

English

What is the English major?

English majors read, discuss, and write about literature. Literary works include poetry, prose, and drama but may also be drawn from film, journalism, and television. Study focuses on the critical, historical, linguistic, and cultural contexts of these works. In addition, you practice your own writing, developing your language-use and composition skills. A working knowledge of literature is an invaluable component of any liberal arts education. It is tremendous preparation for a future in law (or any professional training that requires interpreting written material), journalism, publishing, graduate studies, and just about anything else.

Occupational opportunities

English majors not only learn about a great literary tradition, but they also develop first-rate writing and critical-thinking skills that can be valuable in a variety of careers. Besides teaching, many of them go into business, law, and library science. They are said to make excellent trainees in computer programming. In a wide range of careers, their humanistic skills often allow them to advance higher than those who prepare through more specifically career-oriented curricula. Essentially, the English major is one of the most versatile and valuable majors a student can choose. Some career options available to English majors are:

- Actor
- Advertising executive
- Artist
- Auctioneer
- Bar/club manager
- Book publishing professional
- Editor
- Film director
- Public relations professional
- Teacher
- Television producer
- Television reporter
- Theologian
- Web editor
- Writer

Graduate Study Required

- Attorney
- Corporate lawyer
- Trial lawyer

Career Snapshot: Editor

Editors review, rewrite, and edit the work of writers. They may also do original writing. An editor's responsibilities vary with the employer and type and level of editorial position held. Editorial duties may include planning the content of books, technical journals, trade magazines, and other general-interest publications. Editors also decide what material will appeal to readers, review and edit drafts of books and articles, offer comments to improve the work, and suggest possible titles. In addition, they may oversee the production of the publications. In the book-publishing industry, an editor's primary responsibility is to review proposals for books and decide whether to buy the publication rights from the author.

Major newspapers and newsmagazines usually employ several types of editors. The executive editor oversees assistant editors, who have responsibility for particular subjects, such as local news, international news, feature stories, or sports. Executive editors generally have the final say about what stories are published and how they are covered. The managing editor usually is responsible for the daily operation of the news department. Assignment editors determine which reporters will cover a given story. Copy editors mostly review and edit a reporter's copy for accuracy, content, grammar, and style.

In smaller organizations, such as small daily or weekly newspapers or the membership or publications departments of nonprofit or similar organizations, a single editor may do everything or share responsibility with only a few other people. Executive and managing editors typically hire writers, reporters, and other employees. They also plan

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budgets and negotiate contracts with freelance writers, sometimes called “stringers” in the news industry. In broadcasting companies, *program directors* have similar responsibilities.

Editors and program directors often have assistants, many of whom hold entry-level jobs. These assistants, such as copy editors and *production assistants*, review copy for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling and check the copy for readability, style, and agreement with editorial policy. They suggest revisions, such as changing words and rearranging sentences, to improve clarity or accuracy. They also carry out research for writers and verify facts, dates, and statistics. Production assistants arrange page layouts of articles, photographs, and advertising; compose headlines; and prepare copy for printing. *Publication assistants* who work for publishing houses may read and evaluate manuscripts submitted by freelance writers, proofread printers’ galleys, and answer letters about published material. Production assistants on small newspapers or in radio stations compile articles available from wire services or the Internet. answer phones. and make photocopies.

Skills and Abilities

The skills and abilities one learn as an English major can be applied to any career requiring expertise in the use of language as a means of communication. Personal characteristics of English majors typically include: curiosity, creativity, critical thinking skills, self-motivation, and perseverance. Despite their differing responsibilities, journalists, teachers, sales representatives, and politicians all use their skill with language to perform their jobs. Representative skills and abilities of degree holders in English are listed below:

<u>Research</u>	<u>Critical thinking and analysis</u>	<u>Writing</u>	<u>Speaking</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designing/directing projects• Organizing ideas/information• Developing hypotheses• Using information resources• Creating interpretations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyzing and summarizing ideas• Comparing information• Developing critical evaluations• Thinking independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abstracting information• Interpreting data• Editing and revising• Writing concisely and creatively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Influencing and persuading• Presenting alternative viewpoints• Making oral presentations

Additional Resources

U.S. Government’s Occupational Outlook Handbook
<http://stats.bls.gov/oco>

Modern Language Association (MLA)
26 Broadway
3rd Floor
New York, NY 10004-1789
(646) 576-5000
www.mla.org

TV Jobs: Broadcast employment services
www.tvjobs.com

Media Bistro: Jobs and events in the media.
www.mediabistro.com

Investigative reporters and editors
www.ire.org

Advertising and media jobs
www.nationjob.com

Job links for journalists
www.newslink.org

Authorlink: Information services for writers, editors, literary agents and publishers
www.authorlink.com

Creative freelancers
www.freelancers.com