CAREERS FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

WHAT CAN I DO WITH A BA IN ENGLISH?

You're more valuable than you think. The skills you develop as an English major, such as writing, editing, problem solving, critical thinking, and analysis, are highly prized by employers in nearly every profession. In this age of information and technology, the particular skills you've developed while engaged in studying, analyzing, and writing about literature are in more demand in the workplace than ever before. Employers in all career pathways consistently cite writing, communication skills, the ability to work independently, and adaptability at the top of their lists of desired skills. As an English major and student in the liberal arts, you will develop these skills in abundance.

National Association of Colleges and Employers: Attributes Employers Seek

Survey from 2017 of the top skills and experiences employers seek for new hires.

https://www.naceweb.org/about-us/press/2017/the-key-attributes-employers-seek-on-students-resumes/

The difficulty is often the sheer range of choices. Unlike a student of nursing or landscape architecture, an undergraduate English major has not been trained for one specific kind of work; instead, English majors develop a wide range of transferable skills. It's probably true that no one is going to pay you to write poetry or to research the roles of female protagonists in Elizabethan drama... but whether you're aware of it or not, you've been acquiring and refining a large number of important workplace skills that employers of all sorts place at a premium -- whether those employers are located in the field of education, communications, government, non profit, business, high technology, the arts, health and human services, or law. This can make the task of career exploration feel overwhelming.

Career planning is a process, and it takes time. It begins with self assessment (what am I good at? what do I enjoy? what's important to me?) and research into career fields, sectors or industries, and employers. It's a process in which you'll attempt to match your values, needs, ethics, aspirations, talents, and abilities with the needs of an agency, organization, or institution. This page is designed to help you to begin this process and to access the resources available to you at the University of Washington.

For further reading, check out English Grads, Brilliant Careers (Arts & Sciences Perspectives) and Reality Check on an Old Myth: The “Unemployable” Liberal Arts Major from the UW Transfer Newsletter.

UW Career Services: What Can I Do With My English Degree (PDF)?
http://webster.uaa.washington.edu/sas/toolkit-home/husky-experience/

WHAT DO UW ENGLISH ALUMNI DO?

Use this powerful LinkedIn tool (https://www.linkedin.com/school/university-of-washington/people/) to search for English, Comparative Literature, and Cinema alumni to see what they are doing with their degrees. Contact an alum in your field, ask for an informational interview about their work.

UW English alumni engage in an astonishing range of careers from all employment sectors and at all levels. For details, visit our alumni profiles, read our alumni news, or view a list of more than 1,100 unique job titles currently held by UW English alumni.

Carleton College Career Paths Tool

Visualization created by a small liberal arts college based on alumni data and LinkedIn information of where
students go with their major.

https://apps.carleton.edu/career/visualize/

ENGLISH MAJOR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Small Group Career Coaching for Arts and Sciences Students

Small group career coaching provides personalized support from a career coach with the benefit of learning from peers. Coaching takes place in A&S departments across campus and offers a mix of hands on career mythbusting activities and the opportunity to ask questions and gain career advice.

https://careers.uw.edu/small-group/

This partial list of transferable skills developed in the course of the English major is taken from the English Major Skills Workshops, presented by the Department of English and the Center for Career Services. We encourage you to participate in one of these workshops -- this web page is no substitute for the interactive self-evaluation process that the English Major Skills Workshop provides.

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SOME TYPICAL JOBS FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

Many occupations require an individual who can write and speak well, solve problems, learn new information quickly, and work well with others on a team. This means that English graduates use their education in a wide variety of fields, and your future career may relate more to your personal career interests, work values and transferable skills than anything specific to the content of your major. The following list contains a representative sample of job titles of former graduates with an English major. Use this as an idea list, and remember that it represents some, but certainly not all, of the careers you might consider.
Communications/Media
- editor
- assistant copy editor
- journalist
- screenwriter
- copywriter
- critic
- casting director
- television reporter
- public relations assistant
- radio production assistant
- research analyst
- technical writer
- ETC.

Education
- K-12 teacher (with K-12 certification)
- librarian (with MLIS degree)
- ESL teacher/tutor
- admissions representative
- assistant director
- development officer
- program administrator
- records manager
- financial aid counselor
- classroom assistant
- circulation assistant
- credentials evaluator
- ETC.

Business/Industry
- public relations specialist
- book buyer/seller
- account representative
- marketing consultant
- agent
- manager
- web content developer/writer
- technical writer
- human resources manager
- information architect
- corporate librarian
- advertising copy writer
- market research analyst
- ETC.

Government/Non Profit
- activist
- executive director
- speechwriter
- lobbyist
- grant writer
- museum collections assistant
- fundraising coordinator
- legislative assistant
- archivist
- public relations specialist
- consultant
- human services coordinator
- special events coordinator
- ETC.

SOME WORK APPLICATIONS OF ENGLISH MAJOR SKILLS:

**Editorial Assistant**
Skills:
- proofread and edit manuscripts
- market and promote books
- manage sales database
- attend national bookselling conferences

"I felt competent editing and proofreading, even though I had never done it before, and felt that I was being challenged to grow."

**Public Relations Specialist**
Skills:
- write and edit press releases and articles
- conduct background research
- maintain database
- communicate under the pressure of a deadline

"I learned that the skills you gain as an English major go far beyond literary texts. The ability to think on your feet, the skill of being flexible enough to handle any contingency, and the determination to think through problems are all aspects of being a liberal arts major."

**Investigator**
Skills:
- interview witnesses
- write reports of witness testimony
- conduct conflict of interest checks
- communicate with attorneys and law enforcement officers

"Our job is incredibly important, since we are the eyes and ears of the attorneys. If we fail to interview the witnesses properly or fail to complete our tasks, the clients lose their liberty/freedom."
Trade and Market Development Intern
Skills: collect statistical trade data communicate with international clients and governments recruit American companies for Canadian trade show

“My ultimate career goal of working for the State Department either in France or Switzerland now seems completely attainable.”

Commercial Real Estate Intern
Skills: collect statistical trade data communicate with international clients and governments recruit American companies for Canadian trade show

“My ultimate career goal of working for the State Department either in France or Switzerland now seems completely attainable.”

Museum Collections Assistant
Skills: catalog and maintain museum artifacts prepare condition reports on stored collections engage in acquisition, evaluation, and preparation of new artifacts

“While my initial position was limited to running the admissions desk, I eventually was able to interview for, and ultimately secure, a position with the Collections Department.”

Literary Manager Assistant
Skills: assist literary manager/dramaturgy engage in background research for play production review plays for possible production maintain script library

“I have gained valuable theatre experience that I would not have been able to obtain in the classroom. I have been able to watch, and participate in, a professional theatre group.”

Casting Assistant
Skills: schedule and assist with auditions review audition tapes research casting files for talent communicate with casting directors, actors, and producers

“Just as when I read a novel and visualize in my mind what type of person the character is, my work in casting goes one step beyond to decide what actor could best embody that person.”

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE WHILE I’M STILL IN SCHOOL?

Visit the UW Center for Career Services, located in 134 Mary Gates Hall. CCS has a broad array of services available for undergraduates, including career counseling, classes and workshops, employer panels, career fairs, job listings and internships, campus recruitment, and much more. Make CCS your home base for career exploration activities. You can even post your résumé to employers through their job web.

Go on an Informational Interview: Setting up an informational interview with a professional in your field can be an excellent and much less threatening way to practice your interview skills and find out more about a particular job or field. For tips on making contact (including a sample letter), setting up the interview, preparation, and conducting the interview, click on the link above, or see the CCS Career Guide (also known as the “gold guide”). Pick up your free copy at the Center for Career Services in 134 Mary Gates Hall.

Get Experience through an Internship or Volunteer Work: At the most recent series of Career Education Week panels, an overwhelming majority of English alumni and other professionals working in related fields stated that an internship had helped them to get where they are today, either through an offer of a permanent job by the sponsoring organization, or through valuable contacts they made, or through skills they developed which led to their current positions. Employers value experience very highly: it shows them that you know what the job or field is like and are prepared with the necessary skills. Even if you are close to graduation, consider a quarter-long internship or a short-term volunteer project.

UW + Amazon Mentors Program
Career group mentorship opportunity specifically for Arts and Sciences students. This program helps students better understand the world of work and gain career advice from a working professional. Students meet with their mentor on the Amazon campus during winter quarter.

https://c21.washington.edu/our-programs/uw-amazon-mentors-program

**Make Contacts:** Talk to faculty, counselors, graduate students, and your peers. Get involved in departmental and college functions, lectures, seminars, workshops, and activities. Some of the most valuable contacts you’ll make in college may not be apparent at the time you’re making them. Networking is extremely important: this is how you get information about career fields, find resources, hear about jobs, get recommendations, forge key relationships and locate mentors. A large percentage of professional jobs are found through personal contacts, not through the want-ads!

**Get Involved in a Student Organization:** Consider joining a student organization like the English Undergraduate Association or Bricolage, in the Department of English, or the Undergraduate Fiction Writers Association. There is also a vast and diverse array of student organizations on campus to suit almost any interest. Not only will you have an opportunity to make contacts, but you may also have a chance to develop skills like leadership, presentation skills, and teamwork.

**Take the "Navigating Career Options" course (GEN ST 350):** This three-credit class, offered every quarter, is an exploration of career options that will help you to learn how to navigate your course through the vast domain of job search strategies and career possibilities. Connect your academic experiences to your future career. Elements include experiential learning, individual self assessment and processing, generating career options, group interaction/discussion and journal writing.

**Begin the Task of Self Assessment:** Take the Strong Interest Inventory or the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory through UW’s Student Counseling Center to help you to identify your strengths and interests.

**Put Your Research Skills to Work:** Begin to investigate possible career fields, employers, and jobs. There are many resources at UW to help you with this task. There are also countless resources beyond UW. Some key places to start on campus are the Center for Career Services, the UW Alumni Association, the Student Counseling Center, and the UW Libraries Reference.

**Attend a Career Fair, and Bring Your Résumé:** Career fairs are a great opportunity to see what’s out there and to make contacts with recruiters. They are also a great place to practice your presentation and interviewing skills and try out your résumé. The Center for Career Services holds their annual Internships and Summer Jobs Fair and their Liberal Arts, Science, and Business Career Fair in early April. They also sponsor a Minority Career Fair every February.