What Can I Do With A Major In... Geography?

Compiled by the staff at the SUNY Oneonta Career Development Center

Introduction

Geography examines the location of things that are on the surface of the earth; then questions why these things are located where they are, and how humans interact with this environment. If you are planning to attain your bachelor’s degree in Geography, you should determine which branch of Geography interest you most. There are two main branches of geography: human geography and physical geography.

Human Geography focuses on the spatial aspects of human existence. They work in the field of urban and regional planning, transportation, marketing, real estate, tourism, and international business. Physical geography studies the patterns of climates, land forms, vegetation, soils, and water. They forecast the weather and manage land and water resources.

“Geography tells what is where, why and what of it” – Isaiah Bowman

Sayings: Old Geographers never die, they just lose their bearings.
Old Geographers never die, they just become legends.

Functional Skill Set for Geography Majors:

Good writing skills.
Critical thinker.
Computer skills.
Organizational skills.
Related Career Titles for Geography Majors

- Aerial Photo Interpreter
- Agricultural Extension Agent
- Air/Water Quality Control Manager
- Cartographer
- Cartography Compiler
- Climatologist
- Coastal Zone Manager
- College/University Professor
- Community Developer
- Computer Mapper
- Computer Programmer
- Demographer
- Earth Scientist
- Ecologist
- Editor
- Environmental Impact Analyst
- Environmental Quality Specialist
- Facilities Planner
- Forestry Technician
- Geographer
- Geographic Area Specialist
- Geographic Attaché
- Geographic Information Systems
- Geophysics Assistant
- Hazardous Waste Planner
- Health Services Organization Manager
- Health Services Planner
- Hydrologist
- Industrial Developer
- Industrial Planner
- Intelligence Agent
- International Business Representative
- International Investment Analyst
- Land Developer
- Land Economist
- Land-Use Analyst
- Location Expert
- Map Analyst
- Map Curator/Librarian
- Map Editor
- Market Research Analyst
- Natural Resources Specialist
- Outdoor Guide
- Park Ranger
- Peace Corp Volunteer
- Property Manager
- Public Utilities Specialist
- Real Estate Agent/Broker/Appraiser
- Remote Sensing Analyst
- Site Researcher
- Soil Conservationist
- Surveyor
- Systems Analyst
- Teacher
- Traffic Manager
- Transportation Analyst
- Transportation Manager
- Travel Agent/Specialist
- Urban/Regional Planner
- Weather Forecaster
- Wildlife Manager
- Writer/Author
- Zoning Investigator
Some Organizations that Typically Employ Geographers:

- Aerial Survey Firms
- Architectural Firms
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Department of Interior
- Department of State
- Department of Transportation
- Engineering Firms
- Environmental Consulting Firms
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Insurance Companies
- Land Developers
- Local, State and Federal Government
- Mapping Agencies
- Marketing/Distribution companies
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- Planning Agencies
- Real Estate and Development Corporations
- Resource Mgmt. Agencies
- School Boards
- Textbook and Map Publishers
- Travel Agencies
- Universities

Start a Strategic Plan

Learn federal, state and local government job application process.
Become skilled in related computer technology.
Obtain related experience.
Take elective courses in botany, plant science and wildlife.
Develop excellent communications skills.
Understand local language, history, customs, and culture.
Learn photography skills.
Take courses in surveying and measurements, photogrammetry, technical mathematics, drafting, statistics, optics, remote sensing, art and graphics.
Seek summer internships.
Develop team work skills.
Maintain excellent academic undergraduate record.
Obtain master’s degree in planning.
Obtain a business minor.
Develop research, evaluation and presentation skills applicable to business problems.
Obtain experience working in a highly competitive atmosphere.
Take courses in statistical and mathematical analyses and computer programming.
Obtain certification/licensure for public school teaching.
Join National Council for Geographic Education and/or the Association of American Geographers.
Complete a master’s degree for community college teaching; Ph.D. for college/university teaching and research.
Specialize in quantitative research techniques, computer mapping, and natural resource management.
Obtain computer, drafting, and computer-aided drafting (CAD) experience.
Develop strong mathematical and statistics skills.
Obtain experience and skills and develop interest in mapping, graphics and charts.

**Professional Organizations and Associations for Geography Majors:**

- National Imagery & Mapping Agency (formerly the Defense Mapping Agency)  
  [http://www.nima.mil](http://www.nima.mil)
- National Climate Data Center  [http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/)
- National Geographic  [http://www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)
- List of scholarly societies and links to them  [http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/geog_soc.html](http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/geog_soc.html)

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## GEOGRAPHY

### What can I do with this major?

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<th>AREAS</th>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
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| **ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY**  
Environmental geographers are concerned with how human beings use the earth and impact the environment.  
Environmental Management  
Conservation  
Waste Management  
Environmental Regulation  
Emergency Management  
Outdoor Recreation Management  | Federal and state government: Environmental Protection Agency, Departments of Agriculture, National Forest Service, National Park Service  
Real estate developers  
Scientific and research groups  
Waste management companies  
Chemical companies  
Firms specializing in forestry, mining, environmental issues, or surveying  
Law firms  | Become skilled in related computer technology.  
Take biology and chemistry courses for environmental management positions.  
Take electives in plant science, forestry and wildlife management for careers in recreation and forestry management.  
Join environmental organizations on campus and in your community.  
Seek environmental-related experience through internships, summer or part-time jobs.  
Learn federal government job application process.  
Earn a law degree for work areas such as environmental law and policy. |

| **CULTURAL & HUMAN GEOGRAPHY**  
Cultural and human geographers study the aspects of geography that relate to different cultures. They especially focus on cultural origins and movement and the cultural characteristics of regions.  
Cultural Resources  
Historic Preservation  
Historical Consultation  
Community Development/Redevelopment  
Education  
Research  | State, regional, and local government  
Peace Corps  
Real estate developers  
Companies dealing with insurance, transportation, communications, and international trade  
Scientific and research groups  
Museums  | Develop an open mind towards the language, history, customs, and culture of other countries.  
Learn how to conduct library research, make field observations, and interpret artifacts.  
Learn a foreign language for field observations in other countries.  
Participate in cross-cultural groups and organizations.  
Develop excellent communication and teamwork skills in order to work with historians and archivists in recreating the geography of the past.  
Obtain related experience in your area of interest through volunteer or paid positions including internships.  
Become skilled in related computer technology.  
Learn federal, state, and local government job application process. |
### GEOGRAPHIC TECHNOLOGY
Geographers utilize a variety of technologies to generate maps, store, analyze and interpret map information.

- Cartography
- Geographic Information Systems
- Remote Sensing

### STRATEGIES
Take courses in surveying and measurements, photogrammetry, computer systems, database management, technical mathematics, drafting, statistics, optics, remote sensing, art, graphics.
Learn to be detail-oriented.
Gain experience reading maps and interpreting data sources including geological surveys and satellite images.
Seek related experience, such as a part-time job or internship, to develop technical skills.
Investigate federal, state, and local government job application process.

### PLANNING
Planners ensure that communities develop in an orderly way and that they have the services necessary to support them.

### AREAS
- City/Regional Planning
- Housing Development
- Convention/Tourism
- Community Development
- Demography
- Transportation
- Waste Management
- Conservation
- Federal government agencies: Departments of Defense, Interior, Commerce, Agriculture, and State, Defense Mapping, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Central Intelligence Agency
- State and regional government agencies: Departments of Transportation or Agriculture
- Private industry including telephone, utilities, construction, engineering, energy, environmental planning, and consulting firms
- Mappublishers
- Mapping software companies
- Colleges and universities

### EMPLOYERS
- City, county, and regional planning agencies
- Local and state government
- Federal government agencies including: Agency for International Development, World Bank, Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Research organizations
- Private business
- Banks
- Industrial firms
- Public utilities
- Architecture firms
- Real estate developers

### STRATEGIES
Develop team work and communication skills.
Participate in student government.
Take courses in public administration or public finance.
Observe city/county advisory meetings.
Seek internship or work experience in a local government office, as they are a large employer in this area.
Learn federal, state, and local government job application process.
Obtain master's degree in planning.
Earn a dual degree in planning and law.
Research the certified planning credential obtained through the American Institute of Certified Planners.
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<td><strong>PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>State and local government</td>
<td>Develop strong analytical and communication skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical geographers study earth processes such as climate and weather. They also evaluate the impact of natural hazards such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes.</td>
<td>Federal government agencies including:</td>
<td>Take courses in physics, chemistry, soil science, and agriculture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geomorphology</td>
<td>TV/Radio stations</td>
<td>Gain experience through part-time jobs, internships or volunteer opportunities related to climate, weather or natural hazards.</td>
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<td>Natural Hazards</td>
<td>Agribusiness corporations</td>
<td>Be willing to relocate to regions that have job availability.</td>
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<td>Weather and Climate</td>
<td>Outdoor recreation companies</td>
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<td>Hydrology</td>
<td>Resource management agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Regulation</td>
<td>Research institutes</td>
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<td>Waste Management and Disposal</td>
<td>Insurance companies</td>
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<td><strong>ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>Federal, state, and local government</td>
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<td>Economic geographers study the distribution of resources and economic activities within a certain region. They may use this information to advise organizations on where to build new facilities.</td>
<td>Market research firms</td>
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<td>Location Scouting</td>
<td>Manufacturing, wholesale, and retail firms</td>
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<td>Real Estate Analysis</td>
<td>Public utilities</td>
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<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Consulting firms</td>
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<td>Agricultural Planning</td>
<td>Real estate appraisers and developers</td>
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<td>Travel/Tourism Planning</td>
<td>Banks</td>
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<td><strong>GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION</strong></td>
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<td>Geography teachers may specialize in one or more areas of the discipline or incorporate it into a social science education program.</td>
<td>Elementary/secondary schools, public and private colleges and universities</td>
<td>Develop strong communication skills, both oral and written.</td>
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<td>Teaching</td>
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<td>Research</td>
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GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION CONTINUED

GENERAL INFORMATION

• Bachelor's degree qualifies you for entry-level positions in government and industry.
• Master's degree qualifies you for community college teaching and advancement in industry and government.
• Ph.D. is required for research and teaching positions in colleges and universities and senior positions in government and industry.
• Geography provides a broad foundation for future career endeavors.
• Obtain volunteer, part-time, summer, internship, or co-op experience in your area of interest.
• Join professional organizations such as the American Geography Society or the National Council for Geographic Education.
• Become a member of groups directed toward improvement of natural resources or environment and pollution control.
• Maintain knowledge of current environmental issues including policy, conservation, and industry trends.
• Computer knowledge is extremely important in geography. Obtain experience with geographic information systems.
• Develop strong mathematical and statistical skills.
• Develop skills and interest in mapping, graphics, and charts. An interest in photography may prove beneficial.
• Develop good communication skills.

• Specialize in an area such as quantitative research techniques, computer mapping, or natural resource management.
• Join National Council for Geographic Education.
• Complete a master's degree for community college teaching or a Ph.D. for college/university teaching and research.
• Maintain a high grade point average and build strong faculty recommendations to prepare for graduate school.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES