

# Careers in Psychology

February 22

# 2013

*undergraduate  
Advising*

# What can I do with Psychology degree?

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## Human Services

- Direct Care:
  - Counseling
  - Psychotherapy
  - Case Management
  - Mental Health Services
  - Physical Health and Wellness
  - Crisis Work
  - Art Therapy
  - Music Therapy
- Administration:
  - Advocacy
  - Programming
  - Community Relations
  - Management
  - Development/Fund Raising
  - Grant Writing

## EMPLOYERS

- Federal government, including Departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Veterans Administration, VA Hospitals
- State government, including Departments of Human Services, Mental Health & Mental Retardation, Community mental health centers, State psychiatric hospitals, Facilities for mentally impaired, Justice, Probation and parole
- Local government
- Senior citizens' centers
- United Way agencies
- Social service/nonprofit organizations
- Religiously affiliated service organizations
- Hospitals/healthcare providers
- Private psychiatric facilities
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- College and university counseling centers
- Private practice

## **STRATEGIES**

Obtain essential practical experience through part-time or summer jobs such as camp counselor, tutor, or resident hall advisor. Complete an internship for academic credit. Gain experience through volunteering with organizations such as crisis hotlines, Big Brother or Sister, Special Olympics, service fraternities or sororities, etc. Many entry-level helping positions require one year of related experience. Volunteer experience and internships can typically fulfill this requirement. Learn to work well with different types of people. Develop strong communication skills. Cultivate the desire to help others. Become fluent in a foreign language to serve clients who may not speak English. Be willing to relocate for increased job opportunities. Become familiar with government hiring procedures. Acquire knowledge of government and community resources available for those in need. Obtain a graduate degree in psychology, counseling, or social work for positions involving substantive counseling or psychotherapy or for advancement into administrative/supervisory positions. Many specialties exist at the graduate level, for example school counseling, mental health counseling, counseling psychology, etc. Pursue particular degrees depending upon interests and career goals. See General Information on the last page for more details on this topic. Maintain an excellent academic record and seek experiences valued by graduate programs.

## **Research**

- Social Research
- Market Research
- Data Analysis

## **EMPLOYERS**

- Federal, state and local government agencies
- National headquarters of non-profit organizations
- Universities and colleges
- Market research firms
- Market research departments of consumer goods and manufacturing firms
- Consulting firms

## **STRATEGIES**

Work with a professor on his or her research project. Develop strong quantitative and statistical skills. Take additional math and statistics courses. Obtain a graduate degree for greater opportunities. Obtain related experience. Get a part-time or summer field service position with a market research firm. Get involved in the American Marketing Association. Earn a graduate degree in psychology, statistics or marketing for the greatest number of opportunities.

## **Education**

- Teaching
- Student Affairs
- Administration
- Training
- Adult Learning

## **EMPLOYERS**

- Public and private K-12 schools
- Colleges and universities
- Community instruction offered by government or social service agencies, e.g. GED classes, life skills, parenting, etc.

## **STRATEGIES**

Obtain a teaching certificate for public school positions. Multiple certifications will increase marketability. Seek guidance from the education department of your college. Earn a doctoral degree for post-secondary teaching. Secure strong personal recommendations. Volunteer or work as a tutor. Gain experience working with children or adolescents. Acquire related experience on campus as a resident hall advisor, orientation leader, admissions tour guide, or peer mentor. Develop strong communication skills and learn to speak well in front of a group.

## **Human Resources**

- Employment and Recruitment
- Labor Relations
- Compensation and Benefits
- Organizational Development
- Training

## **EMPLOYERS**

- Large companies
- Government agencies
- Staffing and employment services
- Large non-profit organizations including hospitals and educational institutions

## **STRATEGIES**

Gain relevant experience in human resources by completing an internship. Earn a minor in business or supplement curriculum with business courses. Seek leadership positions in student organizations. Develop strong computer skills. Earn an MBA or a graduate degree in human resources to attain higher-level positions.

## **Business and Industry**

- Sales
- Customer Service
- Management
- Insurance: Claims Management, Underwriting
- Real Estate: Sales, Property Management
- Public Relations

## **EMPLOYERS**

- Service providers
- Wholesalers
- Manufacturers
- Retail stores including: Department stores, Specialty stores, Discount stores, Super retailers, Online retailers
- Call centers
- Financial institutions
- Insurance companies
- Real estate companies
- Property management firms
- Apartment complexes
- Public relations departments of large businesses or nonprofit organizations

## **STRATEGIES**

Develop career goals and seek relevant experiences to prepare for those goals. Earn a minor in business or supplement curriculum with business or communication courses.

Obtain relevant experience through internships or part-time jobs. Work a part-time or summer job in a retail store. Demonstrate a willingness to take on additional responsibilities such as "assistant manager." Participate in student organizations and seek leadership roles. Learn to work well with different types of people. Develop a strong commitment to customer satisfaction. For sales, develop the ability to work well under pressure and be comfortable in a competitive environment. Be willing to start in a management-trainee program or other entry-level positions. When job searching, seek employers interested in hiring "any major." Understand the top skills employers desire and be prepared to demonstrate them, such as communication (oral and written), computer, interpersonal, leadership and teamwork, etc.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Psychology provides a broad, liberal arts background. Some students may choose to study psychology because they enjoy the subject but wish to pursue careers requiring "any major." In this scenario, it is critical to develop desirable skills through internships, part-time or summer jobs, or volunteer experiences. Some skills valued most by employers include: communication, interpersonal, leadership, teamwork, and computer skills.

Other students may major in psychology because they want to work in a related field. Many entry-level helping positions are available, however the amount of direct client contact is limited for those who have a bachelor's degree. Students may wish to pursue graduate education in psychology, social work, counseling, college student personnel, or other related fields to increase

opportunities and earning potential. Research career fields to learn what type of degree (master's or doctoral) and subject area are most appropriate. The following list provides some examples:

### **Master's Degree**

- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Professional Counselor
- Educational, Vocational, and School Counselors
- Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors
- Rehabilitation Counselors
- Licensed Marriage & Family Therapists

### **Doctoral Degree**

- Counseling Psychologist
- Licensed Clinical Psychologist
- Experimental Psychologist
- School Psychologist
- Sport Psychologist
- Industrial/Organizational Psychologist

For those wishing to pursue graduate education, maintain a high grade point average, secure strong faculty recommendations, and gain experience through volunteer or work opportunities. Assist a faculty member with his or her research.

### **Psychology Links**

- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [Graduate School Options for Psychology Majors](#)
- [Association for Psychological Science](#)
- [National Board for Certified Counselors](#)
- [The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology](#)
- [Online Psychology Career Center](#)
- [Psych Web](#)
- [Encyclopedia of Psychology](#)
- [American Counseling Association](#)
- [American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy](#)
- [Psychologist from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- [Human Resources, Training, and Labor Relations Managers and Specialists from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- [Counselors from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- [Social and Human Service Assistants from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- [Teachers-Postsecondary from the Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

## Career Options With a Bachelor's Degree

Although a bachelor's degree in psychology will not prepare you to become a professional psychologist, an undergraduate major can mean that a student graduates with both a strong liberal arts education and adequate preparation for entry-level employment in one of many career paths. The undergraduate years are an excellent time for exploring careers through courses, have conversations with people who have careers that interest you, internships and part-time jobs.

Summer work and part-time jobs not only provide you with exposure to different fields, they also give you practical experience that can be attractive to employers. And sometimes these jobs can lead directly to employment after graduation. As part of the undergraduate curriculum there are often opportunities for field experience, independent study, and research. Any of these may give you excellent work experience. By the time you graduate with a bachelor's degree, it is possible to have assembled a resume with work experience attractive to employers.

Besides the requirements for a major in psychology, take courses that relate to your vocational interests. Some colleges have formal, structured emphases for majors. Examples of these are courses in industrial organizational psychology, mental health services, developmental psychology-disabilities, management, applied psychology, behavior modification, and biopsychology. The first option could require taking psychology electives such as industrial psychology, personnel psychology, educational psychology, sensation and perception, and interviewing, supplemented with courses in economics or marketing. The vocational goal of a student in this type of program is obviously to work in business.

A closely related alternative is the double major or major-minor combination. Psychology and management is a route similar to the industrial/organizational option just described. Psychology and education is a combination that could prepare a student to teach psychology in a high school or to teach special populations, such as those with mental or physical disabilities.

But the student whose college or university does not offer a formal route that matches his or her career interests can fashion his or her own program. Talk to your advisor, psychology department faculty, and campus career counselor about ways to increase the attractiveness of your degree to prospective employers through health psychologists also investigate issues that affect a large segment of society, and develop and implement programs to deal with these problems. Examples are teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, smoking, lack of exercise, and poor diet.

The following are some of the fields that graduates with bachelor's degrees in psychology have entered. For more information about specific careers in these fields, check with your advisor, local library, and people working in these fields:

- x administration and management
- x business and industry
- x casework
- x child care
- x employment interviewing
- x gerontology
- x health services
- x marketing and public relations
- x personnel
- x probation and parole
- x psychiatric assisting
- x research or laboratory assisting
- x sales
- x teaching
- x technical writing

# PSYCHOLOGY

## WHAT CAN I DO WITH THIS DEGREE?

AREAS	EMPLOYERS	STRATEGIES
HUMAN SERVICES Counseling Advocacy Mental Health Service	Federal government, Departments of Health and Human Services Justice Veteran's Administration State government, Departments of Human Services Mental Health & Mental Retardation x Community mental health centers x State psychiatric hospitals x Facilities for mentally retarded Justice: x Probation and parole Local government x Senior citizens' centers x United Way agencies/local branches of national nonprofit organization including: YMCA/YWCA, Goodwill Industries Boys and Girls Clubs x Religiously-affiliated service organizations	Obtain essential practical experience: x Find part-time or summer jobs, e.g., camp counselor, resident hall advisor x Plan internship or practicum placements for academic credit x Get volunteer experiences, e.g., hotline, Big Brother/Sister, Special Olympics, psychiatric hospital, service fraternity/sorority x Pursue excellent academic record x Become fluent in foreign language spoken by multicultural clients x Be willing to relocate x Obtain graduate degree for substantive counseling work x Become familiar with government hiring procedures
ADMINISTRATION	Federal, state and local government National headquarters and local branches of non-profit organizations	x Consider business minor or double major x Get experience in counseling or advocacy x Need masters in health care administration for
COMMUNITY RELATIONS	Federal state and local government Local branches of national non-profit organizations	x Obtain experience in counseling, advocacy, or administration x Acquire knowledge of community
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	Federal, state and local government National headquarters and local	x Acquire experience in counseling, advocacy or administration

AREAS	EMPLOYERS	STRATEGIES
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT (continued)	branches of non-profit organizations	x Obtain graduate degree for advancement
RESEARCH	Federal government: Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Education, Office of Naval Research, National headquarters of non-profit	x Develop strong quantitative and statistical skills x Obtain graduate degree for advancement
HUMAN RESOURCES Employment and Recruitment Labor Relations Compensation and Benefits	Human Resources (Personnel) departments of companies Government personnel agencies and departments Employment agencies	Acquire related experience as: x Resident Hall advisor, New Student Orientation Advisor, Admissions office tour guide or recruiter x Find committee work in
PUBLIC RELATIONS Research Programming Writing and editing Special events Media placement Public speaking Fund-raising	Public relations and advertising firms Companies with in-house public relations departments Trade associations Federal, state and local government College and universities Non-profit organizations	x Develop strong writing and speaking skills x Obtain related experience with campus newspaper, TV, or radio, Admissions office as tour guide or recruiter, Student Activities office in planning x Serve as fund-raiser, political canvasser x Find internship through campus chapter of Public Relations Society of America
ADVERTISING Creative Media Account Services Research	Advertising agencies Companies with in-house advertising agencies or departments	x Obtain relevant experience with campus newspaper, TV, or radio x Work with student-run business x Find internship with member of American Advertising Federation or market research firm x Develop portfolio for creative positions x Plan business minor or double
MARKET RESEARCH	Market Research firms Market Research departments of consumer goods manufacturing firms	x Develop strong background in math/statistics x Become involved in American Marketing Association x Obtain related experience: Get part-time or summer field service experience with market research firm (see "Marketing Services in Yellow Pages) x Obtain business research practicum experience x Become reporter for campus newspaper x Serve as canvasser/phone interviewer for charity or political

AREAS	EMPLOYERS	STRATEGIES
TEACHING	Public and private schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>x Obtain teaching certificate for public school positions</li> <li>x Seek guidance from education department of your school</li> <li>x Secure strong personal recommendations</li> </ul>
RETAILING Management Buying	All major retail including: Drug Specialty Variety Department store chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>x Obtain related sales experience with part-time summer retailer, campus yearbook or newspaper</li> <li>x Secure leadership positions in campus organization</li> <li>x Find internship with individual or chain store</li> </ul>
SALES	Retailers Wholesalers Manufactures Insurance companies Real estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>x Obtain sales experience</li> </ul>





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