

How to Choose a Major

Choosing your major is one of the biggest decisions you will ever make in your life. It's a choice you make when you're young, a choice you make when you're still maturing and getting to grips with the world around you, but it is one that will dictate the trajectory of your future.

If you choose incorrectly, then you could pay the price in later years. To make sure that you make the right choice and have no regrets, it's important to look at all potential majors from all angles. You need to ask yourself a series of questions, taking your time to go over each of them:

- What Should I Major In?
- Which Majors Will Earn me the Most Money?
- Which Majors Will Give me the Most Job Satisfaction?
- Which Majors will Become Obsolete in a Few Years?
- Do I Need a Minor?

Ultimately you're the one who has to make the decision and there is no do-over. But this guide should be able to help you with that decision, with your major and with the career path that you eventual embark upon.

Top Majors That Will See the Most Growth in the Next Five Years

Trends come and go. Philosophy, psychology, sports science, social studies—it seems like every major has had its day. These trends aren't always related to real-life careers. Sometimes a popular film or book can sway opinion, sometimes it's down to the promise of a big paycheck.

This generation is **considerably less interested** in majors related to education and humanities, much more interested in business majors, and just as interested in social studies and natural sciences. But what does the future hold? Will business majors remain dominant? Will computing and medical careers be the main focus of this generation of students?

What follows are majors that are likely to see the most growth over the next 5 years:

- **Biomedical Engineer:** Medical science is constantly advancing, changing the way we live, improving our lives and doing things previously not thought possible. Researchers are at the forefront of those advances and the biomedical sector is where many breakthroughs are made. Anyone looking to discover the next big cure or to decipher a previously unknown illness will see this career as the ultimate goal.
- **Dentists and Dental Hygienists:** Dentists are often portrayed as deeply unhappy people, which no doubt stems from the fact that they have one of the **highest suicide rates in the US**. But this is a profession on the rise. People are living longer, taking more care of their teeth and looking to embrace revolutionary cosmetic treatments. As a result, the demand for dentists and dental hygienists is set to boom.
- **Interpreting, Translation, Linguistics:** The world is more interconnected than ever before and the demand for multilingual speakers has never been higher. You can make a lot of

money if you are fluent in several languages and as the business marketplace becomes more of a global one that will only increase. That's why associated majors are likely to see a lot of growth.

- **Project Managers, Business Managers:** Project management is now an essential part of business. Techniques like Agile and Scrum are common place in business from east to west and as wages climb alongside demand, more students are looking to learn the skills they need to manage projects and businesses.
- **Mental Health Majors:** The mental health sector is growing off the back of an increased public awareness and acceptance. We're more open to mental health problems than ever, which is great for those suffering from such issues and it's also a motivation for anyone looking to become part of the solution. Students with personal histories and family histories of mental health are also more likely to focus on this sector in order to give a little back.
- **Surgeons:** Plastic surgery has become an accepted practice. It's not just about vanity either, as plastic surgery can be used to cure lifelong ailments, to help build self-confidence and to ensure a better and healthier existence. As it becomes more and more a part of every day society, the amount of people looking to train as surgeons will also likely increase.

Trades that will Experience the Most Growth

According to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics** the healthcare sector will experience some of the most employee growth over the next few years. In 2014 they predicted that the number of people working as Registered Nurses, Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides would increase by between 15% and 38.1% between 2014 and 2024.

But of those three, only Registered Nurses can expect to earn more than \$50,000 per annum, and more employees doesn't necessarily mean more potential. If anything, it's the other way around. So, what jobs will have the biggest increase in wage and opportunity? Which trades will be in demand by the time you finish your education?

In other words, where should you focus your attention?

Health and Fitness

On a list of the **9 Most In Demand Jobs of 2017**, CNBC included Home Health Aides at the very top, seemingly basing this inclusion on the BLS report mentioned above. In one sense, they are right to include this. We're all living longer. Technology, medication and an increased understanding of biology and disease is improving our quality of life.

We're gaining ground on everything from cancer to ALS. Add to this the fact that most people want to remain independent in their later years, regardless of how unhealthy they are, and it's easy to see why there would be such a demand for healthcare professionals.

But the median wage for someone in this sector is less than \$22,000 a year. It's certainly a commendable profession and if you have the qualifications then you will always be in demand, but if you want to earn the big money then this isn't the profession for you.

Of course, you could go all the way and train to be a doctor, a psychiatrist, a surgeon or another highly paid health professional, but you can also simply study physical fitness. According to the same report by CNBC, this is a profession that is also on the rise.

That's because as well as living longer and enjoying an unprecedented level of care, we're also more willing to pay for professional advice and training in order to improve our health. Anyone can become a physical therapist, but with the right qualifications you can stand out more and with the right education you can take your career further.

The same applies to nutritionists, sports scientists and any other career where you represent health and wellbeing in an advisory role. People will always need advice on fitness and healthy eating and there is always room for a promotion. If you have the expertise then you could become anything from a trainer working at your local gym, to a gym owner, a nutritionist employed by well paid actors and sports teams, or the owner of a health and fitness business.

- **Potential Majors**

- **Health**>Medicine
- **Health**>Neurobiology and Neurosciences
- **Health**>Physical Therapy Therapist
- **Health**>Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions
- **Recreation and Fitness**>Health and Physical Education
- **Recreation and Fitness**>Outdoor Education
- **Psychology**>Psychology
- **Psychology**>Research and Experimental Psychology

Tech and Development

According to Business Insider, the technology industry is one of the biggest industries for **generating future billionaires**. You only need to look at the success of apps like SnapChat and games like Clash of Clans to see just how much money can be made by hard-working developers with an idea and the talent to put it together.

These days you don't need a vast fortune and a large team of employees to succeed with an app, a website or any other online business. By learning the technologies, programming languages and necessary skills, you can create the software of tomorrow and earn a very lucrative salary.

Creating your own app/game/business is obviously the high point for this career, but it's not the be all and end all. You can still earn a very respectable salary working for tech companies. There are more of these companies out there than ever before and the number will continue to grow, as will the demand for qualified engineers, programmers and designers.

According to the **US News Best Jobs** report, the average unemployment rate for skilled developers, analysts and systems managers is just 2% to 3%, while the median salary is between \$80,000 and \$130,000.

- **Potential Majors**

- **Computer and Information Sciences**>Computer Graphics
- **Computer and Information Sciences**>Computer Programming>**Programmer**
- **Computer and Information Sciences**>Computer Programming>**Specific Applications**
- **Engineering**>Computer Engineering>**Software Engineering**

Big Data

Statisticians and anyone who can make sense of big data and use this to help growing companies are more in demand than ever. They are employed by tech companies, health companies, researchers, and countless other sectors in order to translate data into growth. If you have a passion for numbers then this could be a very lucrative career, and any major involving data is well worth considering.

Statisticians can expect to earn a median wage of \$80,000, which is growing year on year. The demand is high because the number of qualified workers is low. As a result, the unemployment rate is just 0.8% and it was voted as the **fourth “best job” by US News**.

There is a wide scope of jobs and skills involving data. You can focus on the IT sector, taking employment as a data analyst. You can focus on the sales sector, turning customer trends into useful information that business will pay a lot of money for.

- **Potential Majors**

- **Mathematics and Statistics**>Statistics
- **Mathematics and Statistics**>Financial Mathematics
- **Mathematics and Statistics**>Mathematic Statistics and Probability
- **Business and Management**>Marketing>**Marketing Research**
- **Business and Management**>General Sales>**Sales Distribution and Marketing Operations**

What to Minor In?

Some careers will require you to complete a minor, others won't. But even when it's not necessary you may still want to consider completing a minor. It will offer an education that is a little more well rounded, but it also has a few other benefits:

- **Foundation:** A minor can help you to set the foundation for an additional degree or major at a later date. You don't have to invest more time and effort into another degree, but if you add a minor to your studies then you will have the major you want right now and you will also have a minor that gives you an option in the future.
- **Education:** A minor that is relevant to your chosen employment can help you to learn more about your future career. Extra education can create extra opportunity and you won't need to limit your options for additional work, promotions, and other opportunities that may be restricted to employees with additional skills.
- **CV/Employment:** An extra minor looks great on your CV. The more you can squeeze into the "education" sector of your CV the better it will look and the greater chance you will have of being hired. It may not be as important as a major, but it will help you to stand out above applicants that don't have minors.

There's also a "why not" element to tackling a minor. You're going to be spending the next few years of your life in school. You've paid for it, you've prepared for it and you probably won't get much free time to do anything other than study anyway. So find a minor and go for it.

As for what you should minor in, here are a few tips to help you choose:

Focus On Your Future Career

Your main focus should be to complete a minor that is similar to your major and can help you with your career. For instance, if you plan on taking a psychology major then you may want to tackle a minor related to sociology or even communication.

Obscure minors can help you as well, teaching you a little more about the world and giving you the tools you need to perform better and to look good doing it. But your first focus should be on those connected subjects.

Choose Something that Interests You

It is also important to choose a minor that actually interests you. You're going to be spending a lot of time working on it, and this will be easier if you actually have an interest in the subject. If it means sacrificing a little career relevance for the sake of finding a minor that will motivate you, then go for it.

No Regrets

While it is important to find minors that connect to your career and interest you, it's even more important to make sure that you don't leave yourself with any regrets. Don't tackle a minor/major just because you think it's the right thing to do. What happens if you complete your studies, get the job and then look back on your life and regret every minute of it?

Think where you will be ten years from now. Ask yourself where you want to be, what it would take to get you there, and then set about taking yourself on that journey.

Get Advice

Many colleges have **advisor programs** that can help you to choose the right path. They will take your motivation into consideration. They will take note of what your career path is, what your major is, what your goals are and where you see yourself in 5 or 10 years from now.

Sometimes you just need a little outside influence, someone who can take an objective viewpoint. It's a stressful time and all of that stress, that chaos and that indecision can lead to a lot of confusion. You can end up missing the forest for the trees, so make sure you consult someone else, be it an expert, a friend or even a fellow student.

Jobs That Will be Replaced by Machines in the Next Ten Years

If you look at the rapidly advancing technologies and the ways that these are changing the shape of the working environment, it's easy to see why so many employees are worried that their careers will be destroyed by technology, that they will be rendered obsolete by machines. And they are right to be scared, because the truth is that most industries have been affected by rapidly advancing technologies.

Even in the world of art, which many would label as one of the few careers always reliant on a human touch, machines are beginning to wise up. There are advanced computer programs that can **create modern masterpieces**, there is potential for future novels to be **penned by advanced AI**, and you don't need a great leap of faith to understand how advanced photo editing through programs like Photoshop could one day be controlled by machines as well.

The truth is that few careers are safe if you look deep into the future. Unless you're the one creating, operating, maintaining or profiting from the machines, then there are few jobs where we can guarantee you will always be needed. The good news is that machines never completely take over. Factories that are dominated by these mechanical beasts still need a human touch every now and then, and while machines win when it comes to reliability, cost and efficiency, humans will always be preferred in jobs that require interaction, reason and creativity.

To give you an idea of just how far and how fast this industry is changing, here are a list of the ten jobs that could be replaced by machines in the next decade.

Banking

Let's be honest, few of us will shed a tear if rich bankers lose their jobs. And that's just as well, because that's where things are heading. Computers can crunch numbers, run statistics and analyze data to determine where and how to invest. They can keep a bank operational from the backroom to the front.

When you think about it, your interactions with a bank are mostly automated anywhere. Bank balances can be received in a single automated phone call. Transfers can be made and bills can be paid online. Fraud checks, credit applications and other essential aspects of day-to-day banking are already automated in most institutions, so it should come as no surprise to learn that

these economic giants will soon be run by a small number of boardroom staff who do little more than discuss profits and keep the systems operational.

Construction

In factories, machines have taken away jobs once performed by a production line of human employees. They are more reliable, they work quickly, they can run throughout the night, and they cost a fraction of the price. This is why many construction companies are now trying to exploit similar machines on the construction site.

2015 saw the launch of a **machine known as SAM**, which was short for “Semi-Automated mason”. SAM is a fast, fully operational robot built to perform repetitive tasks on a building site.

When installed as a bricklayer SAM is precise and can lay nearly 4 times as many bricks than a human can on any given day. Bricklaying has always been an essential skill and one that is often in high demand during boom years. On average, a bricklayer can expect to earn **around \$50,000 a year**. That’s a lot of money for a construction company to spend and if they are presented with something that is cheaper and can work a great deal faster, they will take it.

Journalism and Content Writing

There is software out there that can write content for you with a few clicks of a mouse. This is freely available, but it’s also not very advanced. It requires the user to feed a story in, at which point it is supposed to offer an original version of that text. In theory this is useful to anyone looking for content and it’s bad news for content writers. In practice, it doesn’t so much as “create” a story as chew one up and spit it out.

Still, there are more advanced programs in use out there that are threatening the livelihoods of journalists and writers everywhere. The **Associated Press has one such machine** and for the most part, it’s hard to tell robot writing from human writing.

Journalism has always been an exciting career and one that has offered many viable options, but in the future a journalist could be nothing more than a researcher or an editor for a machine that is able to work faster and cheaper than they are.

Other Jobs

Taxi drivers could also see a reduced need for their skills. They are currently being undercut by inexperienced drivers working for Uber. In cities like New York and London, where taxi drivers train hard and spend big to get their license, this is especially heartbreaking. In years to come, they will suffer even more when self-driving cars take over.

Manufacturing will also be hit on most levels. Factory workers have already felt the squeeze, but supervisor, management and even maintenance workers could be phased out before long. The same goes for **farmers and farmhands**, as automated milking machines are already quicker and more efficient, while automated shearing machines are getting there.

Robots are taking over in **grocery stores and malls** as well. They are cleaning, they will soon be able to stock shelves and keep inventory, and they could even perform the duties of servers and shop assistants. And that's assuming that there will still be a need for actual high-street and out-of-town shops. Nearly **8 out of 10 Americans prefer to shop online**, where very little human interaction is required to complete their order.

The good news is that these are not really trades that you're likely to try and master/minor in. The bad news is that this dwindling need could be reflected in most jobs, which means you need to think hard and long about a future career. If the trade is already being taken over by machines then there could be little opportunity for you by the time you finish your studies. If the machines have yet to make the mark on your chosen career then there is a chance you will be able to study, work and live comfortably before anything happens.

Most Satisfying Jobs

Money isn't everything. It certainly plays a significant role in everything that we do and finding a job that pays well and has plenty of room for upward mobility is essential. But there is more to it than that. We've looked at careers that are less saturated than others, careers where you stand more of a chance of actually getting work and less chance of being replaced by a robot or by the next generation of eager hopefuls.

But it is also important to find a career that you will actually enjoy. You want a job that you will look forward to going to every morning, a job that will motivate you and not drag you down into a depressive dead-end. So, which jobs offer the most satisfaction?

Obviously, individual preference plays a role in this, but studies have been performed that look at the life satisfaction rating of a select group of employees and then combine them into an average score. Those studies have found that the **following jobs offer some of the most satisfaction**:

- **Members of the Clergy:** Although the mean income is below average, members of the clergy report the highest life satisfaction rating of all. Of course, they tend to be very religious and believe they are serving a greater purpose, so this only makes sense and it's unlikely to have the same effect on someone who is not as religious or spiritual.
- **CEOs:** This may be a high-stress position, but it's also one where you wield a lot of power and make a very lucrative wage. Although if you believe one particular Australian study, it could be because 1 in 5 CEOs display psychopathic traits and are therefore more **well adapted to stress and pressure**.
- **Secretaries:** This is the lowest paying job in the top ten and actually sits fourth on the list of jobs that offer the greatest life satisfaction. This is a hard one to decipher, but it may have something to do with the fact that many company employees and outsiders see a secretary as someone who can help them. As a result, they are more inclined to be polite and grateful to them, which can make a secretary's daily interactions much more pleasant than many careers that involve regular contact with the public.

- **Medical Practitioners:** They deal with injury and death, but they also get to help people and that clearly plays a role in their life satisfaction rating. After all, what can feel better at the end of a long day than knowing that you have eased someone's suffering or even saved their life?
- **Hotel Managers and Owners:** Dealing with the public isn't always easy and there are no doubt some very difficult and occasionally unhappy customers staying in hotels. But most people who stay in hotels are on vacation. They have let their hair down, they are there to have fun, and their enthusiasm and joy will no doubt rub off on the managers and owners. It's also a lucrative industry and one where good times always come when the sun is shining.

The Least Satisfying Jobs

Some of the jobs that scored the lowest included people who own, manage or work in a bar. These were around 270th on the list, with bar staff actually scoring a higher rating than bar owners. Tilers, telemarketers, security guards and window cleaners also scored very low on the life satisfaction rating. These are often considered to be entry-level jobs, so it won't come as much of a surprise, but it's not all about availability and enumeration.

Quantity surveyors were 234th on the list, and they can expect to earn more than four times as much as kitchen staff, who were ahead of them. Driving Instructors, chemical scientists and artists also returned a high average wage and a low life satisfaction rating.

It's clearly not about money. In most cases, the people who enjoy their jobs the least are the ones who either work alone, or work with people who make their life difficult—homeowners get angry when they are phoned by telemarketers; learner driver's send their instructors to the brink of insanity; bar staff have to deal with drunk and unpleasant customers.

Your psychology plays a role. You may be more or less susceptible to anger, frustration and/or depression, and that may make some of these jobs more or less appealing. Only you will have an idea of how you're likely to respond, but you should still focus on a career that will put a smile on your face day after day.