Careers with a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology

The career options for students majoring in Psychology are varied. At the bachelor’s level, Psychology provides a valuable liberal arts education. A properly constructed curriculum in psychology provides individuals with strong interpersonal or people skills, analytical reasoning ability, and problem-solving ability. These are skills that corporations and government agencies seek when hiring new employees.

Where do graduates with a B.A. or B.S. in psychology work? There are many jobs not directly related to psychology, but where a background in psychology is useful. Research some of these using the Occupational Outlook Handbook (https://www.bls.gov/ooh/):

Business/Finance
- Financial Advisors
- Advertising, Promotions & Marketing
- Managers
- Market Research Analysts

Community Service
- Social and Human Service Assistants
- Social Workers
- Substance Abuse Counselors
- Childcare Workers

Human Resources
- Training and Development Specialists
- Human Resources Specialists

Criminal Justice
- Probation Officer
- Correctional Officer
- Criminal Profiler
- Jury Specialist

It is important to understand that majoring in Psychology at the undergraduate level does not provide vocational or professional training like you might get in majors such as Accounting or Finance. The Psychology major has a variety of reasoning and interpersonal skills that can be applied in different settings and for different jobs.

Psychology majors are unique in that they can 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.

Learning to Market Your Psych Major Skill Sets

Psychology is a science and contains many analytical elements, but it also has liberal arts elements. This means psychology graduates will develop critical thinking, research, analytical, interpersonal and project management skills that will be useful in a wide range of careers. If you’ve majored in psychology, you’ve obtained the following skills and attributes that employers are interested in:
✓ RESEARCH ABILITY

The foundation of psychology revolves around scientific research. *Research methods, statistical analysis and data gathering techniques* are learned. Psychology students will also have much practice in finding hidden patterns in research.

✓ EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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

✓ CRITICAL THINKING

Whether through 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 an effective understanding of workplace dynamics and 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 ubiuities of smart phones, drones and social media), which has produced social and cultural changes in today’s society. The psychology field is the 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.
Steps to Take for your Job Search

1. **Plan Early:** The earlier you can narrow down your options, the more time you will have to get involved in activities and opportunities that will help to boost your resume by the time you graduate. You should plan to meet often with your academic advisor to discuss your career interests and what options you will have with a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology. You should try to narrow down your career choice by the end of your sophomore year; this will help you to narrow down the skill sets and knowledge that you will acquire in your program and align them with your career of choice.

2. **Take Advantage of On-Campus Resources:** Your academic advisor can absolutely help you in narrowing down your career interests and identifying career options for you. They can also help you to select which courses or extra-curricular opportunities might be a good fit for those career options. However your campus has many offices filled with people that are here to help you! Some of those offices include:
   - Make an appointment at the **Office of Career and Professional Development:** Science Library G50, 518-437-4900. Counselors here can provide career assessment tools, advice on picking a major, and help you to explore career options based on your experience and interests.

3. **Get Involved:** Look for campus opportunities that will allow you to gain experience in leadership. This can be in the form of clubs or organizations that you help to found, or take a leadership role in. It can also be through participation in service opportunities or in activities through your major or department, including departmental research or peer-mentoring/peer-tutoring opportunities.

4. **Network:** Keep good relationships with mentors, supervisors and professors, who may be able to provide job leads or opportunities to connect with people working in the field. Maintain contact with supervisors from internships, volunteer positions, and independent study positions. Keep an eye out for campus sponsored networking and career development events. The office of Career and Professional Development hosts two job and internship fairs per year. Professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn and Research Gate can also be helpful.

5. **Research:** Get involved in psychology research early and often. The Psychology Advising Office keeps a list of faculty members accepting students into their labs each semester. Getting involved in research is a great way to get a better sense of what your interests are, build your resume, and build connections within the field of psychology. Research experience is especially useful if you’re considering graduate school in psychology. Typically, professors may ask that you volunteer in their lab before earning course credit. For independent study opportunities, students can earn credits by enrolling in APSY 297, 397 and 497, with the permission of the faculty member they’re working with. Independent study may also provide opportunities for writing a thesis, conference presentations and publications.

6. **Resume:** Be sure to have a professional, well-rounded and carefully edited resume. The Psychology Advising Office can provide additional tips for creating a resume, and the Office of Career and Professional Development provides useful advice and resume templates. The Office of Career and Professional development also provides Peer Career Advisors, who help critique resumes and cover letters.

   **Where to look for Jobs:** Utilize websites such as Indeed.com to search for job openings is a good idea – but the Office of Career & Professional Development also has Handshake. Handshake is a free career service site for UAlbany students, where you can search for jobs or internships.