

What to Do with a Psychology Degree: Career Services Information Sheet

Finding a career after graduation can be tough, but with planning and openness to new experiences, you can put yourself in a great position to find employment. One of the biggest challenges facing new graduates is lack of relevant experiences. Careers are like a ladder, unfortunately we have to start at the bottom and slowly climb our way up. Your climb can start in your undergraduate degree with volunteer and part-time work experiences, then your first full or part-time job after graduation, and slowly as you gain more and more experience you will climb the ladder of your career. Patience, creativity, and a willingness to constantly seek out professional development opportunities are central to building a successful career.

Planning involves:

- Picking your courses, consider what grades you will need to get into graduate programs or identify what courses will be the most relevant to potential careers/post-graduate studies.
- Identifying volunteer and part-time work experiences that are relevant to your desired career outcome, start by considering what skills you want to build then find opportunities that will help you build these.
- Job shadowing to help figure out what kind of work you will like to do, this can also help with networking.
- Conducting “information interviews” (brief phone calls or short meetings with employers/employees to find more about what they do). You can join the Career Mentor Program with Career Services to get connected to our mentors.
- Doing research about career opportunities to learn more about required education, desired abilities/experiences, working conditions, entry requirements, and plan alternate paths to reach desired careers (most careers do not follow a linear path, sometimes we take the back roads to get to where we want).
- Purposefully engaging in personal and professional development through certifications, volunteer, and part-time work (actively trying to build and practice new skills, seeking new challenges to constantly build new skills/abilities, not going through the motions to add a notch on your resume, this will not help you in a job interview when you need to articulate how your skills and abilities will help you find success.)

Openness to New Experiences involves:

- Being flexible if your ideal plans don't work out, there are many roads to travel to get to where you want in your career. Being flexible with your experiences will help you discover more roads.
- When looking for volunteer and part-time work experience, be creative and try something out of your comfort zone (hopefully expanding the boundaries of your current comfort zone).
- Wherever or whatever you end up doing, put in your best effort. Be open to learn and develop in whatever you are doing, you never know where it will lead you.
- Go out of your way to explore what you can do, don't limit yourself.

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Chaos Theory of Careers:

If your career is a journey, your work and volunteer experience is your backpack. The general idea behind the Chaos Theory of Careers is that everything you do impacts your career, like the butterfly effect, small actions can have big results. In his research study, Dr. Jim Bright identified that 70% of employees attributed their currently employment to chance.

The key message is, you need to understand processes and patterns in your education, volunteer and work history as opposed to “defining or predicting” career outcomes. What this means is, don’t just identify your end goal, think about everything you’ve done: all the skills you have learned in class, all the abilities you developed through volunteering/working, and find common themes and networks. What does your background and abilities lend itself well to? You can do almost anything want with a Psychology degree – if you have the right mix of experiences and understanding of themes in your background.

Planned happenstance

When we say employment is the result of chance, we don’t mean careers are random happenstance, rather it is about planning to leave yourself open to possibilities: planned happenstance.

Involvement in volunteer, work, and school opens the door to opportunities, but it’s up to you to plan well enough so that opportunities present themselves.

Be patient – jobs don’t just appear, they are the result of effort

What skills/abilities are you building while you take your psychology degree?

Understanding of behavior and motivation, ethics, analytical, communication, critical thinking, abstract reasoning, organization, knowledge/experience with basic statistical analysis techniques, general research skills including: database searching, conducting literature reviews, synthesizing and interpreting vast amounts of information, designing and conducting new research, data analysis, and interpreting and understanding both your own and other’s research results.

- *Do these skills accurately represent the training you are getting in the program?*
- *How might these skills help you get a job?*
- *Can these skills be applied outside of your degree? (concept of transferable skills)*

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What kind of job markets do your skills as a psychology student open up?

Use the list below to help you explore job search engines, the internet, company websites, and other resources to identify opportunities, job requirements, and greater detail.

Government: Policy analyst, researcher, community and social services, media and communications, support, human resources, program management, consulting, career advising, newcomer services

Correctional Services: Probation officers, parole officers, correctional officers, RCMP, education, counselling, and various support roles.

Education: Teaching, adult education, special needs, guidance and counselling, corporate training, principal, student services

General Business: Human resources, marketing, sales, consulting, public relations, etc.

Post-Secondary Education: student services, advocacy, recruitment, career services, academic advisor

Non-Profits: Fundraising, researching, program management, community outreach, recruiting/promotions, volunteer coordination

Private Industry: Human resources, marketing, promotions, communications, analyst, talent scout, consulting,

Community Health Services: Support workers, educational assistant, case workers social services, claims investigator, counsellor

- *What barriers might you face?*
- *What do you need to do to gain entry to a market?*

Employability Skills:

According to the conference board of Canada, the most valuable skills to employers are:

- Communication
- Manage Information
- Use numbers
- Problem Solving
- Ability to demonstrate positive attitude/behaviours
- Responsibility
- Adaptability
- Ability to learn
- Teamwork

Consider the skills above when finding your next volunteer or part-time work experience. These are skills employers want to see you possess and may lead to unexpected opportunities down the road.

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Additional Education:

Certificates: Certificates are great for additional training and education. Programs range from 1-2 years and may be structured to include night and online courses to accommodate work schedules. To find out, use the hyperlinks below to learn more about programs and program structures. Some programs also offer a placement option to help build experience.

Red River College

- [Applied Counselling](#)
- [Child/Youth Care](#)
- [Community Development](#)
- [Disability/Community Support](#)
- [Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Human Resource Management](#)
- [Educational Assistant Certificate](#)

University of Manitoba:

- [Adult Education](#)
- [Applied Behavior Analysis](#)
- [Applied Counselling](#)
- [Human Resource Management](#)

Master's/Additional Programs: Masters programs are generally designed to build and enhance knowledge and abilities in a specific field. Depending on the faculty offering the Masters specializing, you can either further develop skills learned in psychology such as: counselling, research, understanding of human behavior, communication, analysis and synthesis, etc.

University of Manitoba:

- [M.Ed in Guidance and Counselling](#) (focused specifically on counselling and counselling skills, includes a practicum to gain experience. Program meets requirements of certification for the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association).
- [Psychology \(specializations include: Applied Behavioural Analysis, Brain and Cognitive Sciences, Clinical Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Quantitative, School Psychology, Social and Personal\)](#)
- [Social Work](#)
- [Disability Studies](#)
- [Occupational Therapy](#)
- [Public Administration](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Masters of Business Administration](#)

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University of Winnipeg:

- [Marriage and Family Therapy](#)
- [Development Practice](#)

Career Services Resources

Career Guidance: Drop In Support:

Mon and Thurs 9am-11:30, Wed 1pm-3:30pm

Resume/Cover Letter Support:

Drop In Support on Tues 9am-11:30am

Interview help:

Workshops to help prepare you for interviews

Additional Resources:

- [National Occupation Codes](#): Search for generic job descriptions, descriptions of tasks, job requirements, and examples of potential job titles.
- [Volunteer Manitoba Contact Binder \(contact list/info of all organizations in Winnipeg, search by category\)](#)
- [Career Mentor Program](#)