What Skills Does a Degree in English Provide?

English majors will develop a variety of skills that are attractive to employers across all fields. Some of the top skills a English major will develop include:

- Effective writing and oral communication skills
- Finding solutions to intricate problems
- Perceiving the world from multiple points of view
- Creating persuasive messages
- Influencing and persuading
- Gathering information
- Ability to read, reflect, and critique
- Using original sources
- Working with others
- Interpreting data
- Meeting deadlines and managing time
- Summarizing and presenting information
- Understanding components of complex problems
- Evaluating results
- Analyzing texts and information
- Perceiving patterns/structures
- Creativity
- Comparing/contrasting
- Synthesizing information
- Managing a project from conception to completion
- Writing creatively

In the National Association of Colleges & Employers’ (NACE) 2011 Job Outlook, the skills and abilities such employers are seeking were listed in order of importance. The top ten skills were:

- Communication (verbal)
- Strong work ethic
- Teamwork
- Analytical skills
- Initiative
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication (written)
- Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
- Computer skills
- Flexibility/adaptability

Organizations consistently seek candidates who possess a collection of “transferable skills” - skills acquired through your classes, extracurricular involvement, experience, and hobbies that are applicable to virtually any position. The skills listed above all fit into this category and students in the Arts & Humanities, as noted by professionals and academics alike, participate in a rich curriculum that develops their skills in many, if not all, of these areas and beyond, making them extremely marketable and valuable to potential employers. In the current Recruiting Trends report put out by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute, nearly 40% of employers indicate that they will seek candidates across “all majors,” focusing more on the skills and abilities needed in the organization than on a specific academic discipline.

Why English?

The English major provides a gateway to many careers in a service and information economy by developing a broad skill set in its students.

Professional publications, foundations, international business, institutions of law and government, schools and universities, public relations and communications firms, and science and technology companies require leadership and personnel with sophisticated communication skills. Practice in analytical thinking, complex writing, research, and persuasion, synthesized with a knowledge base derived from broad reading make English majors attractive to employers in the non-profit, government and corporate sectors, as well as to a range of graduate and professional schools.
What Can I Do With an English Degree?

An English degree can be shaped to fit a variety of disciplines and the broad skill set you acquire allows you to apply your knowledge in many exciting areas. From the University Career Center’s most recent graduate survey, upon graduation ARHU students entered into a range of dynamic industries including:

Arts, Government, Academia/Education, Non-Profit/Philanthropy, Health Services/Healthcare Communications/Media, Advertising, Technology, Food & Hospitality Services, Entertainment, Social Services and more!

Sample job titles include:

- Advertising
  - Copywriter
  - Analyst
- Columnist/Commentator
- Grant Writer
- Speech Writer
- Communications Manager
- Congressional Aide
- Editor
- Curator
- Research Assistant
- Librarian
- Underwriter
- Professor
- Teacher
- Hotel Manager
- Labor Relations Specialist
- Social Worker
- Attorney
- Commentator
- Retail Sales
- Entertainment Agent
- Marketing Coordinator
- Fundraiser
- Technical Writer
- Publisher
- Special Events Coordinator
- Human Resource Specialist
- Media Planner
- Journalist
- Stockbroker
- Interpreter/Translator
- Paralegal
- Literary Agent
- Lobbyist

Gaining Experience With Your Degree

It’s never too early to start your search for experience. Ideally, you should begin at least one semester in advance. Make an appointment to talk with the University Career Center & The President’s Promise and/or your department internship coordinator and faculty advisor. Research shows that having an internship (or multiple internships) drastically increases your ability to obtain a full-time position upon graduation, especially since most employers use their intern pool as a direct talent pipeline. The most recent NACE Internship & Co-op Survey reported that 44.6% of employers’ hires came from their internship programs. The College of Arts & Humanities ensures that students can have an internship experience prior to graduating, offering numerous credit-granting courses for experiential education at the college and departmental level.

Internships enable students to gain a sense of what it would be like to work in a particular field as they develop marketable skills and establish contacts that may lead to a job offer upon graduation. To get started, visit the University Career Center & The President’s Promise website (www.Careers.umd.edu) and sign up for a Careers4Terps account, a free web-based job posting service, to search for internships and employment.