

How to Prepare For a Veterinary Career

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Whether you are still in school or considering a career change, here are some tips on how to prepare for a career in veterinary medicine -- as a veterinarian, technician, or assistant.

Here's How:

1. Volunteer or seek employment at a veterinary office to get the best idea of the career you are interested in, and what it is like to work with animals -- both sick and healthy. Practical experience is a requirement prior to admission to most veterinary schools.
2. Other career exploring opportunities would be volunteering at a local animal shelter or animal control unit to learn more about how your community handles "unwanted" animals.
3. Express your career interests to staff members. Ask about their career likes, dislikes, necessary training and personal satisfaction involving their career choice. This is a great way to learn and to expand horizons of why types of jobs are available.
4. If you feel uncomfortable about performing a task or answering a client question, ask for help! Better to ask for help than risk injury to an animal or misinformation to a client.
5. Regarding schooling and education, research the various veterinary and technical schools available. Becoming familiar with the admission requirements, typical educational costs, each school's academic strengths and weaknesses will assist in making the right choice for your learning style and career goals.
6. Work with a guidance counselor in your present school to best choose a variety of classes, not solely science classes. Vet schools look for students who are well-rounded, with various interests.
7. If you are considering a career change, seek out a guidance counselor as well. Most community colleges have career resource centers and offer free aptitude testing and career guidance.
8. Join local, state, and national veterinary interest groups and associations.
9. Veterinary professional organization memberships include, but aren't limited to: veterinarians, technicians, pre-veterinary students.
10. Other animal organizations include, but aren't limited to: 4-H, Humane Societies, animal welfare groups, and pet therapy organizations.
11. Most importantly, don't let anyone tell you no! Keep trying, researching, and studying to attain your goal.

Tips:

1. Take advantage of career resources available at schools, community colleges, local libraries, and veterinary school admissions offices.
2. Working for more than one veterinary office will provide a more varied viewpoint of the profession. Keep a journal of your experiences.
3. If you feel capable, ask for more responsibility at your volunteer or staff position to be able to learn new skills on the job.