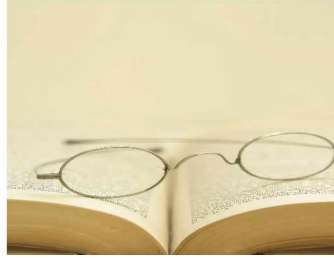


“What Can I do With a Major in...English?”



Many occupations today require people who can write and speak well. Students of English are especially valued because of their communication skills and their knowledge of the language. Employers recognize this fact, making a major in English a valuable asset in any job search.

Skills Possessed by English Majors

- Ability to read and write articulately and analytically
- Comprehensive knowledge of grammar and vocabulary
- Ability to listen, clarify, question, and respond comprehensively
- Ability to conduct and clearly explain research results
- Ability to make critical observations
- Skills in organizing ideas, materials, and people
- Ability to think creatively
- Ability to present persuasive arguments
- Skills in textual analysis and interpretation

From the University of Manitoba's Student Counseling and Career Center website.

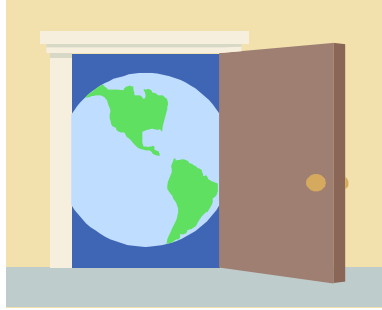
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Possible Job Titles for English Majors



Writers and Authors

Writers fall into two main categories—writers and authors and technical writers. *Writers and authors* develop original written materials for books, magazines, trade journals, online publications, company newsletters, radio and television broadcasts, motion pictures, and advertisements. Their works are classified broadly as either fiction or nonfiction and writers often are identified by the type of writing they do—for example, novelists, playwrights, biographers, screenwriters, and textbook writers. Some freelance writers may be commissioned by a sponsor to write a script; others may be contracted to write a book on the basis of a proposal in the form of a draft or an outline. Writers may produce materials for publication or performance, such as songwriters or scriptwriters.

Copy writers are a very specialized type of writer. They prepare advertising copy for use in publications or for broadcasting and they write other materials to promote the sale of a good or service. They often must work with the client to produce advertising themes or slogans and may be involved in the marketing of the product or service.

Technical writers put technical information into easily understandable language. They prepare product documentation, such as operating and maintenance manuals, catalogs, assembly instructions, and project proposals. Technical writers primarily are found in the information technology industry, writing operating instructions for online Help and documentation for computer programs. Many technical writers work with engineers on technical subject matters to prepare written interpretations of engineering and design specifications and other information for a general readership. Technical writers also may serve as part of a team conducting usability studies to help improve the design of a product that still is in the prototype stage. They plan and edit technical materials and oversee the preparation of illustrations, photographs, diagrams, and charts.

Professions hiring technical writers:

- Natural resources and energy
- Construction and related industries
- Industrial materials and components
- Production and manufacturing equipment
- Information and communications
- The consumer economy
- Transportation and travel
- Health care
- Financial Services
- Business and professional services Public Administration

Many writers are considered *freelance writers*. They are self-employed and sell their work to publishers, publication enterprises, manufacturing firms, public relations departments, or advertising agencies. Sometimes, they contract with publishers first to write a book or an article. Others may be hired to complete specific short-term or recurring assignments, such as writing about a new product or contributing to an organization's quarterly newsletter.

Editors review, rewrite, and edit the work of writers. They also may do original writing. An editor's responsibilities vary with the employer and type and level of editorial position held. Editorial duties may include planning the content of books, technical journals, trade magazines, and other general-interest publications. Editors also review story ideas proposed by staff and freelance writers then decide what material will appeal to readers. They review and edit drafts of books and articles, offer comments to improve the work, and suggest possible titles. In addition, they may oversee the production of publications. In the book-publishing industry, an editor's primary responsibility is to review proposals for books and decide whether to buy the publication rights from the author.

Major newspapers and newsmagazines usually employ several types of editors. The *executive editor* oversees *assistant editors*, and generally has the final say about what stories are published and how they are covered. Assistant editors have responsibility for particular subjects, such as local news, international news, feature stories, or sports. The *managing editor* usually is responsible for the daily operation of the news department. *Assignment editors* determine which reporters will cover a given story. *Copy editors* mostly review and edit a reporter's copy for accuracy, content, grammar, and style.

Advertising and Public Relations Services

Firms in the advertising and public relations services industry prepare advertisements for other companies and organizations and design campaigns to promote the interests and image of their clients. This industry also includes media representatives—firms that sell advertising space for publications, radio, television, and the Internet; display advertisers—businesses engaged in creating and designing public display ads for use in shopping malls, on billboards, or in similar media; and direct mail advertisers. A firm that purchases advertising time (or space) from media outlets, thereafter reselling it to advertising agencies or individual companies directly, is considered a media buying agency. Divisions of companies that produce and place their own advertising are not considered part of this industry.

News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents

In covering a story, *reporters* investigate leads and news tips, look at documents, observe events at the scene, and interview people. Reporters take notes and also may take photographs or shoot videos. At their office, they organize the material, determine the focus or emphasis, write their stories, and edit accompanying video material. Many reporters enter information or write stories using laptop computers and electronically submit the material to their offices from remote locations. In some cases, *news writers* write a story from information collected and submitted by reporters. Radio and television reporters often compose stories and report "live" from the scene. At times, they later tape an introduction to or commentary on their story in the studio. Some journalists also interpret the news or offer opinions to readers, viewers, or listeners. In this role, they are called *commentators* or *columnists*.

Teaching English

Preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school teachers play a vital role in the development of children. What children learn and experience during their early years can shape their views of themselves and the world and can affect their later success or failure in school, work, and their personal lives. Preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school teachers introduce children to mathematics, language, science, and social studies. They use games, music, artwork, films, books, computers, and other tools to teach basic skills.

Preschool children learn mainly through play and interactive activities. *Preschool teachers* capitalize on children's play to further language and vocabulary development (using storytelling, rhyming games, and acting games), improve social skills (having the children work together to build a neighborhood in a sandbox), and introduce scientific and mathematical concepts (showing the children how to balance and count blocks when building a bridge or how to mix colors when painting). Thus, a less structured approach, including small-group lessons, one-on-one instruction, and learning through creative activities such as art, dance, and music, is adopted to teach preschool children. Play and hands-on teaching also are used by *kindergarten teachers*, but academics begin to take priority in kindergarten classrooms. Letter recognition, phonics, numbers, and awareness of nature and science, introduced at the preschool level, are taught primarily in kindergarten.

Most *elementary school teachers* instruct one class of children in several subjects. In some schools, two or more teachers work as a team and are jointly responsible for a group of students in at least one subject. In other schools, a teacher may teach one special subject—usually music, art, reading, science, arithmetic, or physical education—to a number of classes. A small but growing number of teachers instruct multilevel classrooms, with students at several different learning levels.

Middle school teachers and *secondary school teachers* help students delve more deeply into subjects introduced in elementary school and expose them to more information about the world. Middle and secondary school teachers specialize in a specific subject, such as English, Spanish, mathematics, history, or biology. They also may teach subjects that are career oriented. *Vocational education teachers*, also referred to as career and technical or career-technology teachers, instruct and train students to work in a wide variety of fields, such as healthcare, business, auto repair, communications, and, increasingly, technology. They often teach courses that are in high demand by area employers, who may provide input into the curriculum and offer internships to students. Many vocational teachers play an active role in building and overseeing these partnerships. Additional responsibilities of middle and secondary school teachers may include career guidance and job placement, as well as follow-ups with students after graduation. (*Special education teachers*—who instruct elementary and secondary school students who have a variety of disabilities—are discussed separately in this section of the *Handbook*.)

Business Positions

It is critical the job seeker to take the skills they possess and have learned with an English background and transform them into a context an employer will find attractive. This means taking a skill out of the academic context, for example, writing research papers on topics in English Literature. For the business employer who isn't in need of English literature research writing, that particular skill may be difficult to fully appreciate. Some employers would do the necessary generalization and understand the value, but it's more effective and certain if you do it. So instead of indicating on your resume you know how to write and research papers on subjects such as English literature, you might better indicate that you are comfortable with research methods and resources.

You can assemble pertinent data on a subject using a variety of reference materials and transform the data into a piece of valuable information.

Here are other ways to make your background more applicable to the business field:

• **Critical/Analytical Thinking and Problem Solving:**

Describe instances in which you needed to research problems, identify possible solutions, and evaluate outcomes. Consider how you determined which information was important to the task at hand and which information was irrelevant. Activities conducted in a “problems” course or steps taken to solve a problem faced by a club or organization would be great examples to share with a potential employer.

• **Adaptability to Change/Flexibility:** Describe a class, project, or experience through which you learned how changes take place, the challenges that arise in a changing environment, and how to overcome those challenges. If you coordinated an event that required you to make last minute changes (the featured speaker cancelled with little notice, the caterer prepared the wrong food, the room was set up incorrectly, etc.) explain how you were able to salvage the event.

• **Interpersonal:** Give examples of how you developed interpersonal skills through class discussions, group projects, involvement in campus activities, or by working with others at a job or on a volunteer project. Discuss ways that you engaged people, worked in cooperative relationships, motivated others, and managed conflict.

• **Communication:** Share how, through your education, you have read technical material, written various papers, conducted presentations, and participated in class discussions. Be sure to address listening as well as written and oral communication skills.

*The content was adopted from the following websites:

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/careers/english.pdf>

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm>

<http://www.writejobs.com/>

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Career Resources for English Majors



Specific Resources

American Society of Journalists and Authors: <http://www.asja.org>

Journalism Jobs: <http://www.journalismjobs.com/>

Mediabistro: <http://www.mediabistro.com>

National Writers Union: <http://www.nwu.org/nuw/>

Staff Writers: <http://www.staffwriters.com>

The Write Jobs: <http://www.writejobs.com>

Writers Guild of America: <http://www.wga.org/>

Writers Resource Center: <http://www.poewar.com>

General Resources

*CareerSearch: <http://www.careersearch.net/Hofstra>
(username-hofstra, password-career)

Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco>

Riley Guide: <http://www.rileyguide.com>

*Spotlight On Careers: <http://www.spotlightoncareers.org>
(username-lacn, password-holland)

*Vault: http://www.vault.com/cb/careerlib/careerlib_main.jsp?parrefer=6123
(You will be prompted for your Novell username and password)

*These websites require you sign in using a username and password.

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Famous English Majors

Writers

Tom Clancy
Stephen King
Arthur Miller
John Updike
Allen Ginsberg
Joseph Heller
Toni Morrison
Bob Woodward

Government

Mario Cuomo, Former Governor of New York
Carol Browner, Former Head of the Environmental Protection Agency

Film Directors

Steven Spielberg
James Cameron
Martin Scorsese

Actors

Jodie Foster
Matt Damon
Harrison Ford
Tommy Lee Jones
Renee Zellweger

Musicians

Sting
Paul Simon
Chris Isaak
Don Henley

Management

Michael Eisner, Former CEO of Walt Disney
Herb Scannell, Vice-Chairman of MTV Networks, Former President of Nickelodeon

Television

Barbara Walters
Diane Sawyer
Conan O'Brien

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