



BSC CAREER CENTER | CHART YOUR COURSE

PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

What Can I Do with a Degree in Psychology?
Career Options | Alternate Career Paths

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.

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.

HUMAN SERVICES

Counseling / Advocacy / Mental Health Services / Case Management / Community Relations / Administration

Employers: Federal government, including Departments of: Health and Human Services Justice, Veterans Administration. 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. Nonprofit organizations. Religiously-affiliated service organizations. Hospitals.

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 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 spoken by multi-cultural clients. Be willing to relocate. 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 substantive counseling work and advancement into administrative work. Many specialties exist at the graduate level, for example school counseling, mental health counseling, rehabilitation counseling, etc. Pursue particular degrees depending upon interests and career goals. Pursue an excellent academic record.



RESEARCH

Employers: Federal government including: Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Education, Office of Naval Research. National headquarters of non-profit organizations. Universities and colleges.

Strategies: Work with a professor on his or her research project. Develop strong quantitative and statistical skills. Obtain a graduate degree for greater opportunities.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Employment & Recruitment / Labor Relations / Compensation & Benefits

Employers: Large companies, Government agencies, Employment and temporary agencies, and Large non-profit organizations including hospitals and educational institutions

Strategies: Acquire related experience as a resident hall advisor, orientation leader, admissions tour guide, or student assistant in career services. Find student organization committee work in policy making or settling disputes. Supplement curriculum with business courses. Acquire strong computer skills.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Research / Programming / Writing & Editing / Event Planning / Media Placement / Public Speaking / Fund Raising

Employers: Public relations and advertising firms. Companies with public relations departments. Professional associations. Federal, state and local government. Colleges and universities. Non-profit organizations.

Strategies: Develop strong writing and speaking skills. Obtain related experience with campus newspaper, television, or radio station. Serve as an admissions tour guide or work in alumni relations or other PR-related functions. Volunteer as a fund-raiser or political canvasser. Gain experience through internships. Join the campus chapter of Public Relations Society of America.

ADVERTISING

Creative / Media / Account Services / Research

Employers include: Advertising agencies. Companies with in-house advertising agencies or departments.

Strategies: Obtain relevant experience with campus newspaper, television, or radio station. Work with student-run businesses. Find an internship, even if unpaid, with a market research or advertising firm. Develop a portfolio for creative positions. Obtain a business minor or double major for account services positions.

MARKET RESEARCH

Employers: Market research firms and Market research departments of consumer goods and manufacturing firms.

Strategies: Develop a strong background in math and statistics. Get involved in the American Marketing Association. Obtain related experience. Get a part-time or summer field service position with a market research firm. Obtain business research experience. Serve as a canvasser or phone interviewer for a non-profit organization or political campaign. Earn a graduate degree in statistics or marketing for the greatest number of opportunities.

TEACHING

Employers: Public and private schools. Colleges and universities.

Strategies: Obtain teaching certificate for public school positions. Dual certification will increase marketability. Seek guidance from education department of your college. Secure strong personal recommendations. Volunteer as a tutor. Gain experience working with children or adolescents. PhD required for post-secondary teaching.



RETAILING

Management / Sales / Customer Service

Employers: Department Stores. Specialty Stores. Discount Stores. Super Retailers.

Strategies: Secure leadership positions in campus organizations. Work a part-time or summer job in a retail store. Demonstrate a willingness to take on additional responsibilities such as assistant manager. Be willing to start in a management-trainee program. Learn to work well with different types of people.

SALES

Employers: Retailers. Service providers. Wholesalers. Manufacturers. Insurance companies. Real estate companies.

Strategies: Obtain sales experience through internships or jobs. Take business courses. Participate in student organizations and seek leadership roles. Must be highly motivated and well organized. Develop a strong commitment to customer satisfaction. Must work well under pressure and be comfortable in a competitive environment.



PSYCHOLOGY SKILL SET

Besides the inherently interesting nature of the degree, majoring in psychology provides a diverse and well-rounded education that many other degrees cannot offer. A bachelor's degree in psychology requires provides both a liberal arts and analytical level of educational training. For example, a student who majors in psychology may obtain the following skills and attributes which employers will be looking for:

Research ability

The scientific foundation of psychology revolves around research. Research methods, statistical analysis and data gathering techniques will be learned. Psychology students will also have well-developed pattern-finding skills.

Effective communication

Since the bulk of psychology relies on research and critical analysis of information, the ability to communicate the ideas generated is very important. Also, psychology-related fields are usually collaborative, which requires effective teamwork skills.

Critical thinking

Whether data interpretation, peer review of research or problem solving, the analytical nature of psychology makes it necessary to make logical and well-thought decisions. Psychology majors will also be able to think "outside-the-box" and view issues from multiple perspectives due to the research and analytical training from a psychology degree.

Self-awareness

Few college majors teach as much about human behavior and actions (in ourselves and others) as psychology.

Understanding how one thinks, as well as how others think, can make for a more effective understanding of workplace dynamics and production processes.

Social, political and legal cognizance

Many psychological theories and developments coincide with political, cultural or social changes. The recognition of the context in which psychological ideas and theories exist and are implemented is important for effective understanding.

Technological literacy

The research and analytical background of the psychology discipline requires the use of technology, especially computers and data analysis software. There is also the ever-increasing integration of technology in everyday lives (such as the ubiquities of smart phones, drones and social media), which has produced social and cultural changes in today's society. The psychology field is on the forefront of these changes.

Ethical decision-making

The psychology major focuses mostly on researching and studying human behavior. This creates the potential for ethical conundrums. Psychology students have been taught how to anticipate these issues, effectively deal with these problems as they arise and make ethical decisions.

Attention to detail

Students who come from a major where one incorrect decimal point or mistaken use of a control group can make or break a project are going to have a knack for knowing and keeping track of the details. This is a skill anyone can use regardless of their eventual profession.



WHERE PSYCHOLOGY GRADS END UP

Psychology is a hugely popular degree field, and for good reason: Psychology majors are uniquely poised to enter a wide variety of professions after the graduate with a bachelor's degree in hand. In fact, while some choose to pursue a career in psychology by obtaining a master's or doctoral degree, the majority of students who leave college with their bachelor's choose to enter into a profession other than psychology, but one that makes good use of their skills and knowledge learned.

Most students with a psychology doctorate degree end up working at a college or university. Many students who hold the master's degree in psychology wind up in educational institutions as well, though just as many work for government entities. In contrast to master's and doctorate degree holders, the vast majority of students who graduate with a bachelor's degree in psychology end up working for private businesses.

For those who majored in psychology, about 45 percent work for private businesses, about 15 percent for state and local governments, about 15 percent for nonprofit organizations, about 5 percent for colleges and universities, about 5 percent for the federal government, about 15 percent for educational institutions other than colleges and universities, and the rest are self-employed.

The majority of psychology bachelor's degree graduates enter occupations that are not psychology related. In fact, only about 25 percent of psychology majors work directly in a psychology-related field after graduation. One of the reasons for this is that most psychology-related jobs, such as therapist, counselor and psychologist, require a graduate level education.

The following are the top 10 areas entered into by those with a bachelor's degree in psychology:

1. Mid-level and top-level administration and management
2. Sales and retail
3. Social work
4. All other management
5. Employment, labor-training and personnel services
6. All other administrative (clerks, secretarial, etc.)
7. Insurance, securities, business or real-estate services
8. All other marketing and sales
9. Healthcare (nursing, pharmacy, therapy and physician's assistant)
10. Finance (accounting, auditing and consulting)

CAREER CATEGORIES

Business/Finance

Personal Financial Advisors
Advertising, Promotions and Marketing Managers
Sales Managers

Advertising Sales Agents
Retail Sales Workers
Market Research Analysts

Criminal Justice

Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists
Investigators
Criminal Profiler
Jury Specialist

Education

High School Teachers
Middle School Teachers
Special Education Teachers

Labor and Employment

Human Resources and Labor Relations Specialists
Training and Development Specialists

Insurance

Claims Adjusters, Appraiser, Examiners and Investigators
Insurance Sales Agents

Healthcare

Psychiatric Technicians and Aides
Personal Care Aides

Community Service

Social and Human Service Assistants
Social Workers
Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors
Childcare Workers

Other

Meeting, Convention and Event Planners
Fundraisers
Public Relations Specialists
Writer or Author
Customer Service Representatives
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
Flight Attendant
Recreation Workers