

Can You Get a Job with a BA/BS in Psychology?

Having an undergraduate degree in psychology makes a person eligible for some jobs they would not be eligible for without the degree. The [Career Center](#) here at BSU has a computer system to help you identify many of these jobs and a variety of resources to help you find openings. (Many other college campuses have similar facilities.) In PSYSC 295, you'll learn how to use these resources.

Where do they work?

Business. Many students who obtain an undergraduate psychology degree go into the business world at starting level management positions (Nationally about 20%). They often start out as "management trainees", "administrative support personnel", or some other similar beginning position. Another 10% obtain other kinds of business positions in retail establishments, insurance companies, and similar businesses doing sales, human resources, and many other jobs. In many companies, an undergraduate degree in psychology has been valuable for promotions. Ann Howard (1986) published a 20 year longitudinal study of the relationship between aspects of people's college experience (e.g., major and grades) and their managerial qualities and performance. Psychology majors, along with majors in other social sciences, were very successful and rated highest in many qualities, higher in many areas than students who had majored in business administration. This article is available in many libraries (see, Howard, A., 1986, *College experiences and the managerial performance. Journal of Applied Psychology Monograph, 71, 530-552.*) and in the Department's Information Center for Psychology Students.

Social Services/Mental Health. A sizable percentage of students with a bachelor's degree in psychology get a position in social services (Nationally about 20%, somewhat higher for our alumni). They may be interviewers, counselors, activity directors, or any of hundreds of other jobs in social services.

Government/Law. Students with undergraduate degrees in psychology are found in many other jobs in government, such as law enforcement, probation officers, and corrections.

Educational Institutions. Alumni of our department have worked as substitute teachers, various student services positions on university campuses, and worked training and educating people with mental disabilities.

Skills and Competencies

Most students who have entered the work force with an undergraduate degree in psychology believe that the degree was very useful. But surveys of our alumni suggest that it depends on the opportunities students took. If you want to get a

job with an undergraduate degree, you really should note what traits or skills employers typically look for in job candidates with undergraduate degrees. Although your experiences may turn out to be quite unique, surveys of employers suggest that they are interested in finding candidates with the following traits or skills:

good communication skills	oral and written
good interpersonal and teamwork skills	for example, negotiation and leadership
strong analytical abilities	problem solving, decision making, and mathematical-statistical competence
flexibility	creative thinking, willingness to relocate
proficiency in field of study	know psychological ideas and how to use them, good grades
computer skills	word processing, email, and other basic uses

There are many skills not listed above that can be important to specific jobs - these are general skills that are desirable for many different jobs. Many of these skills and abilities can be developed by taking undergraduate classes and making an effort to develop them. For example, this is probably the best way for most students to develop both some mathematical/statistical competence and broad proficiency in psychology.

Some of the skills employers are seeking, for example interpersonal and teamwork skills, are difficult to develop in some classrooms, especially lecture-only courses. But these skills can grow as a result of participating in organizations and societies such as Psi Chi, the psychology honors society. Members of Psi Chi, especially the officers and the others who are really involved, can develop many of these social skills.

Most of the skills employers seek, but particularly communication and specific proficiencies in the field of study, can be enhanced by getting involved in research projects with faculty. There are several ways to get information about research projects. The department's main office (room NQ 104) keeps a list of faculty research interests. You can examine faculty research interests on-line by looking through the faculty biographies. Visit the bulletin boards in the North Quad; faculty research interests are posted on at least one of the department

bulletin boards. You can also get some ideas of what kinds of skills can be developed by examining information on research.

Employers are often particularly impressed by those skills that are developed through research jobs or internships. Internships are volunteer jobs and paid jobs that are relevant to the field of psychology. This hands-on kind of learning is admired by many employers and sought after in applicants.

Further Information

If you would like some more detailed data, such as salaries, check out the various web-documents at [APA's Baccalaureate Data Site](#).

[Hanover](#) - These pages include useful information on interviewing, and a wide variety of information about careers in psychology, including links to psychology jobs in England.