

English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library
August 28, 2025
The AI Age: Gen Z, Higher Education and Work

The past few weeks we have discussed the impact of Artificial Intelligence on dating and how it is used to create fake images. Today, we look at how AI affects the youngest workers in society – Generation Z. The Library of Congress defines Generation Z as those who were born between 1997 and 2012. They've never lived without the internet and are often referred to as digital natives. They're 13 through 28 years old, as of 2025.

Warm-up Questions

1. Do you think young people have a different attitude about college than you did at 18 years old?
2. Do you think young people have a different attitude about work compared to you?

Vocabulary: Review the vocabulary. Match the words to their meanings.

1. career path (<i>kuh-reer path</i>)	A. the act of earning one's living directly from one's own profession or business rather than as an employee earning a salary
2. do-over (<i>doo-oh-ver</i>)	B. to feel sorrow; to have a sense of loss or shame for what happened in the past
3. entrepreneurship (<i>ahn-truh-pruh-nur-ship</i>)	C. a line of work that requires special training and often licensing and certification. For example, carpentry is a skilled trade.
4. passion-driven (<i>pash-uhn driv-uhn</i>)	D. the activity of setting up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of earning profits
5. prestigious (<i>pre-stij-uhs</i>)	E. the series of jobs a person works at especially in a particular field
6. prospect (<i>pros-pekt</i>)	F. having a high reputation; honored; esteemed
7. to regret (<i>ri-gret</i>)	G. motivated by a strong sense of purpose to pursue one's goals
8. returns (<i>ri-turnz</i>)	H. outlook for the future
9. self-employment (<i>self-em-ploi-muhnt</i>)	I. a chance to do something again or repeat it, especially when it did not turn out well the first time.
10. skilled trade (<i>skild trayd</i>)	J. the yield or profits from work; a business deal or investment after expenses

ANSWERS: 1 –E; 2 - I; 3 -D; 4 – G; 5 – F; 6 – H; 7 – B; 8 – J, 9 – A; 10 –C

Dialogue One

Cal: My son dropped out of college after only one year. He said he wants a different **career path**.

Kim: Really? He's dropping out after all his hard work getting into a **prestigious** college?

Cal: That's what he said. He **regrets** he wasted our money for his first year.

Kim: What's he going to do? Does he have a **skilled trade** or any other **prospects** to make a living?

Cal: Well, he is **driven** by a **passion** for video games. He's designing one now. To earn money, he's helping small businesses with website design.

Kim: Gen Z is different from us. I wish him luck!

Dialogue Two

Cal: Did you hear that Fay is going through a **career path do-over**?

Kim: She's always wanted to be **self-employed**. She has an **entrepreneurship** streak.

Cal: She felt she would **regret** it if she never started her own business. Now she is her own boss.

Kim: What's she going to do? Do her business **prospects** look good?

Cal: She's going to open her own cooking school! She already has some **prestigious** clients.

Kim: That's great. She is an excellent cook, and people are always asking for her recipes.

English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library
August 28, 2025
The AI Age: Gen Z, Higher Education and Work

Gen Z Workers' Attitudes about College and Career

Gen Z or the youngest members of the workforce are uncertain about their job **prospects** because the labor market is changing quickly. They have concerns over artificial intelligence and have different values than their parents about a **career path** starting with higher education.

According to a survey of 1,000 Gen Z employees by Resume Genius, college hasn't delivered the value they hoped for. Only 32% say they're content with their education path and wouldn't change it. This is different compared to the generations before Gen Z.



When asked what they'd choose if they could redo their studies, nearly one in four Gen Z workers (23%) said they **regret** going to college altogether — a signal that traditional higher education hasn't lived up to its promise for many of this generation. Just one in five (19%) say their degree hasn't contributed to their career.

If given a **do-over**, this younger generation says they'd approach their education differently. Thirteen percent would pursue a **skilled trade** or a career that doesn't require a college degree. Twelve percent would get a creative or **passion-driven** degree.

Eleven percent said they would still go to college but would choose the same or a similar degree from a cheaper or less **prestigious** university. Ten percent would focus on **entrepreneurship** or **self-employment**. The percentage of men who said they **regret** going to college was higher than the percentage of women— 28 percent compared to 19 percent.

Higher degrees bring higher satisfaction for Gen Z workers

The study did find that the higher a Gen Z person went in their education, the more satisfied they were with it. The percentages below show the share of Gen Z workers at each education level who say they're content with their study path:

- Master's degree or higher: 44%
- Bachelor's degree: 40%
- Associate's degree: 26%
- Some college (no degree): 25%
- High school diploma: 21%

However, many still question whether the price is worth it. "Many Gen Z professionals are disappointed that the time and money they spent earning a degree simply aren't providing the **returns** they expected," said Eva Chan, a career expert at Resume Genius.

English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library
August 28, 2025
The AI Age: Gen Z, Higher Education and Work

Discussion Questions:

1. What career path did you choose?
2. Would you change your career path?
3. Do you think the current economic climate is more challenging for younger workers compared to previous generations? Why or why not?
4. Do you think a college education provides a good return for the money spent? Why or why not?
5. Is there a generational divide when it comes to attitudes towards work-life balance and professional development?
6. Do you think older managers have a difficult time managing Gen Z workers? If so, why?
7. Are Gen Z workers as motivated by money as older generations?
8. What advice would you give to a younger worker who is struggling to cope with the demands of professional life?
9. Should schools and universities do more to prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce?
10. How is work easier for Gen Z compared to 40 years ago? How is it more difficult?
11. Is AI taking away jobs from Gen Z or creating more opportunities?

References, Recommended Reading and Viewing

- Burnet, Marq. (16 July 2025). "Gen Z workers have second thoughts about career pathways. Here's where they're looking instead." *The Playbook, The Business Journals*.
<https://www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2025/07/gen-z-college-regret-trade-school-side-hustle-work.html> Accessed Aug 20, 2025
- Chan, Eva. (13 Jul 2025). "2025 Gen Z Career Prospects Report: What They Really Think About Their Future." ResumeGenius, <https://resumegenius.com/blog/career-advice/gen-z-career-prospects/t3>. Accessed Aug 20, 2025.