

## WHAT TO DO WITH A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION



**What Can I Do With a Liberal Arts Major?** is a frequently asked question. The answer is another question - **What do you want to do?** A liberal arts degree opens the door to a wide variety of occupations in business, social services and government.

For many students who choose liberal arts majors, the choice of major was based on an interest in subject matter, great faculty members or a well-respected academic department rather than vocational goals. If you fall into this category and have yet to make a decision regarding your career goals, now just might be the time to do so. If you know what kind of work interests you, but are unsure of how to market your education, this article can help you too. The remainder of this article is divided into sections - one for those with identified career goals, and one for those without.

For those who KNOW what they'd like to do: You'll need to market your education and skills in a targeted manner to demonstrate to employers that you are prepared for the career that interests you.

First, do your homework to be sure that you have a clear understanding of the work that you seek. Your cover letter and resume format should emphasize the skills needed for the job. This serves to highlight the skills you have to offer and your knowledge of the field. Be specific, relate your background to the field and don't be afraid to emphasize class projects, volunteer work, or student organization accomplishments. Employers are more interested in what you have to offer than in whether or not you were paid as you learned.

If you become aware that you lack the basic skills or background required to enter the field, start learning now. Join a professional or student organization, take a related course, or find an internship (paid or not). It is never too late to start. In addition to gaining valuable experience, this involvement will show that you are serious, even if your interest is recent, and will help you network.

Be willing to start where you can find opportunity. While it is no longer the norm to start in the mailroom and move to the boardroom, don't be afraid to start in a management trainee or general management position with the goal of moving into human resources, finance, or marketing. If the industry that interests you is willing to hire you, it then becomes up to you to prove your skills and earn the opportunity to work in your area of choice. Take a close look at companies with training programs and those that promote from within. These companies are willing to invest in you and may be likely to support your career interests.

For those who don't know what they'd like to do: Your college or university career center has resources to help you in your decision-making. Your initial contact will probably be spent determining your stage in the process of making a career decision. Depending on the outcome, you may be offered assessment tests, referred to research various occupations and/or scheduled for follow-up counseling.

If you are not eligible for career center services, many assessments are available on-line and your library or bookstore can also help you. Remember the steps are the same: self-assessment, learning about yourself, career-exploration, learning about careers, followed by decision-making and constant reassessment.

It is important to remember that neither counselors nor assessments will "tell" you what to be. It is up to you to gather information on yourself and on careers and decide on the best path for you, for now. This is may be a lengthy process and will require effort on your part. You'll need to spend some time learning more about your own interests and skills. You can then learn about some occupations that you might like.

At some point you will need to make a decision on where to focus your job search. For many students, it is simply difficult to make a decision. Again, your career center can help you. It can help to realize that the average person changes careers, not just jobs, three times. Career decisions are not forever.

Don't be afraid to go with an employer who is willing to take a chance on you. Although you may not feel sure of your interests, a recruiter may recognize qualities in you that will lead to success. One of the nice things about [Granted.com](https://www.granted.com) is the frequent emails you receive letting you know of the **wide variety of jobs** for which you are qualified.

If all else fails:

Just Do It!!! Don't waste your time. Your dream career is not likely to come to you in a dream. If you just can't decide or nothing excites you, do something. One of the main reasons that college students have difficulty making career decisions is lack of experience. Doing something can help you gain experience. Join the Peace Corps, head to the mountains or the sea for a seasonal opportunity, work with kids, anything to gain skills and experience that will help you make a decision.