

During my time at Virginia Tech, many people have asked me the one question that almost every English major student fears: “What do you plan on doing with an English degree?” After almost four full years as an English major, I still continue to answer this question. However, my response has changed over the years. At first, my freshman self always answered the question with frustration and offense. Now, as a current senior, my reply is supported by my sense of confidence because I know that my experiences and coursework have prepared me for the future. Today, so many people underestimate the value of this degree, but as I reflect on my time as an English major at Virginia Tech, I know that I have gained so much knowledge from my peers, professors, and employers.

Within the English major itself, I am enrolled in the Professional Writing program. The concentration is meant to prepare students to write and develop documents for various organizations. This type of writing initially appealed to me because I felt that it gave me so many options for my future. In one of my classes, Creating User Documentation, I planned, researched, and wrote projects in diverse technical writing genres. My final project encompassed the skills that I learned throughout the semester. I collaborated with a classmate in the redesign of the Virginia Tech Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines for ergonomics in the workplace. The main goal of the project was to revise the original document for readability and usability. Not only did this course provide me with a solid experience in the technical writing field, but it also enhanced my skills in HTML and XML. On the other hand, I took a class called Designing Documents for Print, which explored a graphic design facet within Professional Writing. In this course, we designed multiple documents for clients including brochures, posters, and business cards. I learned about proper document design principles and improved my skills in Adobe software. Overall, my coursework has given me the opportunity to develop new skills for the workplace and to improve my proficiency in different software materials.

Outside of the classroom, I have had diverse work experiences that have helped me explore my career options for the future. One of my favorite writing experiences took place this past summer, when I held an internship at WholeFoods Magazine as an Editorial Writer. My main duty was to research and write articles that discussed the latest ingredient, product, and technology developments in the health industry. For two of my published articles, I had the pleasure of coordinating and conducting interviews with Howard Schiffer, the Founder of Vitamin Angels, and Onna Young, Board President of Nourish America. Other duties I had during my internship included strategizing the company’s B2B marketing plan through its social media platforms, proofreading articles for publication, and editing product write-ups for publication.

Now, as I approach graduation, I am extremely happy with what I have accomplished as an English major at Virginia Tech. I hope to set an example for others and show that my degree has given me workplace advantages such as critical thinking, communication, writing, and editing skills.