

The D&E English Major: Preparing you for success and for thoughtful engagement in the world

A Career Guide

“An English major? So are you going to teach or something?”

People commonly misunderstand the benefits and unique qualities that English offers to students during their four years of college *and* for the rest of their professional lives. The purpose of this guide is to show you how successful a driven, intelligent, and savvy English major can be and to give you the tools to be that person.

The primary learning outcome for the English major at D&E is to contribute an original argument to the scholarly conversation. This seems simplistic, but the ability to do this actually encapsulates a wide range of skills and a diverse body of knowledge that enable English majors to pursue significant, rewarding, and, yes, even lucrative careers in the years following graduation. Our alumni include news reporters, social media writers, novelists, teachers, freelance writers, filmmakers, paralegals, nonprofit workers, graduate students, and entrepreneurs. But even this list only scratches the surface at the possible careers for English majors.

In this guide, you will find the following information:

- Specific skills English majors have (which you can use to help market yourself to potential employers and graduate schools)
- Types of professions open to English graduates (a wide-ranging list!)
- Interviewing strategies to help you “sell” your English major
- Information about what co-curricular activities you can be doing *now* to make you successful after graduation
- Advice and tips from D&E English alumni
- Links to resources that will empower you to pursue your goals
- Appendices for applying to graduate programs

Specific skills English majors have, or what makes an English major marketable

As one jobs website explains, “While an employer may not be looking for someone who has effectively tracked class identity throughout [Jane Austen’s] *Mansfield Park*, they may be looking for a strong writer capable of thorough research” (“English,” sec. 3). Know what you *can* do and how to translate that into what the employer wants.

There are five, transferrable skill sets that help English majors stand out: Communication skills, Advanced reading and writing, Critical thinking and analysis, Imagination and creativity, and Empathy.

Communication skills

Unlike some other graduates, English majors have the ability to convey ideas and information clearly and concisely, both in writing and in speech. This skill comes not only from informal and formal writing assignments, but also the seminar-style classes students take at all levels (100-400) of the English major. Importantly, employers also value the flip-side of communication—listening. Successful employees don't stop at communicating *their* ideas; they can also listen to *others'* (i.e. a boss's, colleague's, clients) ideas *and* synthesize, summarize, and/or respond to those ideas in writing and speech.

Remember, to market this skill, you must be a meticulous editor and proofreader. Learn punctuation rules *now*. (See the delightful *Eats Shoot and Leaves* by Lynda Truss for more information.) Perfect your style with E.B. White's classic *The Elements of Style* while your undergraduate grades can still benefit.

Advanced reading and writing

English majors spend vast amounts of time reading and writing for their courses; as a result, their skills in these areas are quite advanced, especially their heightened awareness of the power of language, well-developed vocabulary, and understanding of style. Moreover, a sophisticated knowledge of various literary traditions gives English majors a leg-up in understanding and writing multiple genres.

Cultivate your awareness of different genres. Notice how each one has its own rules and rationale. Think about how this knowledge helps you approach (and work with) new genres in a more insightful way.

Critical thinking and analysis

Because English majors often grapple with complex texts, they know how to read critically and analyze deeply. Many professions, especially law and policy work, require the analysis of complex data. English majors' can market their ability to notice and make sense of patterns, connections, and even systems (of a sort) by offering examples of how this skill will benefit the industry or company they're entering.

In your English classes, you will develop this skill by close reading texts (and explaining your analysis in essays), but you should also be aware of how your other classes (e.g. philosophy, religion, and science) help you cultivate critical thinking and analysis.

Imagination and creativity

English majors tend to be highly creative—and they have been since they were children. This creativity, paired with a supple imagination, can lead these students to be highly innovative. These skills will be valued in nearly all industries but perhaps most surprisingly in development (or fundraising), marketing, computer science, and entrepreneurship.

Take every opportunity to think “outside of the box” while maintaining control and perspective. Think how you can channel your eccentric imagination into a tool that you can market to future employers.

Empathy

English majors spend years reading literature from different time periods, places, and perspectives. This knowledge allows them to build an empathetic understanding of human motivations, beliefs, opinions, and ideas as well as a big-picture perspective that encourages effective teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal skills.

Familiarize yourself with the science behind empathetic reading (see links below), so you can speak knowledgably and confidently about it. Also, be aware of how your constant engagement with difference (in texts you're reading *and* writing) helps you cultivate empathy.

What you do as an English major	How that skill translates into the work world	What professions will value this skill (note: this list is not exhaustive; most of these skills apply to all professions.)	How you specifically possess or utilize this skill (student completes this column)
Read difficult, complex, and (sometimes) long texts	Read and retain an extensive amount of information or data	Editing, Publishing, Technical writing, Law	
Analyze texts, including the relationships between different components in the text (e.g. setting, plot, tone, character)	Evaluate and synthesize information to determine relationships between different components	Any research profession, Law, Technical writing	
Analyze characters	Understand social dynamics in order to be a more effective leader, team player, and motivator	Management, Public Relations, Human Resources, Teaching	
Participate in class discussions	Communicate effectively and demonstrate confidence in one's ideas	Business, Law, Management, Writing, Teaching	
Lead class discussions	Facilitate/moderate discussions in order to identify problems and find solutions	Development/Fundraising, Curriculum Development, Entrepreneurship, Management, Consulting	

Present ideas in informal and formal presentations	Prepare and present information to clients, staff, and management with a developed awareness of audience	Business, Marketing, PR, HR, Teaching	
Write responses, journal entries, and other short pieces	Effectively and quickly communicate your ideas in a professional manner	Social media specialist, Content writer	
Write seminar papers	Develop and convey complex ideas in an accessible and polished format	Technical writing, Grant writing, Law, Management, Consulting	
Research topics, ideas, and historical information	Understand the research process, including the questions, stages, and outcomes involved	Research professions, Law, Technical writing, Grant writing	
Write literature reviews reporting the scholarly “conversation” on certain topics, ideas, and trends	Synthesize information for managers, clients, and customers in a clear and coherent way	Writing professions, Law, Marketing, Business, Teaching	
Read, understand, and apply literary and/or rhetorical theory	Comprehend challenging ideas and employ them in innovative ways to create something new and/or solve problems	Marketing, Business, Entrepreneurship, Curriculum Development, Writing professions	
Revise your writing	Receive feedback/criticism in order to update written material	Writing professions, Curriculum Development, Marketing, PR	
Peer review or workshop your and others’ writing	Give and receive constructive criticism in order to enhance products and services	Writing professions, Marketing, Research, Consulting	
Edit and proofread your writing	Edit and proofread your and others’ writing	Editing, Publishing, Print media, Digital Media, Marketing, PR	

Build healthy working relationships with your fellow majors	Make and sustain healthy working relationships, contribute to team synergy, and network with clients, customers, and colleagues	Management, PR, Human Resources, Teaching, Law	
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Types of professions for English majors

Although there are few vocations targeted *specifically* at English majors, the skills learned studying English qualify graduates for a wide variety of jobs in different areas, including law, non-profit work, writing professions, the business and corporate worlds, teaching, program development, and government, to name a few.

Because English can lead to so many different career paths, it is smart to identify an area of interest and *plan* to gain the right skills, experiences, and qualifications to enter that path. In other words, you can just do a straight English major, but it's a good idea to supplement it with an additional area of study for more specialized positions.

Writing professions

To pursue a career as a writer, your number one rule is to be open to all possibilities. After all, even fast food restaurants need someone to write their instruction manuals. And did you know Kroger puts out a quarterly magazine? The editor was an English major at a small liberal arts college. Your number two rule is to learn as much as you can about the rules of writing (i.e. conventions, genres, styles) as soon as possible.

Some career options

- **Print media:** You can find positions at consumer newspapers and magazines as well as trade publications, like *Publishers Weekly*, *Practical Winery & Vineyard*, and *Architectural Digest*, geared for people working in specific businesses or industries. These positions might include content writer, reporter, or copyeditor. One important thing to note: many print media jobs are being replaced by or folded into digital media jobs, so you might be able to (or need to) do both.
- **Social media and digital writing:** You can also find positions exclusively as a digital content writer in pretty much any industry (from business and entertainment to education and government) because everyone has a web presence. You can also look at writing for specific Internet sites. Note: a recent grad just got a job in Nashville as a social media specialist.
- **Technical writing:** You can also get jobs in science and medical writing; software and hardware documentation; information technology writing; human-computer interface

design; and corporate communication. Typically, these are the most lucrative writing jobs.

- Grant and proposal writing: Many/most nonprofit organizations run on grants. That means their funding comes from foundations and institutions whose sole purpose is to fund certain types of work. You can get a job writing arts grants, science or technology grants, education grants, and so on. Really successful grant writers, especially those who are employed full-time, often make competitive salaries.
- Résumé writing: Professional résumé writers are increasingly in demand, not only to write résumés and cover letters but also to build LinkedIn presences for clients. They usually charging \$250-\$1000 per résumé, and a LinkedIn profile summary alone can bring in up to \$1000 for executive level. These writers often branch out into career development and consulting, either owning their own companies or freelancing as ghost writers.
- Freelance writing: This category is a bit amorphous. It can mean writing pieces for organization, institutions, or businesses geographically near you or for companies far away. It can include content you are already familiar with (e.g. a political topic of interest to you) or content you have to learn more about (e.g. a technical process or system). It can be grant writing, scientific writing, creative writing, or digital writing. These jobs can pay little (\$5/piece on fiverr.com) or a lot. Companies like using freelance writers because the companies pay per job; freelancers do not earn salaries or benefits, which makes this type of career a little unstable but also incredibly flexible.
- Novelist/poet: Many English majors dream of having fulfilling careers as published (and even famous) novelists and poets. It should not be surprising that only a select few make it that far. That said, though it is incredibly difficult to earn a living as a creative writer exclusively, many novelists and poets also maintain related jobs (including part- or full-time teaching and freelance writing) that give them the time and flexibility to pursue their work. There are also plenty of self-publishing opportunities, including Kindle Direct Publishing, for writers who just want to get their work out there. You may consider getting an M.F.A. in Creative Writing to help you establish a network in the profession, but it is best to apply to programs that offer assistantships and fellowships. As with the M.A. and Ph.D., it is best if your M.F.A. degree is fully-funded since it is highly unlikely that you will be able to pay back your loans by publishing a best-selling novel right out of your graf program. (Please see Appendix C for one of our alumni's M.F.A. experiences.)

Some employers to consider

- Broadcast media companies: television, radio, and movie
- Local or state political campaigns (if you are also into politics)
- Large corporations
- Management, scientific, and technical consulting companies
- Technical industries
- Retailers, especially electronics
- Engineering firms
- Healthcare industry
- Computer systems design companies
- Software publishers
- Departments of Homeland Security, Defense, and State

- Veterans Affairs
- National Archives and records administration
- Colleges and universities

Some tips if you're interested in a writing profession¹:

- Select a minor and electives based on the industry you might land in.
- If you're interested in pursuing digital media work, consider taking classes in Computer Science and/or Graphic Design at D&E. There are also free online MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that help you gain these skills.
- Write for campus publications such as *The Senator*, *Aurora*, or the departmental webpage. Start building a portfolio.
- Talk to a freelance writer. Become familiar with the proposal and submission process involved in freelance writing. Go on and start freelancing before you graduate. See fiverr.com for immediate freelancing opportunities (\$5 per piece).
- Gain as much experience as possible through volunteer positions, internships, shadowing, or part-time jobs.
- Develop strong grammar and language skills.
- Grant writing is a specific genre, so if you're interested in this path, read as much as you can about the genre and consult with or shadow grant writers.
- Consider a second language, especially Spanish and/or Chinese.
- Be patient and persistent in starting a career in writing. You will experience lots of rejection; use it to improve your writing every chance you get.
- Take free online courses to learn marketable technology skills like social media certification, programming (e.g. Java, Python, SQL, and C), statistical analysis, software development (especially web and mobile development), information security, video editing, graphic design, and cloud technology. A recent grad has used Coursera for some of these skills.

Leadership and teamwork professions

English departments tend to produce confident and compassionate graduates. The confidence comes from seminar-style classes that require students to develop original ideas in speech and writing. The compassion comes from the empathy students gain when they listen to their classmates and professors and read a range of literary and critical voices. This combination of confidence and compassion makes for excellent leadership and teamwork abilities, which many professions value just as much as good writing skills. Consider how you can use your strengths to pursue one of the following careers.

Options for leadership and teamwork professions

- Law: English majors make great lawyers because of their attention to detail, excellent writing skills, and analytical minds. You can get a paralegal job right out of college, or you can pursue a J.D. (i.e. Doctor of Jurisprudence), a three-year graduate degree from an accredited law school. (Please see Appendix A for information on the application process.) Once someone earns a J.D., he/she is qualified for many fields: Law assistance,

¹ Many strategies listed in this handbook are adapted from "What Can I Do With This Major?," a website produced by the University of Tennessee's Center for Career Development.

Prosecution, Defense, Contractual law, Corporate law, Nonprofit or public interest, Government, Mediation, and Lobbying.

- **Management:** English majors often make effective managers because they are good communicators and problem-solvers. Nearly every industry needs managers, so there are lots of options in this field. You will probably need some extra training, so you might want to consider obtaining a M.B.A. (i.e. Master's in Business Administration) to pursue this path. (See Appendix B for more information from one of our alumni.). However, you should definitely weigh the pros and cons of obtaining a M.B.A. right after college. If the degree will reap bigger earning potential, then go for it. If not, go to work for an employer who will pay for the M.B.A..
- **Consulting:** There are many options for consulting, including retail effectiveness, human resources, operations, information technology. Consultants are problem-solvers, good communicators, creative/innovative, smart, and industry-knowledgeable. Usually, consultants have at least five years of experience in the field before being successful.
- **Publishing and Editing:** Within the publishing industry, there are many career paths, including administration, promotion, publicity, circulation, sales, advertising, marketing, production, and of course editing. If you have impeccable editing and proofreading skills and can work in multiple genres and style sheets, consider a career in editing.
- **Marketing:** All companies, agencies, and institutions have employees whose main job is to market a "product" (sometimes a tangible product, sometimes a service). These jobs require excellent writing skills, creativity, and networking abilities. If you are interested in this profession, considering a double major (or minor) in Marketing.
- **Advertising:** You can find jobs in advertising in two places: very large companies that have in-house advertising departments and stand-alone advertising agencies. Positions include creative services like copy writing, art direction, and web design; account management and planning; and production.
- **Sales:** These jobs include traditional sales industries like insurance, car, pharmaceuticals, and real estate but also the developing industry of direct sales (e.g. Avon, Rodan + Fields, Thirty-One Gifts, Stella & Dot).
- **Public Relations:** The Public Relations (or PR) field manages a company's public persona, or how it presents itself to the public. As a PR representative for a specific company, you might be responsible for media relations, social media accounts, and/or digital and print research, writing, and editing. As an employee in a PR firm, you would manage and coordinate clients' accounts.
- **Human Resources:** As with marketing and public relations, most companies have a Human Resources (or HR) department, consisting of one or more employee whose job is to oversee other employees' benefits, salaries, grievances, promotions, and trainings. Entry-level positions allow you to gain experience.
- **Development and Fundraising:** All nonprofit organizations have employees whose primary work is to raise money through networking, campaigns, and grants. These workers are innovative, savvy, and excellent at communicating with others. They can possess both "big picture" vision and great attention to detail.
- **Media:** Traditional and new media have leadership and teamwork positions that might be good for English majors. Consider a job as a production assistant in television or radio, a social media writer, or a website coordinator. If you also have an interest in Theater, consider positions in dramaturgy (i.e. translating script to stage).

- Entrepreneurship: English majors tend to make successful entrepreneurs because they are creative and confident. Consider pairing your English major with a major or minor in Business or Computer Science.

Employers to consider

- Nonprofit organizations
- Corporations
- Local, independent businesses
- Federal, state, and local government
- Colleges and universities
- Law firms
- News media
- University presses
- Special interest magazine
- Independent publishers
- Alternative media publishers (e.g., e-books, audiobooks)
- Sunday newspaper supplements
- Association, trade, religious, or educational publications
- Advertising agencies
- Public Relations firms
- Theaters (see dramaturgy)
- Museums
- Hotels, resorts, other hospitality-related businesses
- Retailers
- Banks
- Real estate agencies
- Insurance companies

Tips for entering teamwork and leadership professions

- Intern, shadow, and/or volunteer in your chosen industry. You may also consider conducting informational interviews with people in the industry to learn more about it.
- Be prepared to start in an entry-level position and work your way up.
- Develop strong research and writing skills.
- Have a strong working knowledge of the different theories of leadership and teamwork. Consider doing a research project on these topics to achieve this goal.
- Supplement your English major with a minor (or another major) in Communication or Business.
- Attend job fairs and association conferences to network with businesses as well as learn more about the HR (Human Resources) and/or L&D (Leadership and Development) fields.
- For law specifically
 - Participate in the Calliduz Debate Team to strengthen communication skills.
 - Maintain an excellent GPA and secure strong faculty recommendations to gain law school admittance. Plan to study for and take the LSAT (i.e. law school entrance exam) the year before you plan on studying.

- For management
 - Earn a minor in business or management.
 - Volunteer for leadership roles in student and campus organizations.
 - Gain experience as a treasurer of a campus or community organization.
- For editing
 - Work in the Writing Center.
 - Volunteer to proofread and/or edit student publications.
 - Take a leadership role in *The Senator Newspaper* and/or *Aurora Literary Magazine*.
- For publishing
 - Look for positions with local dailies and alternative weeklies in your town.
 - Volunteer to write or edit publications with local nonprofit organizations to gain experience.
 - Be prepared to relocate to cities with a publishing presence (e.g. New York City).
 - Participate in a summer publishing institute (e.g. the six-week NYU Summer Publishing Institute).
- For marketing, advertising, sales, and PR
 - Take classes in communication, business, or art.
 - Take classes in statistics for market research positions.
 - Build a portfolio for creative positions.
 - Volunteer to run sales and promotions for student organizations or private businesses.
 - Volunteer to write publications for nonprofit or student organizations.
 - Take free online courses to learn marketable technology skills like social media certification, programming (e.g. Java, Python, SQL, and C), statistical analysis, software development (especially web and mobile development), information security, video editing, graphic design, and cloud technology. A recent grad has used Coursera for some of these skills.

Teaching and mentoring professions

And, yes, some English majors do teach. But don't think teaching is limited to public education, though of course there are many, wonderful opportunities on that path. There are also a range of other ways to teach and mentor students at all levels and ages. And there are a variety of reasons to pursue one of these professions: if you feel called to help children, adolescents, or teenagers learn to read, write, and love literature; if you long to travel and live in new places; if you want to pursue advanced degrees and teach or mentor adult learners; if you want to work from home in your pajamas, if you feel called to a helping profession; or if you want to educate others about the world around them.

Options in Teaching and Mentoring Professions

- K-12 education: To teach English in grades 5-12, you will need to major in English education and minor in Education at D&E. You will also need to pursue certification and, eventually, a M.A. in Teaching (M.A.T.) or Education (M.Ed.). Also be cognizant of positions beyond the classroom, including administration, counseling, and tutoring.
- Higher Education: To teach at the college-level, you need at minimum a Master's of Arts degree in the field you wish to teach. With a M.A. or M.F.A. (usually 2-year degrees),

you might be eligible to teach full-time at some community colleges and part-time at four-year institutions based on market demand. To teach full-time at a four-year institution, you usually will need a Ph.D. in English or Rhetoric/Composition (usually 5-7 years beyond the M.A.). As a part-time instructor (or adjunct), you are responsible for working with a department to teach an established curriculum. As a full-time professor, you will also work on committees, design programs, mentor/advise students, recruit new students, and conduct and present research. Also be aware of the non-teaching positions in higher ed, including Admissions, Retention, Academic Support, Student Affairs, and Study Abroad.

- English as a Second Language (ESL) education: Teaching English to non-native speakers is a high-demand field that will let you travel the world. There are positions teaching every age level and every fluency level in every country on Earth. There are even positions teaching ESL online. You can pursue a Master's degree in TESOL to increase your knowledge and marketability.
- Library education: To be a librarian, you will need to earn a Master's in Library Science (M.L.S.) degree (usually a two- or three-year program). Specializations include Archives and Records Management, Art Librarianship, Chemical Information, Children's and Young Adult Services, Data Science, Digital Humanities, Digital Libraries, Information Architecture, Music Librarianship, and Rare Books and Manuscripts.
- Adult education: This category can include many different positions, including those listed elsewhere in this section, but it also includes adult literacy education and G.E.D. instructorships. Positions will usually include one-on-one and group instruction.
- Instructional or curriculum development: If you are interested in education but don't want to be a classroom teacher, you can also work as an instructional designer or curriculum developer. In these positions (available from early to higher education), you will work closely with administrators and teachers to identify learning outcomes, assignments, and texts that help students gain the knowledge and skills they need to progress to the next level in their schooling. To qualify, you may need to have experience teaching in a similar curriculum.
- Business, corporate, or government education/training: It sometimes surprises people that teaching or instructional jobs are available in the business, corporate, and government sectors. Procedures, policies, and systems frequently change, and employees in Human Resources (HR) or Learning and Development (L&D) must create materials to help their coworkers understand and comply with these changes. These jobs include preparing training materials and curricula, developing and giving presentations, leading workshops, and facilitating the learning process.
- Summer camp or outdoor recreational education: If you also love the outdoors, you might want to consider a career in outdoor recreational education. English and American literature has a strong tradition of nature writing, which might complement new fields in psychology, including ecotherapy or wilderness therapy.
- Online education: This category includes instruction in any content area—writing, literacy, ESL, literary studies, library science, corporate or business training—that is designed and conducted online. To pursue this path, you will need to first qualify for teaching your content, then seek out opportunities for online instruction.

Employers to consider

- Public, private, or charter schools
- Community colleges
- Schools in the U.S. or abroad that need ESL teachers
- For-profit educational institutions
- Literacy centers
- Libraries
- Museums
- Parks, zoos, tourist attractions
- Test prep agencies
- Corporations with vibrant training programs
- Government agencies
- Career counseling agencies
- Independent contractor/consultant/life coach

Tips for entering teaching and mentoring professions

- Gain certification to teach multiple ages and/or subjects in public schools.
- Pursue a specialization, or certification, or endorsement. A Reading Specialist will be much more marketable than someone with just a Bachelor's degree.
- Maintain a high grade point average and secure strong faculty recommendations for graduate school.
- Plan to attend graduate school in Higher Ed Administration or Library and Information Science to pursue those fields. Gain experience by working or volunteering in those fields.
- Volunteer to work with children through Big Brother/Sister programs, Energy Express, tutoring, summer camps, YMCAs, and the like.
- Consider a double major or minor that will give you a leg up.

Interviewing tips/strategies to help you “sell” your English major

- Use D&E Career Services as much as possible. Contact Lisa Reed about résumés, cover letters, and mock interviews.
- Join LinkedIn, Opportunity, and/or Upwork.
- Join one or two associations relevant to your career goals. This is a savvy way to know what's going on in your field and how to market yourself best. It's also a great (and under-utilized!) way to network and make yourself stand out.
- Before you apply and/or interview, be sure to research *and* use the language of the industry (and job ad) to tailor your résumé and cover letter. If you're asked to submit a writing sample, be sure you follow the instructions *exactly* (and definitely send a clean, unmarked copy).
- Emphasize your written and oral communication skills, ability to sort through and analyze complex ideas/information, experience in teamwork and leadership. Basically tailor the above chart to you.

When interviewing...

- Prepare by researching company and industry thoroughly. This will impress interviewers.
- Have answers for common interview questions.
- Be able to articulate how you 1.) already have experience doing or 2.) intend to learn how to do *every component listed in job ad*.
- If appropriate, bring a portfolio of writing samples, including short pieces (business letters, memos, press releases, articles) and longer pieces (essays or articles relevant to the position).
- Dress the part. (Otherwise known as fake it ‘til you make it.)
- Practice being confident but not cocky.
- Own your quirkiness, but don’t be too weird.
- During the interview, focus on four tasks business professional Marben Bland outlines:²
 - Inform – Articulate the experiences, expertise, and intangibles that make you the only choice for the job.
 - Impress – With your knowledge, intelligence, charm and wit that you are the only choice for the job.
 - Convince – Prove that what you will bring makes you the only choice for the job.
 - Confirm – That this company and everything about it, especially its people, products and direction is the only choice for your next job.
- Have questions prepared, including one or two about the specific position. Here are a few other good questions to ask if there is enough time:
 - What are the company’s strengths and weaknesses?
 - What is the most important trait necessary to be successful at this job?
 - For this particular position, what do you think *I* bring to the table?
 - How are new ideas generated? Acted upon? Rewarded?
 - How would you define the company’s personality? Its culture?
 - When can I expect to hear from you about the position?
 - Is it okay if I follow up in a week?
- Send a thank you note (or email if it will be a quick decision).

Co-curriculars for English majors, or what to do now to get your dream job

What you do as an English major	How that skill translates into the work world	How you specifically possess or utilize this skill (student completes this column)

² See Marben Bland, “The 4 Questions You Must Ask During An Interview.”

Editing and writing with the <i>Aurora</i> and the <i>Senator</i>	Solicit content, copy-edit, and manage other writers, meeting deadlines and putting together a finished product	
Tutoring/consulting at D&E or elsewhere	Understand and adapt to social dynamics in order to help other people grasp material	
Internships, for a semester or the summer	Understand the possibilities and problems associated with an industry while building professional habits and skills	
Shadowing	Understand the possibilities and problems associated with an industry while observing professionals	
Volunteering/Community Service	Enhance network and engage in community	
Work study	Build good work habits, including dependability, punctuality, professionalism	
Study abroad or away, for a semester or the summer	Gain exposure to different cultures and build empathy with those who are different	
Language acquisition	Strengthen marketability and showcase intellectual curiosity	
Publish	Demonstrate writing skills and drive to succeed	

Present at conferences	Demonstrate confidence in communicating ideas	
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A word from our graduates: Advice from English alumni

- 1) Be flexible. Maybe we all want to be authors, poet-laureates, hard-hitting journalists, etc., but as a recent graduate, if you can find a way to pay your bills doing something writing-related, that's your first small success. Grow from where you are while keeping one eye on where you want to go.
- 2) Never, ever burn a bridge, and likewise, take no connection for granted. Every single person you meet might be able to help you someday, and most are very willing to help provided you haven't given them a reason not to. Be polite. Show up to work/events on time. These little things count for a lot when someone's friend asks them for a quick recommendation.
- 3) Don't lose sight of your goals. Going back to #1, paying the bills doesn't mean you have to put your dreams on the back burner. Saying you don't have enough time, resources, or energy to do the thing you want to do is, in my opinion at least, just makes excuses to cover up the fact that you're scared or unmotivated. If you want something badly enough, prioritize it, put energy into it every single day, and don't get so wrapped up in your day job hustle that you lose track of your big-picture plans.

Cassidy Dickens '16: I got hired as the Copy Productions Editor for Life's a Beach Publications in Destin, FL a couple of months after graduating from D&E. Since then, I've been writing all the articles for our in-house magazine...and editing our other publications (which are mostly other visitors' guides, Chamber of Commerce Directories, etc. Nothing super glamorous). Through this job, I recently met a woman who offered me a position as the Content Writer/Social Media Specialist for her all-female web development company. In about two weeks, I'll be leaving Life's a Beach and moving to Nashville, TN, where I'll continue pursuing a career as a singer/songwriter while writing web/social media content alongside a team of super progressive, intelligent young women. (yay!)

After I graduated and moved to California, I spent a lot of time trying to figure how what it took. Then I finally decided to do what I liked. As soon as I did that, everything changed: the work became easier, and I enjoyed it more. Find out what your tastes are and make things that reflect that. But don't be obstinate—be open to feedback. Make sure the thing you want to do is as good as it can be.

Jason Headley '96: Not an English major! Jason was a science major at D&E but pursued music and advertising before he became a screenwriter and filmmaker. Check out his website, jasonheadley.com, for more information.

1. Figure out what it is that you are willing to spend your time doing, and then prepare to prove that you are able to do it to the scrutinizing world.
Whether pursuing a degree, employment, writing a novel, etc., all take a considerable devotion of time. It's worth exploring your interests and abilities to decide which path(s) makes the most sense to you. Don't become a hairdresser if you're not interested in fashion-- even if you can braid really well. Alternatively, if you love style trends and can braid, cut, and dye hair-- don't expect employers to sweep you up without the credentials, or at least a portfolio to back it up.
*Bonus: If there is something that you are willing to do that most people don't want to do, you will rarely find yourself without income. For me, it's working outside in all types of weather. A willingness to relocate for employment can help too.
2. Research everything you can about an employer before accepting an offer. Know how their former and current clients and employees perceive them. Find reviews online from glassdoor, the Better Business Bureau, yelp, trip advisor, etc., and ask tough questions of them in the interview process. "How long have you worked here? What attracted you to this organization? What about the organization entices you to stay?"
3. Take initiative.
Especially at a new job, if you see a need that isn't being filled, make a plan and take action against the void-- in some jobs that void might be as mundane as not having anything to occupy a certain span of time; I suggest deep cleaning the break room, pulling weeds, or organizing files if you have absolutely nothing to do at work. Someone is bound to notice the initiative, and it's better than getting caught snapchatting or playing Pokemon Go-- millennials get a bad rep in the workplace.
4. Be persistent and gracious.
Most applications are done online, and you may never see or hear from a human being, but being relentless by calling the facility or even using the "contact us" link can sometimes dig up a real person. Once you make contact, remember to say thank you. I write a thank you note after every interaction in the application process.
5. Actively try to learn new things both on and off the job.
Employers like to see volunteer experience (*Aurora* and *Greenworks* have been prominently featured on my resume and discussed in interviews). Another great way to learn new skills is through career development opportunities. Discuss this with your employer. Often they will either pay for work-related trainings or offer a pay raise if you acquire new certifications.

Barbara (Bob) Fellenstein '13. In April of my senior year, I started applying to 'jobs.' Basically, anything that I felt quasi-qualified for...I naively thought finding employment would be easy with degrees in both biology and English. After all, I had completed an internship...maintained a decent GPA, been involved in cross-country, performance groups, and student assembly in addition to having part-time employment throughout all four years at D&E. [...Right after graduation, I worked a summer] At Wisconsin Badger Camp. From late August to January, my only source of income came from raking leaves...In November, I sent my resume and cold-call cover letters to school districts, community colleges, and tutoring centers, hoping to at least find a part-time tutoring job

since I had worked for six semesters in the D&E Writing Center. Huntington Learning Center hired me as an administrator in January...After I left the tutoring center, I was quickly hired by Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens for a seasonal job in their education department... When my season at the botanical gardens ended in October, I had already lined up a temporary position at Ogden Nature Center that started in January... While working at the nature center, I was required to take online graduate courses in Environmental Education through Utah State University. This was part of the process for becoming a Certified Environmental Educator by the Utah Society for Environmental Education...I resumed volunteering with the Virginia Living Museum's horticulture department. Being in the right place at the right time, I learned that they were hiring. My work in habitat restoration and knowledge from the botanical gardens made me suitable for the job...I'm moving to Columbia, SC for a similar horticulture position at Riverbanks Zoo and Garden. I'm happy to have the horticulture position; however, I also was interviewed for an education position at the same facility (on two different occasions, actually with that department). For now, I'm only at the cusp of being a competitive applicant for a year-round, full-time environmental educator.

We pursue an English degree not for the jobs it will bring us, but for the joy it brings us. So, while you are taking the numerous English and Literature courses, remember that you are there to learn. The markings on your papers are to help you grow as a writer. Use them. Listen to your professors because they know what they are talking about. Read every book you can get your hands on. It will help you in the long run. And, for the love of Pete, talk during the discussions. Believe me, those discussions are where you will learn the most.

One last thing, I want to leave you with is something that I wish someone had told me my first year of college. "It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves." – William Shakespeare. You have control of your destiny. You have the opportunity to be whom and whatever you want to be. If you want to be a writer, write your heart out. If you want to be a journalist, go out, find that story, and write it. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do it, and please, do not let money be the reasoning behind your choices. We have one life to live. That is it.

Loran Davis '15 lives and works in Charlotte, NC. She has self-published one novel, Finally Free, and is working on a second. She will earn the M.B.A. with a concentration in Marketing in spring 2018.

Practical tips

Keep literal notes about names/connections if that's what you have to do to remember.

Cassidy: I have a spreadsheet where I type the names, companies, special interests, etc. of anyone who seemed particularly interesting after every single networking event, because I won't remember otherwise.

Always take the meeting.

You never know when you might make a great contact.

Look into getting some kind of social media/content writing certification.

Cassidy: I've taken a couple of cheap courses through Coursera -- they have no actual academic value whatsoever, but they can provide a wealth of practical skills in a hurry. Regardless of what field someone finds themselves in, knowing your way around social media and having a little bit of PR insight is invaluable. Potential employers love it because they want your help promoting their business, and if you're

a creative type, you can use that information to promote your own writing as well. (For example, I've spent the last year working for a publications company while still focusing on music/songwriting. I asked my boss to pay for several online social media courses so that I could better promote the magazines we produced, and now I get to keep that knowledge forever to help me promote myself as a musician. Double win.)

Write a thank you note after every interaction in the application process.

Know now that you *will have to* do grunt work.

In nearly every industry, entry-level workers must pay their dues. As long as it's ethical, consider doing all tasks you're asked to do (e.g. fetch coffee, handle a difficult customer, and deliver mail).

Don't be afraid to send résumés and cold-call cover letters to employers you are interested in.

Send follow-up emails

Bob: Sending follow-up emails was key to landing one of my jobs. I was not their first pick. Weeks after I applied, I inquired about the status of my application and learned they had hired someone else. I responded to this with a thank you email, and was called for an interview the following week because their hired applicant had changed her mind.

When life (family, friends, illness, etc.) happens, do what you can.

Bob: When my grandparents got sick and I had to move home, I volunteered at The Virginia Living Museum twice a week while staying with them to keep myself somewhat occupied. [Later, this turned into a paying job.]

Some recent alumni career and graduate school placements:

WBOY – TV

Elkins High School

The Goddard School for Early Childhood Education

Tourist Meets Traveler (<http://touristmeetstraveler.com/author/marlener/>)

Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens

Elon Law School, J.D.

Lehigh University, M.Ed. in Globalization and Educational Change

West Virginia Wesleyan, M.F.A.

Links to resources that will empower you to pursue your goals

Why I like to hire English majors, etc.

“14 Jobs For English Majors That Pay At Least \$60,000”

<http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/english/>

“WhatCanIDoWithThisMajor.com is a place for current or recently graduated English students to explore and learn about typical career areas available to English Majors and types of employers that hire in these fields. I hope this website can help also help you gain knowledge on strategies to make you a more marketable candidate for that employer.”

<http://www.dearenglishmajor.com/>

“My goal is for DearEnglishMajor.com to be a place for current or recently graduated English students to gain knowledge and a sense of direction regarding their careers. A big part of this includes featuring stories from people who are pursuing writing and editing careers, no matter the shape or form.”

http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/04/my-view-what-will-you-do-with-an-english-degree-plenty/?hpt=us_bn5

“Students showed improvement in “critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills” largely to the degree that their courses required them to read at least 40 pages a week and write at least 20 pages in a semester. The more reading and writing they did - serious reading, analytical writing - the more they learned. A remarkable finding!”

<https://www.forbes.com/forbes/welcome/?toURL=https://www.forbes.com/sites/georgeanders/2016/10/03/14-jobs-for-english-majors-that-pay-at-least-60000/&refURL=https://www.google.com/&referrer=https://www.google.com/>

“In a tech-fueled economy there are many exciting, fast-growing career opportunities that are suited for English majors. The need for people who can read and write, and empathize with other people's points of view is soaring. I hope Forbes.com can enlighten you on your endless career possibilities as an English major.”

<https://today.duke.edu/2012/03/humanitiestalk>

“Today.Duke.edu highlights 5 core values of the humanities—English being a subject within the humanities category. First, humanities are the source of personal pleasure and enriched experience. Second, humanities broadens and deepens human awareness and allow for recognition of other points of view other than our own. Third, humanities illustrates the power of words. Fourth, humanities strengthens our communication skills. Fifth, humanities helps us understand how we are globally connected.”

<http://www.salary.com/8-college-degrees-that-will-earn-your-money-back/>

“Getting a college education is expensive, but English is amongst the top 8 college degrees that will earn your money back!”

<http://www.selloutyoursoul.com/2011/05/27/the-ultimate-guide-to-finding-jobs-as-an-english-major/>

“When looking for career opportunities it isn't just about what degree you have, it's also about what skills you have. You don't just learn to read and write throughout your 4 years as an English major, you gain the skills necessary to make yourself accessible to employers. My goal is for SellOutYourSoul.com to be a go-to source that describes practical career building steps.”

<http://www.iflscience.com/brain/bookworms-are-nicer-kinder-and-more-empathetic-people-according-to-new-study/>

“Do you enjoy reading? If you do, keep reading. Reading is good. Be proud to be a bookworm!”

<http://www.onedayonejob.com/majors/english/>

“This article touches on skills that English majors develop as well as related valuable job skills. It then lays out entry level jobs well-suited for English majors and other possible career paths. Great resource for potential English majors and current or recently graduated English majors.”

<https://english.washington.edu/careers-english-majors>

“The career planning process takes time and can sometimes feel overwhelming, but I hope English.Washington.edu can be a resource that may help you start this process. Remember, English majors are not trained for one specific kind of work like other majors of nursing or architectural design—English majors are more valuable than you think.”

<http://english.gmu.edu/careers-in-english>

“Where there is verbal communication in the world of business, the professions, non-profit organizations, and government—whether in the form of speeches, presentations, commercials, print ads, podcasts, broadcasts, instructions, brochures, press releases, newspapers, magazines, books—there are people creating, editing, and revising the content . . . and **there are jobs for English majors.**”

<https://www.freelancewriting.com/get-paid-more/six-job-boards-for-freelance-writers/>

“These six job boards have helped me to maintain a full-time freelance writing business for eight years. They can do the same for you.”

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Appendix A

Applying to Law School Samantha Smith '17

1. Create LSAC Account

- Go to LSAC.org
- Under the “Login” dropdown select “Future JD Student” and create a new account.
- Take time to navigate the LSAC website, because it will be your best friend. Almost all of the information you need to apply to law school is on LSAC. It’s also the website that you will submit your completed applications through.

2. Look For Schools

- On the LSAC website you can search for schools. You can do this multiple ways. One way is by location, and it even has a state map you can click on. Another way is by GPA and LSAT score. I suggest the location, unless you’ve already taken the LSAT.
- Figure out what schools interest you and what requirements they have for the application process. Know how many letters of recommendation they require, what kind of personal statement they’re looking for, the average GPA and LSAT score of their current students. This information will aid you in completing their application before the required deadline, and hopefully give you an edge on applying!
- Add the schools that you’re interested in to the “My School List” on your LSAC page. This way you always have them in one convenient spot and you can do the application as you please and save your progress along the way.

3. Talk to your professors

- If you haven’t done so already, you should talk to your favorite professors.
- You need to ask them for a letter of recommendation months ahead of time. This allows them to have time to gather their thoughts and write a really thorough letter for you. This will not only benefit you, but helps them as well because they have a busy schedule. You wouldn’t rush writing your personal statement, correct?... So don’t rush them to write your letter of recommendation.
- Add the professor to your LSAC letters of recommendation. They will submit their letter via LSAC once they’re finished.
- It’s also a good idea to just speak to them about the process of applying. They could have some really good advice for you, so don’t be shy! They’re there to help.

4. START STUDYING

- Pretty much every school requires you to take the LSAT. This is a gauge that tells them how successful you may be in their program. This is arguably the most important aspect of the application process.
- Sign up to take the LSAT through the LSAC website. Give yourself AT LEAST three months study time. Honestly, I'd suggest even more. If you only have three months, you must study each night for at least a few hours in order to be successful.
- There are several ways you can study for the LSAT.
 - If you have the money, I would suggest looking into Kaplan test prep for the LSAT. It can be pricey, but it could be worth it based on your study habits. You can take an online class that prepares you for the test, and the best part is that it's a set schedule. It can be really hard to make yourself study while taking undergrad classes as well, so having someone guide you through the learning process is helpful.
 - If you can't afford the class, buying books online is probably the best solution. You can easily google the best books to use in studying. I suggest PowerScore because it teaches you as you read. I also suggest getting these books new. Any markings that you did not make will either confuse you, or give away the answer you're looking for. Either way, it would be counterproductive.

5. Personal Statement

- a. Other than the LSAT, your personal statement is one of the other main components of applying. It's a short paper that explains yourself and why you should be attending law school.
- b. Do NOT hold back in this paper when speaking highly of yourself. You'll need to highlight anything that makes you stand out from other students.
- c. What are you passionate about? Why law school? Let this passion show through your writing style! This is your one chance to let the admissions council know who you are. Essentially, if you really stand out from other students you could tip the balance in your favor! If you have a lower LSAT score, maybe try to focus on making this paper really great! It could balance out the scales.
- d. MAKE SURE you let multiple professors read it. Again, give them time to analyze it. Most likely, you will need to make major corrections after getting the first draft back. In fact, it may take multiple drafts.
- e. Bottom line- you need this to be great. Don't wait until the last minute. BUT this can come after things like the LSAT. Just make sure you have time to draft.
- f. Attached is an example of my own personal statement for your reference.

6. It's Okay

- a. It's okay if your LSAT score isn't exactly where you aimed for it to be. It's okay if something doesn't go your way. Deep breaths! Break downs are okay, too. (That happened to me a few times.)

- b. Most likely, you're being hard on yourself. Take the LSAT twice if it makes you feel better.
7. Send the APP
- a. It's time to send in your application.
 - b. Double check to make sure you meet each school's requirement.
 - c. Don't be afraid to apply to a couple schools that seem like a "reach" because you never know what they may be looking for. Take the chance, you may surprise yourself.
8. If you need help...
- Don't hesitate to email me. Smiths6@dewv.edu or ssmith129@elon.edu. I check my D&E email most currently! But if I don't email back for some reason, you can try the second one. I'd be happy to help- I definitely had help along the way!
9. GOOD LUCK.

Appendix B

Applying for an M.B.A. program
Loran Davis '14

Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) Checklist

1. Search M.B.A programs: You want to make sure you search M.B.A. programs throughout the country. Some programs require you to take the GRE Subject Test in Math and others do not require you to take the GRE at all. Some programs also want you to have a certain amount of business experience or previous courses.
2. Take GRE: Once you have determined which M.B.A. programs you would like to apply for, you will need to sign up to take the GRE. As I chose a program that did not require it, I cannot help much with the GRE test. I do know that there are blogs and websites out there that will tell you the best books to use and what to focus on.
3. Apply to Program: After you have taken the GRE, you will want to apply for the M.B.A. program. Most programs tell you what you need to apply including letters of recommendations, GRE test scores, and transcripts.
4. Pick Concentration: The M.B.A. has several concentrations you can choose from such as accounting, marketing, and management. I recommend marketing for English majors because many marketing positions involve writing and creativity.

Things to Remember:

1. Don't wait until the last minute to do this. Getting in to a good M.B.A. program takes time. You want to take your GRE before your senior year if possible and apply to the program the fall of your senior year. Most programs have a deadline for applications that fall between November and January.
2. Take a couple business classes as electives. It is better to have some knowledge than no knowledge. Trust me!
3. I chose the online route for my M.B.A. because it was the best option for me at the time. However, remember that online schooling is not looked at as highly as on site Graduate programs. Take this into consideration when choosing the school and program.
4. Finally, prep for the program. Study for your GRE as much as you can, and read as much about business processes as possible, especially if you don't take any undergrad business courses. Also, take advantage of internships or jobs in general. The M.B.A. relies largely on personal experiences in work environments. You want to be able to relate your own experiences to the processes you're learning about.

Appendix C

Some thoughts on the M.F.A. in Creative Writing

Susan Krakoff Good '12

I was one of the lucky ones whose mom said, "Study what you love!" My long string of pursuing what I love started with moving to West Virginia to study English at Davis & Elkins College.

One of my very first classes at D&E was creative writing with Dr. Bill King. I had always loved writing, but he was the first person who helped strip away the superficial bits of my essays and start the long and never-ending process of developing my craft. During spring semester of my second year, I heard three letters that made no sense at the time and ended up being a game changer: M.F.A. We had a guest professor, Vince Trimboli, in a sociology class, and in passing he mentioned he had just started a new graduate program—a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Over the course of the next year, I chatted with Vince and a Wesleyan professor and friend, Doug van Gundy, about what the program had to offer. Poetry and Fiction were options, but my concentration was Creative Nonfiction.

This was the only M.F.A. program to which I applied, but regardless of how many applications you send out, my main tip is to talk with people affiliated with the program. Do not rely on online information alone. I had a wonderful phone conversation with the director of the program, Jessie van Eerden, and my decision was made. I attended the next residency that winter.

Another thing to consider when applying to M.F.A. programs is residential versus low-residency. The WV Wesleyan M.F.A. is a low-residency program, and although the program was an excellent fit in so many ways, what solidified my decision was that I knew I could stay living in Elkins and keep working full time. Research different programs, talk with folks, consider

where you want to live and if you are willing to leave your current home and job for graduate school.

The basic layout of the WV Wesleyan low-residency M.F.A. program is that you attend five 10-day residencies, which are incredibly intensive, sometimes overwhelming, and always the best parts of your year (they were for me, anyway!) All core professors and some guest professors teach seminars on various multi-genre writing topics. You are assigned a great deal of reading before each residency to prepare for the fruitful seminars, which always left me eager to learn more about the subject matter. Each evening there are readings—poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The readings are a mix of core and guest faculty and visiting writers. It is exciting meeting writers whose work you have read and studied, and the visiting writers are always eager to chat with the M.F.A. students...and sign their books!

My favorite part of the residencies was the workshop. About a month beforehand, you are given each student's creative work from your genre (15-25 pages each), and you are expected to thoroughly read, leave line edits, and write a thoughtful letter to each of your peers in your workshop group. A professor facilitates, and each day the group discusses one student's work in great detail while that student takes notes for the inclusive discussion afterward. What helped me grow most as a reader and writer from these workshops was how to dissect an essay and articulate what is effective and what could improve—and different ways to develop those ideas.

If an M.F.A. in Creative Writing (or any M.F.A. program) is something you're considering, I highly recommend it!

Susan Good holds degrees from Davis & Elkins College and WV Wesleyan College in English and Creative Writing. She lived in Ireland with her husband from 2014-2017, working as a Birth Doula, teaching baby massage and yoga, and completing massage school. Susan plans to develop her massage therapy business and continue writing. She and her husband have recently settled in Virginia.