

# Careers involving English



The study of English literature focuses mainly on analysis, debate and critical theorising about a large number of published works, be they novels, poems, plays or other literary works.

Given this number of genres, it is perhaps unsurprising that a degree in English literature can be incredibly wide-ranging; two students on the same degree course can choose to study very different things outside of their core modules.

As well as analysis, students can also expect to have to defend their ideas, since it's not enough to simply note something about a text, this must be accompanied by explanation and argument.

You can also expect to be taught aspects of creative writing and how to express ideas in various literary forms. It's certainly a challenging course to take at university, but it can be immensely rewarding for those with a passion for English who are willing to work for it.

An English literature degree can open a number of doors once you've graduated. Opportunities to delve deeper into your field with a postgraduate course are a good choice should you find a particular genre or style of literature that you are particularly passionate about.

In terms of job opportunities, media and publishing can be a good fit for an English literature graduate, as they offer a good way to apply your knowledge of the written language.

These skills will also serve you well in advertising and marketing. Teaching is another option; from primary education right up to tertiary, English as a subject is considered important at all stages.

The analytical skills associated with such a degree also apply well to things such as law, so many students undertake law conversion courses.

Generally speaking, English literature is a degree well respected by potential employers owing to the numerous transferable skills it demonstrates.

A strong degree from a good university is a fantastic asset to have in general, not only being a great thing for employers and job prospects but also allowing access to excellent postgraduate schemes or conversion courses.

English graduates enter a broad range of professions, including education, marketing, journalism and public relations. Their analytical and communication skills are potentially in demand in management roles both in business and the public sector.

Specific skills for English courses include:

- critical and evaluative thinking
- self-management
- excellent written communication
- oral communication and interpersonal skills
- research and analysis skills
- ability to work independently

Though pay levels for English graduates may not be as high as those in other areas, many of the career opportunities it opens up can be particularly rewarding. Typical roles include publishing, academia or working with heritage and culture.

English graduates are suitable for many roles in the business sector, where their ability to sift the evidence and present arguments will help them to succeed. What is more, their interpersonal skills should set them up well for a role in management. Employers in areas such as finance and IT often have vacancies such as customer-facing roles that are not technical, or where it is not a requirement for applicants to have a numerate degree: these are among the options open to English graduates.

With some additional training, English graduates could consider jobs in teaching, journalism or acting, and the following roles:

- advertising account executive
- advertising copywriter

- arts administrator
- public relations (PR) officer
- broadcasting presenter
- intelligence
- marketing executive job description

What do English graduates go on to do?

Here's what English graduates who finished their degrees in 2017 were doing six months after graduating, according to the *What do graduates do?* report published in 2018.

Source: *What do graduates do? 2018*

Key areas of employment for fresh English graduates

Areas of employment	Percentage
Retail, catering, waiting and bar staff	19.2
Marketing, PR and sales professionals	16.4
Clerical, secretarial and numerical clerks	11.2
Education professionals	9.5
Arts, design and media professionals	9.1

Other careers pursued by English graduates included business, HR and finance (8.9%), management (3.3) and legal, social and welfare professions (3.8%).

The proportion of English graduates working in retail, catering, bar and waiting jobs is perhaps in part a reflection of this group's willingness to take on jobs in the short-term while working towards longer-term career goals – it's worth remembering that English graduates are less likely to be unemployed than graduates of several other degree subjects, including IT graduates (9.4% of whom were unemployed) and mathematics (7.5% unemployed).

Secretarial and clerical positions (taken by 11.2% of English graduates) can offer a way into competitive industries such as publishing, so it may be that English graduates are pragmatic about playing a long game with regards to their overall career goals.

Whether you studied language, literature or linguistics, an English degree is a surprisingly universal qualification to have, and could benefit you in a range of career paths – from writing and editing, to teaching and law. You just need to know how to use it to its full potential.

To make sure you know what's out there, here's what you can actually do with your English degree:

### Jobs you can do with an English degree

**Copywriter** – Copywriters are responsible for generating and editing written content, which could be used in anything from press releases, emails, and articles, to brochures, product descriptions, and more.

*How to get there: If you're lacking in practical experience, working on a freelance basis (e.g. as a Journalist) and/or creating your own blog (e.g. travel blogging) is a great way to build up a portfolio and prove your writing abilities. Junior Copywriter roles are also available – and, as many entry-level Marketing Assistant positions also involve elements of copywriting, this is a good place to start too.*

**Forensic Linguist** – This role is based around the linguistic analysis of written and verbal evidence, which helps to decipher the correct meaning behind both victim and suspect statements. A Forensic Linguist's examination could help determine the outcome of a court case.

*How to get there: Aside from experience in related fields like psychology and sociology, extensive knowledge of legal procedures is an essential trait for any Forensic Linguist – so taking courses or studying for a postgrad is a great way to stand out from the crowd if you're struggling to break into this position. Roles such as Social Worker and Psychologist could also help quantify your skills, and show you can effectively analyse how people express their thoughts and feelings through words.*

**Editorial Assistant** – This position involves supporting an editorial team in the planning and production of content for a range of media. General duties could

include anything from writing, proofreading, and researching, to organising projects, calculating costs, and commissioning articles.

*How to get there: Many Editorial Assistant roles are entry-level – providing you can demonstrate an interest and experience in writing and editing. If you're struggling to enter this competitive field, working as an Administrative Assistant or Receptionist in a publishing house or digital media agency could help you to build a useful network of contacts and move up within the industry.*

Journalist – Whether it's by tracking down and interviewing sources, liaising with relevant contacts, or turning their findings into engaging copy – a Journalist's job is all about keeping the world up-to-date with the most current news and events.

*How to get there: Journalism is a competitive industry, but that doesn't mean you can't get involved. Whether it's by providing content for your university tabloid or website, working with your local newspaper, or freelancing for the web, building a portfolio of relevant experience is the best way to work your way up and become a Journalist. Industry-specific qualifications alongside your degree will also be beneficial.*

Lexicographer – Lexicographers are responsible for compiling and editing dictionaries, both written and online. They use databases to monitor language uses and meanings, assess the possibility of new entries, and structure definitions accordingly.

*How to get there: Employers will primarily look for candidates with an exceptionally strong grasp of the English language, alongside a degree in English. Breaking into the field often involves starting out as an Editorial Assistant or Junior Editor for a dictionary publishing house, where you'll be able to progress to the position of Lexicographer with experience. Knowledge of other languages and experience as a Translator could also help if you're looking for work at multilingual dictionaries.*

English Teacher – If you want to use your academic qualifications to teach English – working as a Secondary School Teacher could be the best way to utilise your degree. They work with young people aged 11-18, and are in charge of lesson planning as well as supporting and monitoring the progress of a class of students.

How to get there: *In addition to your degree, you'll need to study for a PGCE to become a Secondary School Teacher. This usually involves work placements that give you the skills and contacts to be better equipped to secure a role after graduating. Working as a Teaching Assistant is also a great way to gain practical experience in the field, making you more attractive to employers.*

Other potential roles: Librarian, HR Assistant, Administrative Assistant, Speech Therapist, Writer, PR Officer, Information Officer, Underwriter.

### Skills to utilise

No matter what field you want to enter, an English degree will have given you a range of skills and knowledge (primarily in written and verbal communication) – which are transferable in almost any job.

So whether you studied English language, linguistics, or literature, there's a career path out there to suit you and put your skills to good use.

Here are some key skills to take away from an English degree:

- Time management
- Researching
- Planning
- Reasoning
- Analysis
- Critical thinking
- Effective judgment
- Organisation
- Creativity