

Why Didn't Chris Rock Go to College?

Chris Rock was born on February 7, 1966, in Andrews, South Carolina. Many of his early years were spent in the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York. He had two idols: one was boxer Sugar Ray Leonard and the other was comedian Eddie Murphy. Realizing that he wasn't much of a boxer, Chris decided to become a comedian, like Murphy.

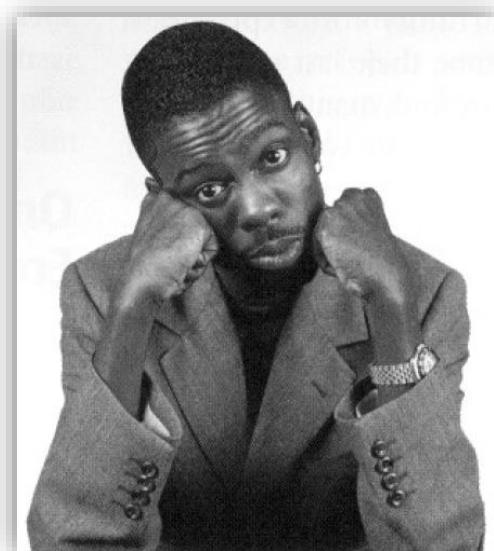
One night, Eddie Murphy caught Chris Rock's act at a club. He was so impressed with Rock that he cast him in his 1987 movie, *Beverly Hills Cop 2*. In the early 1990s, Rock became a regular on television's Saturday Night Live. He went on to become one of America's funniest comedians—doing movies, HBO specials, and more. Chris's hard work and talent began paying off for him financially, with his earnings far exceeding that of the average 21-year-old.

While Chris Rock was pursuing his comedy career, many people the same age were attending college. Why didn't Rock go to college? He certainly could have afforded the tuition, and he would have been accepted had he applied. Could it be that the *opportunity costs* of attending college were just too high for Chris Rock?

"We were so poor my daddy unplugged the clocks when we went to bed." – Chris Rock

To understand, think what it will cost you to attend college. Let's say that room, board, tuition, books, fees, and living expenses add up to \$20,000 a year. Multiplied by 4 years that comes to \$80,000. Is \$80,000 really the full cost of your attending college? What would you be doing if you didn't go to college? Chances are that you'd be earning income working at a job. For example, perhaps you could be working at a full-time job earning \$25,000 annually. Multiplied by 4 years that's \$100,000. Certainly this forfeited \$100,000 is part of the cost of your attending college. Even if you earn some money working part-time while in school, you will be giving up some earnings.

How do the earnings you would give up compare to the earnings that someone like Chris Rock would have to give up? Even though the tuition, room, board, and other costs of attending college are roughly the same for everyone who attends your college, the *opportunity costs* will not be. Some people have higher opportunity costs of attending college than others do. Can you see how it was simply too "costly" for Chris Rock to attend college?



1. You may not be making hundreds of thousands of dollars shortly after graduating from high school, but if you decide to go to college, you will have opportunity costs. What will be *your* opportunity costs for going to college?

2. If it is so expensive to attend college (both in the actual dollars it costs and in opportunity costs), why do many people make the choice to go to college?

3. Looking into the future, what career would you ultimately like to have? How will you achieve this goal? What steps can you take now? In college? After college?