

What Can I Do With A Major In... **English?**

Compiled by the staff at the SUNY Oneonta Career Development Center

Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of English! This major is what we call a functional major, which means that college graduates with this major could use it in many fields. The English major uses analytical approaches to examine language, literature, cultural studies and writing. With the English major you can acquire many jobs such as a teacher, journalist and public information specialist. The employers of English majors come in a very wide range. There are many options like magazines, newspapers, colleges and universities. The employer market for English majors is endless. Majoring in English provides a background for further study in law, journalism, and radio or television communications.

“The best teachers teach from the heart, not from the book.” Author Unknown

Functional Skill Set for English Majors

- Background of influencing knowledge
- High proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking
- Comprehensive command of grammar and vocabulary
- Good listening, clarifying, questioning, and responding skills
- Ability to conduct and clearly explain research results
- Ability to read Analytically
- Capacity to work well under pressure
- Ability to make keen observations and appropriate decisions
- Ability to concentrate for long periods of time

Related Career Titles for English Majors

- Account Executive
- Actor/Actress
- Administrative Assistant
- Administrator
- Advertising Copywriter
- Analyst
- Artist
- Assistant Scientific Writer
- Attorney
- Author-Fiction Non-Fiction
- Bank Officer
- Biographer
- Book Critic
- Book Store Manager
- Columnist
- Copy Editor
- Editor, Film/Video
- Editor, Magazine
- Editor, News
- Editor, Newspaper
- Editor, Publications
- Editorial Assistant
- Educator
- Educational Program Specialist
- Entertainment Agent
- Fashion Merchandiser
- Foreign Correspondent
- Freelance Writer/Consultant
- Journalist
- Librarian
- Literary Agent
- Loan Officer
- Lobbyist
- Magazine Writer
- Management Trainee
- Manuscript Reader
- Market Research
- Marketing Specialist
- Marketing Writer
- Mass Media
- Media Planner
- Media Specialist
- Narrator
- Novelist
- Publisher
- Reporter
- Teacher
- Technical Writer
- Speech Writer
- Writer

Some Organizations that Typically Employ English Majors:

- Newspapers , magazines, broadcast media – script writing
- Trade, professional or consumer publications
- Advertising agencies, corporations, government agencies, colleges and universities
- Any organization or publication with technical focus or technical areas
- Public schools
- Private schools
- Colleges and universities
- Libraries
- Special interest magazines
- Associational and organizational magazines
- Sunday newspaper supplements
- Mass-market paperbacks
- Educational and professional books
- Religious books and magazines
- In-house agencies of large companies
- Public relations firms
- In-house public relations departments
- Trade associations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Law firms
- Corporate legal departments
- Public service agencies
- Commercial banks
- Regional banks
- Savings & Loan associations
- Credit unions
- Business organizations
- Department, grocery, drug, specialty and variety store chains
- Bookstores

Start a Strategic Plan

General:

Select a wide variety of electives.

Write for on-campus publications; develop speaking/debate skills; write and edit reports.

Obtain concentration in technical writing.

Take computer courses to gain knowledge about technical areas and trends.

Teaching:

Gain volunteer experience with Big Brother/Sister program, tutoring, sports, summer camps, teen counseling, childcare centers for special populations.

Participate in school activities: debate, literary club, student publications and government, alumni and admissions work.

Obtain certification for public school teaching.

Obtain graduate degree for post-secondary teaching. Master's required to teach introductory courses. Doctorate required for full-time professorships.

Publishing:

Participate in summer publishing institute.

Develop word processing and editing skills.

Work on student publications.

Demonstrate talent, persistence, assertiveness and enthusiasm; be prepared to start entry-level.

Obtain solid statistics background for research.

Create portfolio of writing/ideas showing originality and imagination for creative department.

Gain knowledge of various media, contemporary tastes and trends.

Obtain campus newspaper, TV or radio experience.

Marketing:

Participate in student-run or personal business involving promotion and sales.

Find internship in market research firm.

Obtain internships/work experience to make yourself more marketable.

Develop strong research skills, public speaking ability, enthusiasm and good interpersonal skills.

Become an effective team worker by working on group projects for campus organizations.

Develop organizational skills and concern for detail.

Law:

Become skillful in debate.

Organize campus events, speaker or political rallies.

Obtain summer or part-time work in law firm.

Specialty training required for paralegals.

Plan to attend law school to obtain Juris Doctor, the degree required for lawyers.

Business:

Get a business minor.

Develop strong analytical and computer skills.

Obtain cashier, teller or clerical experience.

Gain experience as financial officer/treasurer in campus organization.

A business minor and technical writing experience is helpful.

Secure a leadership role in campus organization.

Join student professional associations.

Professional Organizations and Associations for English Majors:

American Society Magazine Editors
919 3rd Ave
New York NY 10022

Dow Jones Newspaper Fund
PO Box 300
Princeton, NJ 08543-0300
609-452-2820
<http://djnewspaperfund.dowjones.com/fund>
(Sponsors various internships and job placement assistance)

English in Action
16 E 69th St.
New York NY 10021

Magazine Publishers of America
919 Third Avenue, 22nd Floor
New York NY 10022
<http://www.magazine.org>
(Has information about magazine internships)

National Council of Teachers of English
111 W. Kenyon Rd.
Urbana IL 61801-1096
<http://www.ncte.org>

Society for Technical Communication
901 North Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington VA 22203-1822
703-522-4114 <http://stc.org>
(Publishes a salary survey and offers internships and student memberships)

Women in Scholarly Publishing
2501 W. 15th St.
Lawrence KS 66049-8350

American Society of Newspaper Editors
Box 17004
Washington DC 20041
<http://www.asne.org>

Modern Language Association

10 Astor Place
New York NY 10003-6981
<http://www.mla.org>

Women in Communications
210 Wilson Blvd Suite 417
Arlington VA 22201

American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation
The Newspaper Center
PO Box 17407 Dulles International Airport
Washington DC 20041
Ask for: Your Future in Daily Newspapers

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville MD 20852

Dickinson College Counseling Center
Carlisle PA 17013
Ask for: Career Areas for English Majors

INTAC tape series, Northern Illinois University
Phone: 815-753-0414 and ask for tape no. 838, English or tape no. 835, Communication
Studies

International Association of Business Communicators
870 Market Street Suite 940
San Francisco CA 94102
Ask for: Business Communication as a Career

Revised 12-1-10

ENGLISH

What can I do with this major?

| AREAS | EMPLOYERS | STRATEGIES |
|--|---|--|
| <p><u>WRITING/EDITING</u> Creative Writing Books Poetry Plays Screenplays Scripts Greeting Cards Lyrics/Jingle Writing Journalism Writing/Reporting Editing Technical Writing Science and Medical Writing Freelance Writing</p> | <p>Newspapers Magazines Broadcast media companies including television, radio, and the movie industry Trade, professional, or consumer publications Internet sites Large corporations Government agencies including: Department of Homeland Security Department of Defense Department of State Veterans Affairs National Archives and Records Admin. Universities and university presses Technical industries Self-employed/Freelance</p> | <p>Select elective coursework in a particular area of interest. Write for campus publications such as college newspapers, magazines, or departmental/program newsletters. Volunteer to assist or tutor students in a writing center. For technical writing positions obtain a concentration in technical writing. Take science and/or computer courses to gain knowledge about technical areas and trends. Become familiar with the proposal writing and submission process involved in freelance writing. Gain as much experience as possible through volunteer positions, internships, or part-time jobs. Demonstrate patience and persistence in starting a career in creative writing.</p> |

EDUCATION

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| <p>Teaching Administration Student Affairs Academic Advising Information Science Non-classroom Teaching Tutoring</p> | <p>Public schools Private schools Colleges and universities Language institutes, local and abroad Libraries Museums Private learning centers Test preparation organizations Nonprofit organizations involved with literacy</p> | <p>Obtain appropriate state certification for public school teaching. Earn certification to teach multiple subjects or age groups for increased job opportunities. Earn a master's or doctorate degree for post-secondary teaching. Plan to attend graduate school in college student personnel or information science if those are areas of interest. Gain volunteer experience working with children through Big Brother/Sister programs, tutoring, summer camps, YMCA's, etc. Participate in school activities such as debate or literary clubs, campus publications, or student government. Get involved in roles of leadership such as resident advisor, peer mentor, student advisor, etc. Maintain a high grade point average and secure strong faculty recommendations for graduate school applications.</p> |
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| AREAS | EMPLOYERS | STRATEGIES |
|--|--|---|
| <p><u>PUBLISHING</u> Editing Advertising Sales Circulation Production Publicity Marketing Promotion Administration</p> | <p>Trade publishing Special interest magazines Trade magazines Association magazines Sunday newspaper supplements Educational publishing Religious books and magazines Professional and scholarly publishing University presses Independent publishers Alternative media publishers E-books Audiobooks</p> | <p>Obtain an internship in the publishing industry. Participate in a summer publishing institute. Develop word processing, editing, and desktop publishing skills. Gain additional technical skills if working in an online environment. Gain experience by writing for student publications such as the newspaper, creative writing magazines, the yearbook, etc. Conduct an informational interview with or shadow a professional in the publishing industry. Look for positions with local dailies and alternative weeklies in the community. Volunteer to write or edit publications with local nonprofit organizations to gain experience. Develop extensive grammar and language skills. Be prepared to relocate to cities with a publishing presence. A large majority of opportunities exist in New York City. Research the publishing industry to learn more about career ladders.</p> |
| <p><u>ADVERTISING</u> Creative Services Copy Writing Art Direction Account Management Media Account Planning Production</p> | <p>Advertising agencies In-house agencies of large companies</p> | <p>Demonstrate talent, persistence, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Be prepared to start in an entry-level position. Obtain strong statistics background for market research positions. Create a portfolio of writing and ideas showing originality and imagination for creative positions. Gain knowledge of various media, contemporary tastes, and trends. Obtain experience with campus newspaper, TV, or radio. Participate in sales and promotions for student organizations or private businesses. Complete an internship in a market research firm or advertising agency. Supplement curriculum with courses in business (marketing, economics, mathematics), art, or graphic design.</p> |

| AREAS | EMPLOYERS | STRATEGIES |
|--|---|--|
| <u>PUBLIC RELATIONS</u> Account Coordination Writing/Editing Media Relations Account Management | Public relations firms Advertising agencies In-house public relations departments Trade associations Colleges and universities Nonprofit organizations Government agencies | Obtain internship or other relevant work experience to break into this field. Be prepared to start at the bottom and work towards higher levels. Develop strong research skills, public speaking ability, enthusiasm, and interpersonal skills. Supplement curriculum with business courses. Become an effective team member by working on group projects for campus organizations. Volunteer to write publications for nonprofit or student organizations. |
| <u>BUSINESS</u> Management Sales Marketing Human Resources Insurance Claims Underwriting | Business organizations including banks, real estate agencies, insurance firms, and large and small corporations Retailers including department, grocery, drug, specialty, variety, and book stores | Obtain a business minor. Gain work experience through part-time jobs, internships, or relevant volunteer work. Secure leadership roles in campus organizations. Join student professional associations and seek leadership roles. Develop strong analytical and computer skills. Gain experience as financial officer or treasurer of a campus organization. |
| <u>LAW</u> | Law firms Corporate legal departments Government agencies Nonprofit organizations | Develop strong organizational skills and attention to detail. Become skillful in debate and public speaking. Organize campus events, speakers, or political rallies. Obtain summer or part-time work in a law firm. Plan to shadow an attorney to learn more about the field. Complete special training requirements for paralegal positions. Attend law school and earn a JD to become an attorney. Maintain an excellent grade point average and secure strong faculty recommendations to gain law school admittance. Plan to take the LSAT. |

GENERAL INFORMATION

- A major in English can be good preparation for continued graduate or professional training in areas such as English, law, political science/government, public administration, psychology, counseling, communications, and religious studies (i.e., seminary).
- Develop a specialty area of interest via additional coursework and/or work experience for greater marketability within that specific career field.
- Save samples of written work to be used for a portfolio.
- Be prepared to be proactive, determined, assertive, and confident in order to secure freelance writing opportunities. Writers typically experience many rejections for each piece that is accepted for publication.
- Cultivate other career opportunities in order to supplement a freelance writing income.
- Obtain additional areas of expertise such as journalism, broadcasting, technical writing, or politics for specialized positions.
- For careers in advertising or public relations be prepared to begin in an entry-level position.
- A bachelor's degree in English is sufficient for many entry level positions in business and industry.
- Appropriate teacher certification is required for public school teaching.
- A graduate degree is required for teaching at the college or university level.
- Conduct informational interviews or shadow professionals in careers of interest to learn more about their jobs.