

I'm Getting My Bachelor's Degree in Psychology—What Can I Do With It?

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It's best to think of your undergraduate education in psychology as learning "about" psychology, not learning "to do" psychology. A quality undergraduate education in psychology should prepare you to be a good citizen and a critical thinker. Fortunately, the skills and abilities that psychology majors acquire through their coursework and out-of-class experiences make them marketable for a wide variety of employment options. Even though the bachelor's degree in psychology is not a professional degree, it is still a good choice in becoming a well-rounded, well-educated citizen and person. Why? Although psychology departments at colleges and universities differ, McGovern et al. (1991) identified common goals for undergraduate students to accomplish. These goals include:

- **A knowledge base.** There is a wide array of information in psychology that you need to understand to truly be a student of human behavior. In other words, a future employer might actually expect you to know something about human behavior!
- **Thinking skills.** Critical thinking and reasoning, analysis of outcomes through experimental methods and statistics give psychology students the tools to make reasoned decisions.
- **Language skills.** As scientists, psychologists must be able to communicate findings to the broader scientific community; students must develop reading, writing, and presentation skills.
- **Information gathering and synthesis.** Psychology students need to be able to gather information from a number of sources (e.g., library, computerized databases, the Internet) and be able to synthesize this information into coherent lines of reasoning.
- **Research methods and statistical skills.** The development of quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis and interpretation is central to the discipline.
- **Interpersonal skills.** Psychology students need to be sensitive to the diversity of the environment in which they live and be able to use this increased sensitivity and self-knowledge to monitor their own behavior.
- **History of psychology.** Psychology majors need to understand the contexts out of which popular ideas and people have emerged. George Santayana once said, "Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it."
- **Ethics and values.** Psychology majors need to understand the ethical treatment of research participants, to understand conflicts of interests, and to generate options that maximize human dignity and human welfare and adhere to high standards of academic and scientific integrity.

Now we have an idea of the most important skills and abilities needed, but we need to know who is doing the hiring and in what types of jobs. Schwartz (2000) reported that the top 10 occupations that employ persons with only a bachelor's degree in psychology are:

- Top- and mid-level managers, executives, administrators
- Sales occupations, including retail
- Social workers
- Other management-related occupations
- Personnel, training, labor-relations specialists
- Other administrative (record clerks, telephone operators)
- Insurance, securities, real estate, business services
- Other marketing and sales occupations
- Registered nurses, pharmacists, therapists, physician assistants
- Accountants, auditors, other financial specialists

**Categories of Job Titles Relevant to
Psychology Bachelor's Degree Holders**

Related to psychology	Related to business	Other areas
Academic advisor	Administrative assistant	Activity director
Alcohol/drug abuse counselor	Advertising agent	Assistant youth coordinator
Behavior analyst	Advertising trainee	Camp staff director
Career counselor	Affirmative action representative	College admissions officer
Career planning and placement counselor	Airline reservations clerk	Community organizer
Case management aide	Bank management	Community recreation worker
Case worker	Claims specialist	Community relations officer
Child care worker	Customer relations	Congressional aide
Child protection worker	Customer service representative	Crime prevention coordinator
Community outreach worker	Employee counselor	Director of alumni relations
Community support worker	Employee relations assistant	Director of fundraising
Corrections officer	Energy researcher	Driving instructor
Counselor aide	Events coordinator	Educational coordinator
Day care center supervisor	Financial researcher	Fast food restaurant manager
Director of volunteer services	Hotel management	Foster home parent
Eligibility worker	Human relations director	Film researcher/copywriter
Employment counselor	Human resources recruiter	Historical research assistant
Family services worker	Insurance agent	Hospital patient service representative
Gerontology aide	Insurance claims/underwriter	Juvenile probation officer
Group home coordinator	Intelligence officer	Laboratory assistant
Housing/student life coordinator	Job analyst	Law enforcement officer
Life skill counselor	Loan officer	Neighborhood outreach worker
Mental health technician	Lobbying organizer	Newspaper reporter
Mental retardation unit manager	Management trainee	Nursing home administrator
Parole officer	Marketing representative	Park and recreation director
Political campaign worker	Marketing researcher	Private tutor
Probation officer	Media buyer	Research assistant
Program manager	Occupational analyst	Security officer
Public affairs coordinator	Office manager	Statistical assistant
Public relations specialist	Personnel worker/administrator	Statistical reports compiler
Publications researcher	Property management	Store manager
Radio/TV research assistant	Public information officer	Task force coordinator
Rehabilitation advisor	Sales representative	Teaching
Residential counselor	Small business owner	Technical writer
Residential youth counselor	Staff training and development	Vocational rehabilitation counselor
Secondary school teacher	Store manager	Volunteer coordinator
Social services assistant	Technical writer	Warehouse manager
Social services director	Warehouse manager	Work activity program director
Social work assistant		Youth minister
Urban planning research assistant		
Veterans advisor		

Sources: Appleby, 1999; Aubrecht, 2001; Lloyd, 1997;
Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1998; Shepard, 1996.