

**An Introduction to**

**An Online Career-Exploration Resource for Psychology Majors**

**for Faculty**

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**Description**

This resource contains a list of 300 careers that psychology majors can prepare to enter, which have been organized into 15 broad occupational categories. Persons employed in 57 of these careers bear the official title of psychologist and must hold the appropriate graduate degree to carry this title. Persons employed in the remaining 243 careers (i.e., careers that require the demonstration of psychological knowledge and skills, but which do not carry the title of psychologist) are divided almost equally into two categories: those whose careers can be entered with a bachelor’s degree and those whose careers require a graduate degree. Each career is followed by a set of hotlinks to websites containing information such as required skills and knowledge, work activities and environment, necessary preparation, pay scale, and future outlook. Careers whose futures are particularly promising because they are expected to grow rapidly in the next several years, will have large numbers of job openings, or are new and emerging occupations are identified.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this resource is to help psychology majors begin the process of accomplishing ***Goal 5: Professional Development*** of *APA’s Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major: Version 2.0* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2013). Faculty, advisors, and administrators can make the information contained in this resource available to students in a variety of educational venues, such as classes (Appleby, 2010), academic advising sessions (Appleby, 2002), and department websites (Appleby, 2011). The resource can help students acquire an understanding of the “settings in which people with backgrounds in psychology typically work” (APA, 2013, p. 58) and become familiar with the “skill sets desired by employers who hire or select people with psychology backgrounds” (p. 58), thus helping them “develop meaningful professional directions” (p. 58). Once students acquire this foundational knowledge—and use it to identify potential careers that match their values and interests—faculty and advisors can provide them with strategies to utilize their curricular and extracurricular opportunities to prepare for and attain their professional goals (Appleby, 2014).

**Rationale**

Perhaps the strongest case for the creation, dissemination, and implementation of career-planning resources for psychology majors—such as the one described in this document—was presented by Stoloff, Good, Smith, and Brewster (2015) who performed a national survey of psychology department chairs that solicited information about how many resources and how much emphasis their departments devote to each of the 10 goals in the original *APA Guidelines* (APA, 2007). They used the following two paragraphs (p. 106-107) to summarize the conclusions they drew from their results regarding the relative importance that psychology departments place on career planning.

Unfortunately, we found that many psychology departments have no courses that include a focus on career planning (Goal 10), and of those programs that do, this focus is limited to one or two courses. This is far fewer than the average number of courses that include a focus on the other nine goals. When chairs were asked how often students practice creating resumes, engage in networking, practice interviewing, or visit a career resource center, many chairs did not respond, suggesting that they did not know. These data suggest that psychology programs often do not engage in explicit career preparation activities, and chairs are uncertain as to whether their students are accessing career planning resources elsewhere on campus. We suggest that psychology departments either focus more on career preparation within the context of their programs or more intentionally direct students to other career resources. This suggestion is consistent with the revised *APA Guidelines* (APA, 2013).

Psychology programs already teach students a number of skills that are valued by employers, for example, skills in communication, technology, problem solving, teamwork, and ethical reasoning (AAC&U, 2013; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Rodgers, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). But, because of the apparent lack of focus on Goal 10, we may not be doing a very good job of helping our students to recognize that they are developing skills that are applicable to a number of career paths. Psychology departments should take responsibility for helping students to explicitly think about and describe their experiences in terms of these marketable skills.

The authors of *Guidelines 2.0* also made it clear that “too little attention was paid to psychology as an appropriate degree for workforce preparation” (APA, 2013, p. 10) in the original *Guidelines* (also see Halonen, 2013). They stated that “departments across the country are experiencing pressure about the legitimacy of the psychology degree as a foundation for a productive career” (p. 10) caused, in part, by their production of so many “psychology graduates who are not only ill prepared for the work-place, but who also demonstrate significant naiveté about the workplace and entitled attitudes that do not breed work-place success” (p.10). Their solution to this dilemma was to urge psychology programs to create and implement strategies to help their students develop “clearer linkages between baccalaureate preparation and the workplace” (p. 10). Appleby (2014, p. 143) used the following paragraph in his chapter titled *A Skills-Based Academic Advising Strategy for Job-Seeking Psychology Majors* to describe how the absence of the professional development activities emphasized in *Guidelines 2.0* (i.e., career identification, exploration, planning, and preparation) can produce undesirable consequences for psychology students.

More than 100,000 psychology majors graduate each year with a bachelor’s degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), but only about 20-25% of these continue their education in a graduate program (Hettich & Landrum, 2014). The remaining 75-80% enter the job market, and fewer than 25% of these will work in a field directly related to psychology (Halonen, 2011). Because the baccalaureate degree in psychology does not qualify a student to enter a specific profession like some other majors (e.g., nursing, education, engineering, and accounting), academic advisors should make psychology majors aware of the broad range of occupations they can enter (Appleby, Millspaugh, & Hammersley, 2011; Rajecki, 2009) and the types of transferable skills they must develop during their undergraduate education so they can gain meaningful employment in today’s challenging job market (Shaffer, 1997). If psychology majors lack this knowledge and these skills, they risk job dissatisfaction (Light, 2010), the disturbing belief that their jobs are not related to their major (Borden & Rajecki, 2000), and the very real possibility of having to accept a job that does not require a bachelor’s degree (Rajecki & Borden, 2009).

The authors of *Guidelines 2.0* recognized that the initial step in professional development for psychology majors is to become aware of the careers they can prepare for and enter, both with and without a degree beyond the bachelor’s. They did this by creating a two-page appendix to the *Guidelines* titled *A Roster of Job Prospects for Psychology Graduates* that includes a list of 143 such careers derived from the original edition of this resource (Appleby, Millspaugh, & Hammersley, 2011).

**Contents**

Each career in this resource meets at least one—and in most cases several—of the following criteria.

* It is a career that the *Occupational Information Network* (*O\*NET*) indicates requires several of the skills identified as outcomes of an undergraduate psychology major in *Guidelines: 2.0* (e.g., communication, critical thinking, collaboration, project management, and self-reflection).
* It is a career that *O\*NET* indicates places importance on and/or requires the use of one or more of the following types of psychological knowledge: human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
* It is a career that requires several of the skills included in the 2017 National Association of Colleges and Employers report titled *Employers Seek Teamwork, Problem-Solving Skills on Resumes* (Gray & Koncz, 2017).
* It is a career that requires several skills Appleby (2014) identified in his meta-analytic study of publications describing the skills potential employers seek when they hire new college graduates.
* It is a career that requires several skills Gardner (2007) identified as those whose presence produce positive on-the-job outcomes (e.g., promotions and new responsibilities) and whose absence produce negative on-the-job outcomes (e.g., reprimands, discipline, or termination) for new college hires.
* It is a career identified as available to psychology majors in at least one of the books listed in the *Books* subsection of the *Print and Online Career-Exploration Resources for Psychology Students, Faculty, and Advisors* section of this document.
* It is a career that appears in one or more of the websites contained in the *Governmental* and *Nongovernmental* *Websites* subsections of the *Print and Online Career-Exploration Resources for Psychology Students, Faculty, and Advisors* section of this document.
* It is a career entered by at least one psychology major taught by the author during his 40-year career (e.g., While few psychology majors enter this profession, one of my majors serves as the Juvenile Court Judge of Lake County, Indiana.).

**Organizational Structure**

The 300 careers listed in this resource are organized into the following 15 broad occupational categories, which are highlighted in **YELLOW**. These categories enable psychology majors to navigate this resource more efficiently by identifying and exploring groups of related careers that fit their unique patterns of interests, values, goals, skills, and knowledge. In the resource, the category names are hyperlinked to their locations to avoid excessive scrolling through this 80-page document.

1. Business, Advertising, and Finance
2. Children and Families
3. Counseling
4. Education
5. Health and Medical Services
6. Human Resources
7. Law and Law Enforcement
8. Military
9. Psychology
10. Religion and Spirituality
11. Social and Human Services
12. Sport, Fitness, and Recreation
13. Technology
14. Therapy
15. Other

Persons employed in **57** of these careers bear the official title of psychologist and must hold the appropriate graduate degree to carry this title. Persons employed in the remaining **243** psychology-related careers (i.e., careers that require the demonstration of psychological knowledge and skills) are divided almost equally into two categories, those whose careers can be entered with a bachelor’s degree and those whose careers require a graduate degree. Careers that can be entered with a bachelor’s degree are highlighted in **BLUE**, and those requiring a graduate degree are highlighted in **GREEN**. Careers rated by *O\*NET* as having a particularly bright outlook because they are expected to grow rapidly in the next several years, will have large numbers of job openings, or are new and emerging careers are followed by 🟓. Some careers are listed in more than one category, such as Educational Psychologist, which appears in both the Education and the Psychology categories. A set of hotlinks follows each career that lead to online sources providing answers to one or more of the following questions.

* What knowledge, skills, abilities, tools, and technologies are required in this career?
* What do workers actually do in this career and under what conditions do they carry out these duties?
* What types of preparation (e.g., education or job training) do students need to enter this career?
* What interests, values, and characteristics do workers in this career possess?
* How much do people earn in this career?
* How many people are employed in this career?
* What is the projected need for this career in the future?
* What other occupations are related to this particular career?

A label that identifies its source precedes each hotlink. These labels and their sources are below.

* **DOT, OOH, and O\*NET:** government websites that enable visitors to explore careers
* **Wild Card:** a nongovernmental website that enables visitors to explore careers
* **Video:** a YouTube or other online visual media source created to enable site visitors to explore careers, some of which feature “a day in the life” of a person employed in a particular career
* **Interview:** a transcribed interview with a person employed in a particular career
* **STP and a Chapter Number:** a chapter containing advice about how to prepare for a career in a sub-discipline of psychology that appears in an edited e-book titled *Academic Advising: A Handbook for Advisors and Students: Volume 2: A Guide to the Sub-Disciplines* (Irons, & Miller, 2015) published by Division 2 of APA (The Society for the Teaching of Psychology)
* **APA Careers:** a resource created by APA to enable site visitors to explore careers in a specific sub-discipline of psychology (e.g., social, clinical, or industrial/organizational psychology)
* **APA Psychologist Profile:** a profile of a psychologist from APA’s multimedia campaign ([www.PsychScienceAction.org](http://www.PsychScienceAction.org)) who conducts research on problems such as Alzheimer’s disease, obesity, and distracted driving to improve human welfare
* **APA Applied Research:** a summary of how the results of research of APA members in a particular psychological sub-discipline have been applied to promote human welfare
* **APA Division:** a division of APA devoted to psychologists who practice a particular sub-discipline of psychology by publishing journals and newsletters, hosting listservs, holding conferences and meetings, providing networking and mentoring opportunities, and sponsoring awards

Go to <http://www.apa.org/about/division/activities/dive-student.pdf> to see how students can benefit from becoming a member of one of these divisions at a very low membership fee.

**Caveat to Convey to Students**

Some of the careers listed in this resource can be entered with less than a bachelor’s degree (e.g., Retail Sales Person, Psychiatric Aide, and Corrections Officer). Although these are perfectly respectable occupations—and some psychology majors do report employment in these areas after graduation—they serve as a compelling reminder to students that they may have to settle for lower-paying jobs such as these if they do not use their undergraduate educations to discover and develop the appropriate knowledge and skills that will enable them to successfully compete for occupations more commensurate with their educational status and financial aspirations. One of the most important messages this resource can convey to psychology majors is that they must take full advantage of their educational opportunities in order to develop the knowledge and skills that will make them viable and attractive applicants in today’s competitive job market. The enormous number of psychology majors who graduate each year verifies the popularity of the discipline, but it also makes clear that psychology majors should understand that the simple possession a Bachelor’s of Arts or a Bachelor’s of Science in Psychology will not guarantee them a high-status and/or high-paying job. They must use their undergraduate education to identify and investigate the careers they wish to enter and then take full advantage of their curricular and extracurricular opportunities to become persons who can find successful employment in these careers. The information available in this document can help them begin to accomplish these challenging tasks.

**A Strategy to Use This Resource**

**During the Career-Advising Process**

The first recommendation to strengthen the quality of the undergraduate psychology major offered in APA’s (2013) Guidelines: Version 2.0 is to enhance student awareness of the five learning goals and the positive outcomes that can result from their accomplishment. One way to accomplish this recommendation is to follow the National Academic Advising Association’s guiding principle that “Advising is teaching.” (Appleby, 2008, p. 85) by creating teaching-based advising strategies that bring students’ attention to the goals and their positive outcomes in a clear and organized manner. For example, in regard to Goal 5: Professional Development, it would be best if psychology faculty and advisors stopped answering the perennial student question “What kind of a job can I get with my psychology degree?” with optimistically cheerful, but nebulous responses such as “Your psychology degree can prepare you for almost any job in which you will work with people.” Although this type of answer creates a temporary aura of confidence in students and an equally fleeting sense of relief in faculty who are unable to provide a more specific answer, it most certainly lacks clarity and organization, two teacher behaviors that Loes and Pascarella (2015, p. 1) suggest are critical to important student learning outcomes such as “critical thinking, propensity for lifelong learning, academic motivation, persistence to the second year of college, graduate degree plans, likelihood of obtaining a bachelor's degree, and student use of deep approaches to learning.” Loes and Pascarella’s findings suggest that psychology faculty and advisors can best use the current resource in a manner similar to the following answer to the “what kind of job” question.

*I’m glad you asked me “What kind of job can I get with my psychology degree?” However, I’d like to rephrase your question slightly so we can work together more effectively to answer it. I’d like your new question to be “How can I use my psychology major to prepare myself for a good job.” Let’s begin to explore the answer to this question by breaking down the concept of a good job into two parts: the good part and the job part. A job is good for you if you possess the skills and knowledge needed to perform the tasks required by the job and also gain satisfaction and fulfillment from the successful completion of these tasks. It is a job that will cause you to want to get up in the morning and go to work, to know you are performing your job well while you are doing it, and to feel pride in the work you have completed when you return home after work. I can help you answer this part of your question by encouraging you to engage in some serious self-reflection about your values and goals so you can begin to understand what will make a job a good job for you. An excellent way to begin this process is by reading an article by Paul Hettich titled “What Do You Want From Your Postgraduation Job? A Wish List and a Reality Check,” which you can access at* [*http://www.psichi.org/?192EyeWin15eHettich*](http://www.psichi.org/?192EyeWin15eHettich)*. If you need more help, I can refer you to our Career Center where a career counselor can assist you.*

*The best way I can help you in the process of identifying the job part of a good job is to demonstrate how to use a resource titled* An Online Career-Exploration Resource for Psychology Majors*, which contains a list of 300 careers (organized into 15 broad occupational categories) that psychology majors can prepare to enter. Persons employed in 56 of these careers bear the official title of psychologist and must hold the appropriate graduate degree to carry this title. Persons employed in the remaining 244 psychology-related careers (i.e., careers that require the demonstration of psychological knowledge and skills, but which do not carry the title of psychologist) are divided almost equally into two categories: those that can be entered with a bachelor’s degree and those that require a graduate degree. Each career is followed by a set of hotlinks to websites containing information such as its required skills and knowledge, work activities and environment, pay scale, necessary preparation, and future outlook. The best way to begin using this resource is to choose one of the occupational categories that sounds most interesting to you (e.g., Psychology, Counseling, Education, Human Resources, Technology, or Children and Families) and begin to investigate specific careers in this category by clicking on their hotlinks. Once you have identified a career that really interests you (i.e., a good job), make a list of the skills and knowledge it requires, and then set up another appointment with me. During that meeting, I can help you answer your rephrased question by providing you with a set of classes and extracurricular activities (e.g., internships, service learning, and leadership opportunities) that will enable you to acquire the specific knowledge and skills your desired job requires. If your job requires graduate school, I can help you create and obtain the documents you will need to apply successfully to a graduate program (i.e., a Curriculum Vitae, a personal statement, and at least three strong letters of recommendation from credible sources) because I created and obtained these same documents when I applied to graduate school. If you plan to enter your chosen career with a bachelor’s degree, I can refer you to our school’s Career Center where an employment counselor, who knows far more about the job application process than I do, can help you create the necessary documents and information you will need to be hired (i.e., a resume, a cover letter, and effective answers to challenging interview questions).*

I suspect that psychology majors will find this to be a very clear, organized, helpful, and honest advising strategy to help them discover, explore, and prepare for psychology and psychology-related careers for which they possess the skills and knowledge to succeed and from which they will receive personal and professional satisfaction.

**Author’s Notes**

This resource is not a finished product; it is a work in progress. If you (a) discover any errors such as dead hotlinks, online sources unrelated to their listed career, or sources that contain inaccurate or inappropriate information; (b) are aware of any relevant online resources that would expand this list; or (c) would like to recommend that a particular career be added to or removed from this resource, please share this information with me at dappleby@iupui.edu.

Two of my students, Brandon Millspaugh and Melissa Hammersley, contributed to this resource in 2010 when they helped me increase its number of occupations from 130 to 176.

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**Print and Online Career-Exploration Resources for**

**Psychology Students, Faculty, and Advisors**

**Books**

American Psychological Association. (2015). *Graduate study in psychology*. Washington, DC: Author.

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**Governmental Websites**

*Occupational Information Network (O\*NET)*

[*http://www.onetonline.org/*](http://www.onetonline.org/)

*Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)*

[*http://www.bls.gov/ooh/*](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/)

*Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)*

[*http://www.occupationalinfo.org/*](http://www.occupationalinfo.org/)

**Nongovernmental Websites**

*All Psychology Careers*

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

*APA Careers in Psychology*

<http://www.apa.org/action/careers/index.aspx>

*APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major*

<http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/about/psymajor-guidelines.pdf>

*Careers in Psych*

<http://careersinpsych.com/>

*Careers in Psychology*

<http://careersinpsychology.org/>

*Careers in Psychology: The Experts*

<http://careersinpsychology.org/full-experts/>

*Careers for Psychology Majors*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlgWBDfRGL8>

*College Atlas*

<http://www.collegeatlas.org/psychology-colleges.html#careers>

*Dr. Kit*

<http://www.drkit.org>

*Education Portal*

<http://education-portal.com/article_directory/q_p/page/Psychology/q_p/Careers_and_Occupations_List.html>

*My Majors: Psychology Major*

<http://www.mymajors.com/college-majors/psychology/>

*PsychologyAbout.Com*

<http://psychology.about.com/od/careersinpsychology/a/career-list.htm>

*Psychology Career Center*

<http://www.psychologycareercenter.org/>

*Psychology Career Zone*

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

*Psychology School Guide*

<http://www.psychologyschoolguide.net/>

Psychology: Science in Action

<http://www.apa.org/action/resources/students/index.aspx>