

(0:06) Police One Academy is leading the way in high quality, affordable training for officers nationwide. Your department can take advantage of more than 1,000 HD videos and 175 full-length courses in a robust learning management system. Training is certified or accepted for training credit in 35 states. Join the industry's most officer-friendly learning platform with more than 60,000 subscribers. To schedule a free demo, go to [policeoneacademy.com/policingmatters](http://policeoneacademy.com/policingmatters).

Hello, and thank you for clicking and thank you for listening to Policing Matters, the Police One podcast. I'm Doug Wyllie.

Hi, I'm Jim Dudley

Jim, you are in the business of educating young people who wish to become police officers. And I want to tap into your expertise on that matter today. We've found that in watching the Policing Matters audience grow on SoundCloud and iTunes and even on the PoliceOne website, we're getting emails and comments more and more, increasingly, from people who are not police officers. So, as a way of kind of nodding to that audience and trying to serve that audience, let's delve into what kids, middle school, high school, when you kind of begin to form the idea of you want to have a career in this, that or the next, what are things that kids can do to position themselves to be not just be accepted into the profession, but to really excel?

(1:36) Sure, well we can go into the state standards in California and generally accepted standards across the United States in American policing today, but I'd say for the younger people, the message is clear and simple. Stay out of trouble. You're going to have to stay in school. You're going to have to be free of felony convictions, but I would also encourage you to have zero types of convictions. Get a driver's license. And then when you're in your high school years, getting to college, build some sort of a credit history. That's important later in the background portion of your application. And then I'd say that people who do get their degrees, their college degrees, even an AA, but especially a bachelor's degree, that they seem to have a leg up on the competition in sort of problem solving ability and common sense. Certainly people without those degrees do as well, but I think there is a bit of an edge when you learn how to break down questions and use some critical thinking. I would also suggest that when you're in the business of getting a job, that you do some sort of a job that requires some sort of interaction with the public or the community or customers so that you learn how to deal with people. I know that some of the younger people in the police academy that have had problems are 21-, 22-year-olds that may have a problem telling an older adult to follow commands. So you have a 21-year-old recruit acting simulations, walking in say on a domestic violence situation where an emphatic husband tells them, 'There's no problem here. Get out. This is my house.' And you have maybe the spouse with an obvious injury, bleeding maybe, holding an appendage and crying, and you're confronted with a situation where you know you should go in and investigate. And you actually have the authority to at that point, and yet, some would shy away from that sort of conflict.

(4:00) Yeah. So some year or two ago – I don't remember precisely the date – a 14-year-old girl sent an email to me at PoliceOne, and she was interested in becoming a police officer and seeking advice similar to what you've just given. In addition to writing her an email back, of course, I actually turned that email into an article, and it's entitled, "Preparing for the Entry-Level LE Position: [10 Things Teens Who Want to be Cops Can Do to Start on the Right Path](#)." And I'm going to lift from that just briefly. I came up with a top 10 list, some of those things you've already covered. Work hard at your academics was rule No. 1. If you're a good student, you're likely to have – like you said – sharpened your problem solving skills, sharpened your ability to stay on top, to get ahead. You know, to your point about getting a college degree that just gives you a leg up for promotion. Not just conducting the job but moving through the ranks. Keep out of trouble in school. And I said, 'Getting sent to the principal's office is not a good start to a police officer's career.' And that is true, I mean, if you're a good kid, doing good things for the right reasons, then you're on your way. Stay out of trouble after school, right? You know, idle hands. We do not want to have kids with idle hands. Volunteer in your community. One of the things that I think really does – to your point about working with the community – you know, go to the Boys and Girls Club, volunteer there. Volunteer at the YMCA. Volunteer at the public library. Do things where you have responsibility, visible responsibility, and get out there and start cultivating your capability to be a public servant. Participate in sports. First and foremost, it's going to make you bigger, stronger, faster. You're going to be more healthy, and healthy cops are good cops. But furthermore, you're going to learn team building. Even if you're on a team – sports that's individual competitive, say swimming, for example. You're on the team with 12 other swimmers, right? So you're going to learn how to work with people on the same team who you may not see eye-to-eye with.

(6:00) Sure, and develop a discipline, follow basic rules and have a routine, things like that.

Exactly, exactly. I'm a big fan of scouting – Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America. It teaches you structure, it teaches you working through a rank system. It teaches you service. Enrolling in a citizens' academy if one's available to you.

Or an explorers' academy.

Or an explorers' academy, yeah. Exactly. I've taken a number of citizens' academies, and they're all great. Usually, there's about six or seven kids in them, and they have their intentions to become a cop. Talk to cops. No. 8, talk to cops, talk to police officers, ask them what the job is about. Ask them what the job is like. Learn about the profession from the people who are actually doing it. Read law enforcement resources. Not only PoliceOne, of course we want everyone to go to [policeone.com](http://policeone.com) and take in all of the great content there, but you know, there's great resources out there – IACP, Police Chief Magazine – all kinds of great resources. The more you know before you get into the academy, you can really then be that really nice piece

of molded clay, semi-molded clay for professors like yourself who are going to prepare you to go out on the street. And finally, No. 10, believe in yourself and don't give up. It's not an easy thing to become a cop.

Sure.

There are high bars to pass, high hurdles to get over, and if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Keep at it, don't give up on your dream.

(7:27) No, absolutely. And I think the profile that you just described is sort of the conservative profile, but I've seen kids who really didn't think about law enforcement careers until later in their life, in their maybe even 20s. They still make great cops too, and they've had life experience. I encourage that – have life experience. It seems often that the people who have no problems with the backgrounds are these young people who get up in the morning, go to school, come home, [play a video game](#), maybe go to work, go to sleep.

Repeat.

Repeat. Wash, rinse, repeat, right? And so I do, from the law enforcement side, I like a little more experience. But also realize that the process from the very get-go – so those are things like you say, lead you up to the application – young people often ask me, should I go learn how to do defensive driving. I don't discourage that, I think that's helpful because there is some difficult emergency vehicle operation courses that will be coming up. Shooting a gun. I recommend that you get some exercise hand equipment that climbers use to strengthen your hands because you're going to have to do a trigger pull exercise. But as far as going to a range and learning how to shoot, I would say, you know, with a word of caution, fire a gun. Know what it's like. But don't try to make yourself proficient in it because you can really learn some bad habits that would, could hamper your training at the police academy.

(9:20) Yeah, particularly with regard to driving and shooting, just because you can drive a car doesn't mean you can drive a police car. It's a totally different kettle of fish. And just because you can shoot a gun doesn't mean you understand shooting in high stress, rapidly unfolding, dynamic, life-threatening, potentially life-threatening environments. I've taken literally, probably thousands of hours – at least a thousand hours – of firearms training. And I can tell you from experience that if you go to an instructor who has a great reputation and is particularly skilled at teaching, at instruction, then that can be very, very beneficial. However, if you end up at a firearms instruction class on the range with someone who doesn't know what they're doing, you could paint yourself in a really tight corner with regard to some bad habits that you're going to have to eventually unlearn. And unlearning bad shooting skills is a fairly lengthy process. So, you're absolutely right on the money with that. So, you know, you're not going to get EVOC training in the civilian world.

Right.

But you can go out and get high quality training. What you just have to do is make sure that you've really vetted the reputation of the instructor and in fact, again, going back to the top 10 list, talk to cops. The cops are going to know the best instructors in you area.

(10:45) Right. So I think what some of the younger listeners are looking for, the actual, you know, blood and guts of how you get into the police department. So you're 21, well 18 in some areas, but 18-21, and you're free of convictions, if we say, and then what's expected? You take a written test and the standards that apply to your jurisdiction. You should go online to the jurisdiction agencies that you're looking for and see what their guidelines are. You'll take an oral board interview, a drug triage where they'll take DNA, hair sample, maybe a blood sample. You'll do a physical agility. It's usually push-ups, sit-ups, run, lift, pull, trigger pull, climb a fence anywhere from 3-6 feet, get yourself over that, do a run of 150 yards to a half-mile. Then you have your battery of psychological tests, which is a grueling event in itself, six to eight hours, it could be. A polygraph test where they're going to hold you to everything you've said up to that point, your written application as well as your oral boards and talk about some things that happened at school or work. And then they will assign – if you get that far – they'll assign a background investigator to you, and they will pretty much check on you as far as your social background, your financial background, your work history, showing up to school, showing up to work, getting along with people, things like that.

(12:30) Yeah. It is a terrific career path for any of you young people presently listening to Policing Matters. This podcast is going to go up on the website a number of times. We're going to post this to Facebook, we're going to post this to our social media because getting the word out there. A this present time in American history, we're seeing people turning away from the profession. And it's an honorable and great profession. And the more we can encourage the right kids to go down the path of becoming a police officer, I feel like the more good we're doing for this world. So Jim, thank you for this expertise.

No, you're welcome.