

# English Major Careers

## CAREER PATHS

As an English major, choosing a career path can be confusing -- especially if you're being compared to peers pursuing clear cut business or engineering careers. In fact, English majors have plenty of opportunities, but finding a specific career path requires you to delve into what you want to do. "One of the best things about [being] an English major is that there is no 'typical' career path," says Leslie Stevenson, director at University of Richmond's career development center.



Having a wide skill set, including top-notch communication skills, English majors are valued in fields like publishing, law and even marketing. "Some students -- and their families -- mistakenly believe that English degrees only prepare students for careers as a teacher or attorney," Stevenson says. "While many English majors pursue [those fields], there are a wide variety of other options."

Here are 10 career paths you can pursue with an English degree:

**Publishing** - Putting together printed material like books, magazines or even newspapers requires both business and English skills, since publishers both market and distribute their printed products. And with the Internet world constantly changing, web publishing is playing a significant role in the industry.

**Copywriting** - Working to promote anything from retail goods to Fortune 500 companies, copywriters work with marketing departments to help construct a brand's message. Focused on creating copy for advertisements, sales collateral, company brochures and even websites, copywriters play a big role in realizing the company's vision for the brand.

**Public Relations** - Working with media to gain positive exposure for a particular company, person or brand requires many different modes of communication. Public relations professionals are ultimately responsible for protecting the

image of their clients and building public interest about the people or things they represent.

**Teacher** - A bachelor's in English provides a perfect foundation for those who are eager to go into the teaching profession. Instructing students in courses like English, language arts or literature can be a rewarding experience. Depending on the level of instruction, a master's in education may be required.

**Paralegal** - Working with lawyers to assist in legal work is a good way to become immersed in the legal profession. Everyday duties including legal writing, research and presenting the attorneys with needed documents. Some paralegals move on to attend law school.

**Speechwriter** - Working on speeches delivered by public officials or senior executives means being able to craft a precise message within a deadline. Speechwriters often work closely with the person giving the delivery to incorporate ideas and changes along the way.

**Technical Writer** - Putting together technical documents such as guides, research papers or product specifications requires an attention to detail. Technical writers must not only have superb English skills, but also need to also be able to grasp and break down complex topics and technical concepts into easily understood ideas.

**Marketing Coordinator** - Some English majors pursue a business role after completing their degree. "In addition to well-developed oral and written communication skills, English majors have been noted to have a tremendous capacity for research and critical thinking," Stevenson says. Marketing coordinators are responsible for working with the entire marketing team to conduct analysis, develop product awareness or assist with other brand development.

**Proofreader** - Correcting text for any inconsistencies requires strict discipline and attention to detail. Proofreaders' assignments vary, requiring them to work with anything from textbooks to instruction manuals.

**Librarian** - Working with books, periodicals, references and online information, librarians ultimately help others find necessary information. Librarians are well versed in different types of reference materials and can easily make recommendations. While English is a good foundation for those interested in becoming a librarian, a master's degree in library science is ultimately required for the job.

(CareerRookie, 2011)

## EXCITING OPTIONS

English Literature is one of the many fields of study that does not have an obvious career path. Entering the job market can be confusing for college graduates with English Literature degrees. However, there are many exciting career options for English Literature graduates that take advantage of their skills and talents.

**Web Writer** - The Internet has a never-ending hunger for new content. Web writers answer this hunger by writing articles and providing copy for websites. The researching and writing skills learned in English Literature programs are invaluable in this type of work. Web writing work is often freelance. Freelance jobs offer great flexibility, but much less in the way of job benefits and steady pay.

**Educational Publishing Editor** - Educational publishers produce the books included in school curriculums. Those with English Literature degrees can put their knowledge to work working as an editor for English textbooks. Entry-level jobs in educational publishing are less glamorous. They may include fact checking books or ensuring that textbooks match specific curriculum standards for each state. However, these positions are stepping-stones to more fulfilling work.

**Advertising Copywriter** - The copy written for advertisements needs to be creative and catchy. English Literature graduates have written extensively as part of earning their degree. Working as an advertising copywriter means writing to suit the needs of various clients and coordinating with other advertising professionals.



**Publishing Publicist** - When a book is published, a publicist makes sure people know about it. A publicist or press agent for a book publisher writes the blurbs that appear on the book cover and composes press releases about the book and the author. They also contact media outlets and arrange for interviews and book signings. English literature graduates will enjoy the challenge of making new books bestsellers.

**Literary Agent** - A literary agent works on behalf of authors to get their books published. Literary agents look for new writing talent or they may be hired by established authors. Having a good eye for good writing that will sell is essential. English literature graduates will find their reading and analysis skills put to good use in this career. It is necessary to have good connections in the publishing world to be

successful as a literary agent. Many agents start their careers at publishing houses.

**Teacher/Professor** - English literature degrees translate well into positions as teachers or professors. Those with literature degrees find teaching to be a great way to share their love of the written word. To teach in public schools, it is necessary to be certified as a teacher. To teach at the college level, post-graduate degrees are required.

(Yahoo Voices, 2011)



## BEST PAYING JOBS

When earning a living is on the line, you may wonder, "Wherefore art thou an English major?" (Translation for non-Shakespearean scholars: "Why are you an English major?") Fear not, English majors have some well-paying career options, says Katie Bardaro, lead analyst for online salary database PayScale.com. "If you want to major in English and earn a lot of money, you don't have to figure out how to do that as a writer," she says. "Take your communication and analytical-thinking skills and apply them in other areas."

Check out this list of the best-paying jobs for workers who have bachelor's degrees in English and five to eight years of experience in their field.

**Sales Account Manager** (Median Annual Salary: \$67,300) - A sales account manager maintains business relationships with existing clients and seeks opportunities for new clients -- tasks that require strong written and oral communication skills. Because English majors learn critical thinking, they are well-suited to handle the problem-solving and strategizing issues involved in this job.

**IT Project Manager** (Median Annual Salary: \$67,000) - Working as an IT project manager is much like diagramming sentences -- breaking down something complex and then building or reconstructing it. IT project managers plan, coordinate and direct technology-related activities, from installing and upgrading computer software to building network security measures. To land this job, you'll want to punctuate your grammar skills with computer knowledge. Employers often prefer a bachelor's degree in a computer- or information science-related field. Graduate degrees are sometimes required.

Proposal Manager (Median Annual Salary: \$65,000) - Remember persuasive writing? Proposal managers use those same skills to help their organizations land new work. They coordinate writers, illustrators and other team members to prepare proposals on behalf of their company for contracted projects, like building a school. English majors' mastery of language and details help them excel in this role.

Web Developer (Median Annual Salary: \$58,500) - Web developers design and create Web sites and sometimes the content. They are responsible for the site's performance, capacity and look. A high school diploma may be enough to get started in this field, but an associate's or bachelor's degree is sometimes required. You'll need a full understanding of computer languages such as HTML. "Being an English major prepared me with critical-thinking skills that I use all the time as a Web developer," says David Feld, who worked as a newspaper editor and reporter before starting his own Web development business in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, in 2011. "Having that strong writing background helped set me apart from competitors."

Nonprofit Executive Director (Median Annual Salary: \$55,200) - Nonprofit executive directors devise strategies and policies to ensure that an organization meets its goals. They oversee an organization's finances, manage staff, write grants and work with the community. "An English degree gives you such a great, flexible foundation from which to build a career," says Laurie Dean Torrell, executive director of Just Buffalo Literary Center in Buffalo. "Every step of my career, I've benefited from having that foundation."

Human Resources Generalist (Median Annual Salary: \$54,000) - An HR generalist handles all aspects of human resources work, including recruitment; employee relations; payroll and benefits; training; and administering human resources policies, procedures and programs. Communication skills are important when explaining these policies to employees. Most employers prefer a bachelor's degree in human resources, business or a related field. A certification from the Human Resources Certification Institute is recommended because it shows knowledge and competence across all areas of HR.

Marketing Director (Median Annual Salary: \$53,200) - Fans of creative writing will likely end up here. A marketing director needs to come up with great ideas and encourage others to do the same. Marketing directors plan, direct and coordinate the marketing of an organization's products or services. Work experience in marketing, sales, advertising and promotions is essential.

Managing Editor (Median Annual Salary: \$53,000) - A managing editor is responsible for the daily operation of a news department at a newspaper, magazine or television station. Duties include editing content for proper context, planning content and approving final versions of stories. Today, familiarity with Web design, multimedia production and other electronic-publishing methods keeps a job candidate competitive.

Marketing Communications Manager (Median Annual Salary: \$50,500) - MarCom managers create clear, compelling and concise communications about an organization's marketing strategy. Their work can include coordinating press releases and Web site content, developing promotional strategies and campaigns, and editing white papers. Employers usually seek candidates with bachelor's degrees in English, communications, journalism, public relations or business.

Technical Writer (Median Annual Salary: \$49,100) - Technical writers produce instructional manuals and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. After earning her English degree in 2005 from Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa, Krystal Gabel held substitute-teaching, library and newspaper jobs. Since July 2011, she's worked as a technical writer for ACI, an Omaha company that writes software for the banking industry. She loves the challenge of deciphering complicated, technical language for numerous audiences. "We're given raw material, and we have to make something of it," she said. "It's problem-solving for [the client]. That's what I like most about being a tech writer."

(Monster, 2013)