading differentiation

- For classes in which student reading speeds vary widely, do not set a specific number of playthroughs to be completed within a time limit. Ideally, students will read at their own pace and feel challenged, but not singled out. Self-pacing has the added benefit of not drawing attention to students who have a hard time completing the game successfully.
- Pair or group students who have complimentary reading comfort and skill levels. *Get a Life* works well as a social game.
- Whole-class instructional strategies that would fit this need are: [Parking Lot](#), a modified [Sentence-Phrase-Word](#), [Vocabulary Charades](#), or [Word Splash](#).



The screenshot shows the 'Get a Life' game interface. At the top left, there are buttons for 'CAREER' (set to 'ART') and 'SCHOOL' (set to 'REDBUD COMMUNITY COLLEGE'). Below 'CAREER' is a 'Go to the doctor' button. At the top right, there are buttons for 'TITLE' (set to 'STUDENT') and 'STUDENT'. In the center, a 'STRESS' card is displayed with a brain icon and the text: 'The professor tells Alexis to go home anyway so they don't get everyone else sick. She suggests going to the doctor and says she'll email the lecture notes later.' Below the stress card is a 'Stay home' button. At the bottom, there are several stat buttons: 'ALEXIS AGE - 18', 'INCOME \$625', 'GRADES 1/4' (with a red arrow pointing down), 'COMFORT' (with a green arrow pointing up), 'EXPENSES \$800', and 'LOAN DEBT \$0'. A 'TURNS UNTIL GRADUATION' button is also present.



For English-language learners

- Events in the game vary from realistic to fanciful. Let English-language learners (ELLs) know this ahead of time, so they are prepared for the vocabulary they will encounter.
- Native English-speakers may naturally skip over difficult words that are not necessary to reading comprehension (e.g., names of chemicals or machines in career events). English-language learners, however, may need help identifying these terms.
- The game uses casual language, which offers an opportunity to introduce contractions to an ELL class that is not familiar with them.

Connecting to other topics

Get a *Life* could raise additional student questions about topics other than college and career exploration. The following topics may warrant further investigation.

- Student loan debt
- Student loan repayment plans
- Tuition cost/differences in cost
- FAFSA®
- Scholarships and grants
- Debt (other than student loan debt)
- Salary/income
- Cost of living
- Danger and injuries at work
- Cost of medical insurance and care
- Other options not included in the game (e.g., the military and how it can affect the cost of education)
- Social Security





Gameplay and Interface

Ease of play and structure

Gameplay uses a familiar three-phase structure: Enrollment, College, and Career. All three phases have the same interface structure—an event is presented in the middle with one or two clickable options to the right and, in most events, the left of the event card.



Each phase presents a series of decisions for the student to make. Each choice has consequences that change their character's happiness, income, savings, grades, or civic involvement for better or worse.





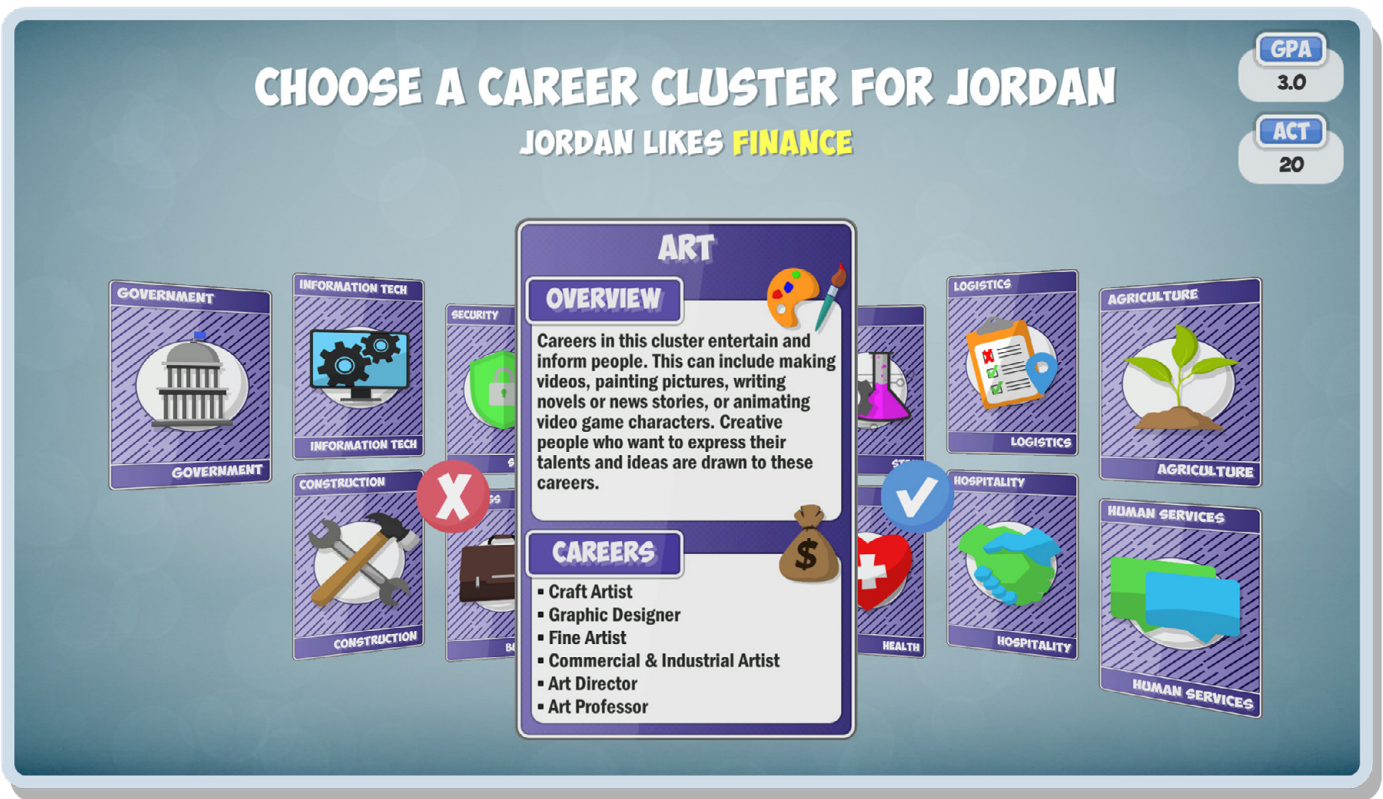
Enrollment

During enrollment, the student will make choices about their character's education and career goals.

Choosing a career cluster

The student begins by choosing one of the 16 career clusters. Each character has career cluster preference, but students do not have to play through that interest.

Encourage or direct students to try out a variety of clusters over the course of multiple playthroughs.



Each career cluster has six careers available up front, one per education level, for a total of 96 careers.

More careers can be triggered as a result of in-game situations and choices. As it is in real life, the student's initial choices point the character in a direction but do not chart their entire life.

A table of the 96 careers and their associated college levels and interests can be found at the end of the guide.





Applying to colleges

Characters can only apply to schools that offer classes in their chosen career cluster. Each character has an ACT score and a GPA that may further limit their options.

Choosing “No Further Education” sends the player directly to the Career Phase.

Each College Card shows the full cost of tuition and the cost after subtracting financial aid and family contribution, demonstrating how the cost of education can greatly decrease as a result of financial aid.

CAREER
ART

CHOOSE AND APPLY TO A FEW COLLEGES

JORDAN HAS AN **ACT SCORE OF 20**

GPA
3.0
ACT
20

CAREER TECH 2 YEAR CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY 4 YEAR DEGREE

CENTRAL CAREER CENTER

JAVIER ELIZONDO TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITY

BRENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

REDBUD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SOUTH COAST STATE UNIVERSITY

NO FURTHER EDUCATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGE 2 YEAR DEGREE

NO COLLEGE GO TO CAREER

College	ACT Score	Total Cost	Scholarship	Family Contribution	Final Cost
Central Career Center	0	\$26,516	-\$1,389	-\$17,252	\$7,875
Javier Elizondo Technology Institute	0	\$18,089	-\$0	-\$17,252	\$837
Collegiate University	24	\$91,028	-\$42,605	-\$17,252	\$31,171
Brendale Community College	0	\$31,974	-\$5,520	-\$17,252	\$9,202
Redbud Community College	0	\$21,378	-\$2,011	-\$17,252	\$2,115
South Coast State University	22	\$70,272	-\$11,812	-\$17,252	\$21,208
No Further Education	0	None	None	None	None

After applying, the player will be able to see which schools their character has been admitted to and select one to attend. Until they have confirmed a school, the student can still choose “No Further Education.”



Paying for college

The option to submit the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA®) appears after the student confirms a college selection.

If the student decides to submit the FAFSA, the next card will present the FAFSA determination. If the student decides not to apply, they will still see the FAFSA determination, but it will not apply to their tuition cost.

FAFSA results are based on the character's GPA, their family contribution, and the institution's percentage of need.

CAREER

SCHOOL

ART

COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITY

TITLE

STUDENT

ALEXIS

INCOME

GRADES

1/8

COMFORT

EXPENSES

LOAN DEBT

AGE - 18

\$625

TURNS UNTIL GRADUATION

\$800

\$0

SCHOLARSHIP

Hey, wanna hang out?
No, I need to read this important text!

Okay

Due to Alexis's GPA of 2.9 and their expected family contribution of \$8,496, Collegiate University is awarding Alexis \$46,073 in scholarships, bringing their total college cost down to \$36,459.



Scoring Categories

Student choice can affect their character's Grades, Income, Comfort, Civic, Debt, and/or Savings categories. Some of these items can end the game if they fall too low.

Primary scoring categories

The three primary scoring categories are regularly affected by student choice and will end the game if scores fall to zero or below.

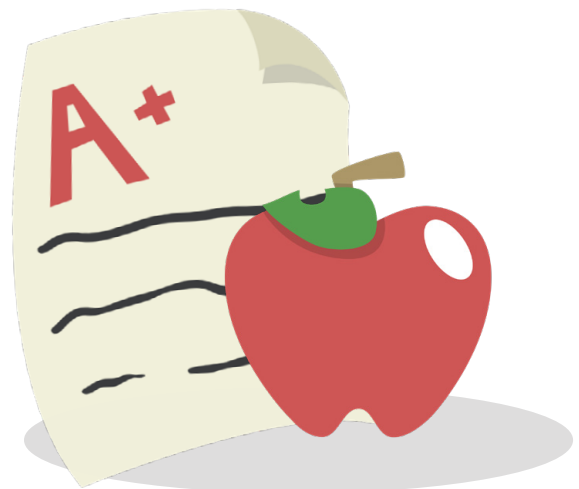
Comfort score

Comfort scores are benefitted by choices that make the character's life easier and happier. This is the only scoring category that exists in both the College Phase and Career Phase.



Grades score

The Grades score only appears in the College Phase. Grades can go up as a result of any event in which the character learns something and will go down when the student makes choices that do not prioritize school.





Civic score

Civic score only appears in the Career Phase and is affected by decisions that help or hurt others.

Careers that are meant to help or influence the public have more opportunities to earn or lose Civic points than others.

Secondary scoring categories

Debt, Income, and Savings values influence the primary scoring categories but will not end the game.

Loan Debt

Loan Debt is accrued as student loan debt and is the total cost of tuition not covered by financial aid. Working or earning a scholarship while in school will mitigate some of the education costs and therefore the accrual of student debt.

Upon graduation, students are shown their character's total student debt and the payment they will need to make each turn to pay off their Loan Debt in a set amount of time.

The Loan Debt payment is added to the character's Expenses in the Career Phase and can result, temporarily, in a negative Savings if the payment amount is larger than their income per turn.





Income/Salary and Expenses

College Phase Income or Career Phase Salary is the money a character regularly earns. Expenses are the costs a character must pay.

In the College Phase, Expenses are a result of costs like tuition and rent (if the student chooses to move their character into an apartment). Expenses increase in the Career Phase and include costs such as student loan payments, a mortgage, car payments, and upkeep for pets and/or family members.

EXPENSES

\$2,300

INCOME

\$3,600



Savings and negative savings

Students are introduced to the Savings category in the Career Phase. If their character's Income is more than their Expenses, the extra money will be put into Savings. If the opposite is true, the difference will be subtracted from Savings.

Having a large enough Savings balance will open doors to events that offer opportunities to start a business, buy a house, or go on vacation (among many others).

Having a negative Savings balance triggers events to help the character get out of debt and makes it more difficult for the character to gain and keep Comfort points.



Turns

In the College Phase, each turn is equivalent to one semester of time. In the Career Phase, a turn encompasses 4 years of the character's life.

**URNS UNTIL
RETIREMENT**

Aging

Characters experience three life phases: young, middle-aged, and late-aged. This is reflected in the way a character looks and in the events that may occur to them. A character visibly ages at 35 and again at 50.





Life Event Cards

Life Events

Life Event cards appear once per turn and require the student to decide between two options with different consequences. Once a choice is made, there is no going back.

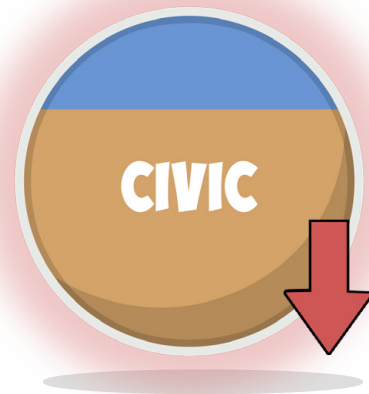
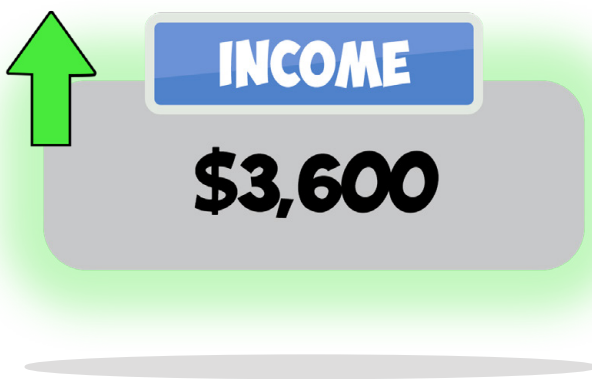
In a few cases, a student's choice will influence future Life Events. For example, joining a group in school may immediately cost money or create stress, but membership could offer scholarships or career opportunities in the future.

As in life, these benefits are not immediately evident. It is important that students learn how decisions like these, that may seem difficult in the moment, could positively affect them in the future.

The phase in which the Life Event occurs affects the kinds of Life Events students will encounter. More information on Life Events can be found in the Event Phases section.

Decision indicators

Hovering the cursor over an option will reveal how the choice will immediately affect the character's scores. A green arrow indicates positive impact, while a red arrow designates negative impact.

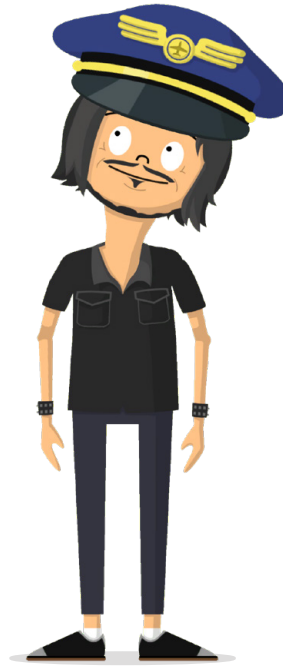


Arrows only appear if scores change immediately after clicking on a decision. Since some Life Events are made up of multiple choices and/or affect future decisions, these arrows will not always show how scores will change overall. Students should choose the option they prefer and not the one that they think will help their scores.



Props

Some choices will make props appear on the character. These do not affect event options or scores.





Event phases

Get a Life has two phases through which students guide their character's choices: College and Career. If a character does not enroll in a school, the College Phase will be skipped entirely.

College Phase events

College Phase events are based on challenges and opportunities that students could face in college or trade school, including unique events related to the character's level of education and course of study.

Some choices extend the number of turns in the College Phase, such as dropping a class or getting accepted to graduate school.

College events can affect Grades, Income, Comfort, and Debt scores.

Career Phase events

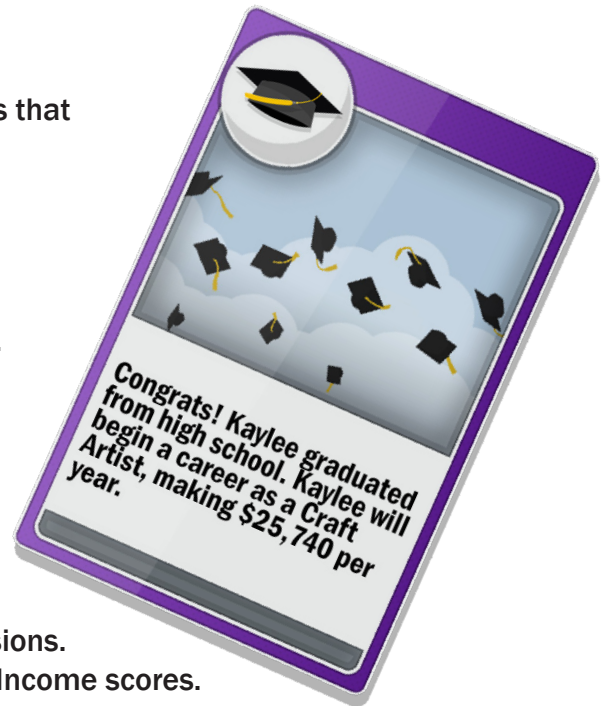
Career Phase events represent major career and domestic decisions. The events in this phase can affect Savings, Comfort, Civic, and Income scores.

Each career in the game has multiple career-specific events, ranging from silly to serious, that give students insight into the kinds of tasks and conflicts associated with the character's job.

Students will continue experiencing events in this phase until their character reaches the age of retirement, at which point the game ends.

Special events

Special events occur when the character graduates, when they have the opportunity to apply for a higher degree, and when the game ends. These special cards indicate a major change for the character that will affect gameplay.





End of the Game

The game ends when the student's character successfully reaches retirement or when one of the primary scores falls to zero or below.

Game Over

When a score falls to zero or below, a "Game Over" card appears to give feedback and encourage the student to try again. Clicking the "Try Again" button will return the student to the main screen to begin a new game.



Retirement

Characters retire between the ages of 65 and 70. This ends the game and takes the student through two results screens that offer feedback on their playthrough.

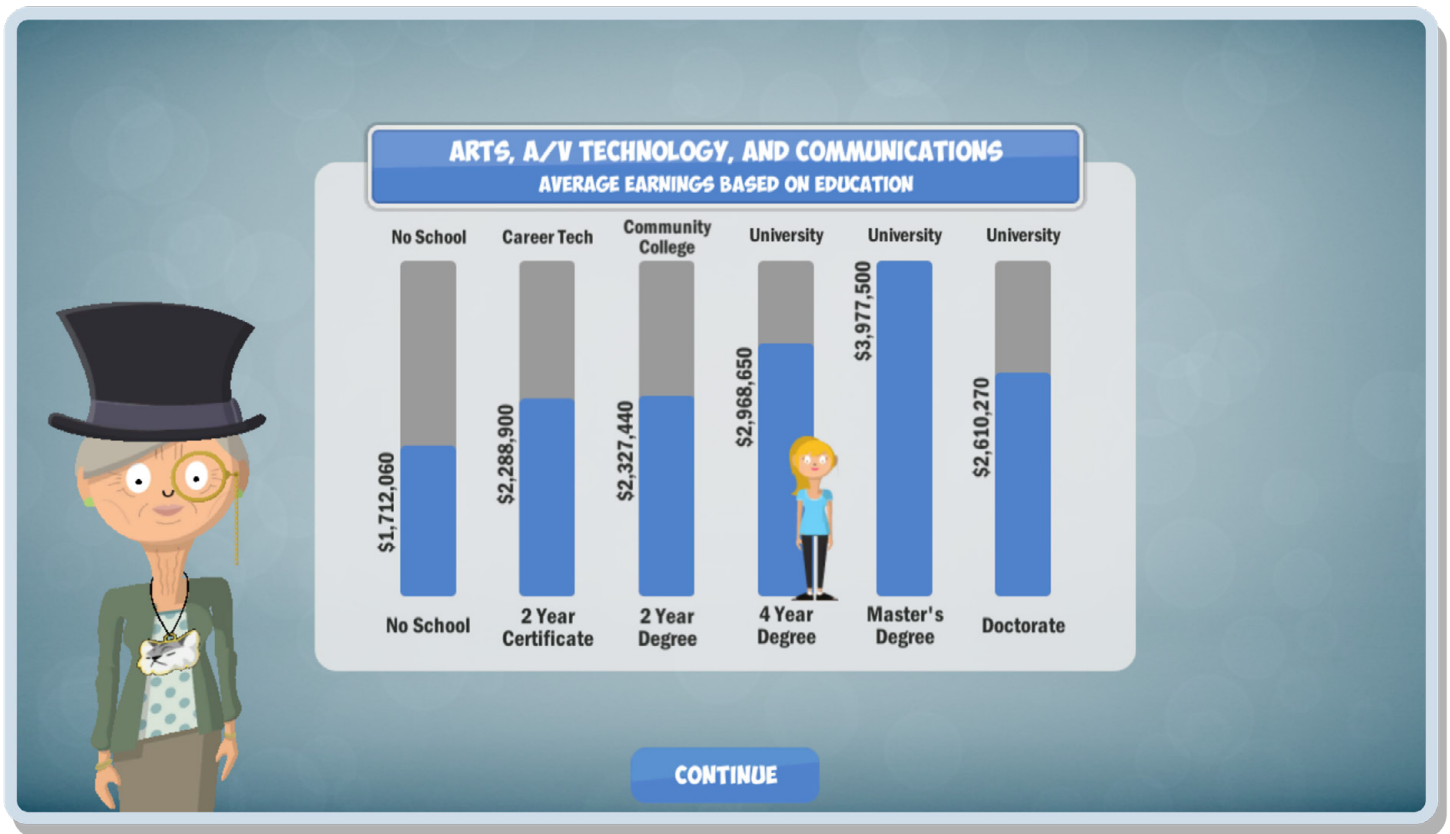
Career and education overview

The first retirement screen contains two cards that review facts about the character's life: interest, ACT score, GPA, family tuition contribution, school, degree, career, and their starting and ending salaries.



Lifetime income

The next screen shows a bar graph of the average lifetime earnings for each level of education in the character's chosen career cluster and how the character's lifetime earnings compares.



Clicking the continue button will return the student to the main screen to begin a new game if they wish.



Contacts and Other Games

DR. SCOTT WILSON

Director of Innovative Learning

405-325-2608

scott.wilson@ou.edu

JAVIER ELIZONDO

Game-Based Learning Coordinator

405-325-0832

elizondo@ou.edu

WILL THOMPSON

Instructional Game Designer

405-325-0832

will.thompson@ou.edu





Pathways Guide

Cluster	Education Level	Job Track
AGRICULTURE, FOOD, & NATURAL RESOURCES	High School	Farm Laborer
	Trade School	Farm Equipment Technician
	2-Year Degree	Farm/Ranch Manager
	4-Year Degree	Environmental Engineer
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Biochemist Veterinarian
ARCHITECTURE & CONSTRUCTION	High School	Construction Laborer
	Trade School	Civil Engineering Technician
	2-Year Degree	Architectural/Civil Drafter
	4-Year Degree	Civil Engineer
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Construction Manager Architect
ARTS, A/V TECHNOLOGY, & COMMUNICATIONS	High School	Craft Artist
	Trade School	Graphic Designer
	2-Year Degree	Fine Artist
	4-Year Degree	Commercial/Industrial Artist
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Art Director Art Professor
BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, & ADMINISTRATION	High School	Customer Service
	Trade School	Administrative Assistant
	2-Year Degree	Executive Assistant
	4-Year Degree	Manager
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Management Analyst Executive
EDUCATION & TRAINING	High School	Child Care Worker
	Trade School	Teacher Assistant
	2-Year Degree	Preschool Teacher
	4-Year Degree	School Teacher
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Instructional Designer College Professor
FINANCE	High School	Teller
	Trade School	Tax Preparer
	2-Year Degree	Insurance Adjuster
	4-Year Degree	Accountant
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Financial Analyst Economist
GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	High School	Postal Service Mail Carrier
	Trade School	Campaign Coordinator
	2-Year Degree	Campaign Manager
	4-Year Degree	Foreign Service Officer
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Emergency Management Director Lawyer
HEALTH SCIENCE	High School	Home Health Aide
	Trade School	Licensed Practical Nurse
	2-Year Degree	Emergency Medical Technician
	4-Year Degree	Registered Nurse
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Physician Assistant Surgeon





Cluster	Education Level	Job Track
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM	High School	Waiter
	Trade School	Chef
	2-Year Degree	Travel Agent
	4-Year Degree	Meeting/Convention Planner
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Hotel Manager Historian
HUMAN SERVICES	High School	Personal Care Aide
	Trade School	Social & Human Services Assistant
	2-Year Degree	Community Health Worker
	4-Year Degree	Child & Family Social Worker
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Mental Health Counselor Clinical Psychologist
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	High School	Computer Operator
	Trade School	Computer Support Specialist
	2-Year Degree	Web Developer
	4-Year Degree	Software Developer
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Info. Systems Manager Computer & Information Scientist
LAW, PUBLIC SAFETY, CORRECTIONS, & SECURITY	High School	Correctional Officer
	Trade School	Private Detective
	2-Year Degree	Police Officer
	4-Year Degree	Criminal Investigator
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Security Specialist Federal Prison Warden
MANUFACTURING	High School	Retail Salesperson
	Trade School	Photographer
	2-Year Degree	Advertising Sales Agent
	4-Year Degree	Market Research Analyst
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Marketing Manager Marketing Data Scientist
MARKETING, SALES, & SERVICE	High School	Teller
	Trade School	Tax Preparer
	2-Year Degree	Insurance Adjuster
	4-Year Degree	Accountant
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Financial Analyst Economist
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, & MATHEMATICS	High School	Waste Treatment Plant Operator
	Trade School	Chemical Technician
	2-Year Degree	Nuclear Technician
	4-Year Degree	Materials Scientist
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Archaeologist Microbiologist
TRANSPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION, & LOGISTICS	High School	Delivery Driver
	Trade School	Truck Driver
	2-Year Degree	Air Traffic Controller
	4-Year Degree	Aerospace Engineer
	Master's Degree Ph.D.	Airline Pilot Architectural & Engineering Manager