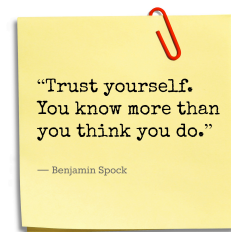


# What can I do with an undergraduate degree in English

## *Skills Developed with an English Degree*

While this is not an exhaustive list, you will find below some of the transferrable skills that your education in English may have helped you develop or enhance. Transferrable skills are aptitudes and understandings you have developed during your undergraduate degree that are essential to positions in various fields such as advertisement, journalism, business communications, publishing, law, etc. Use the following list as an opportunity to reflect and identify the transferrable skills you have acquired during your education as well as work and volunteer experiences.



## **Analysis**

- Analyze written information to identify main ideas, opinions, as well as identify the different elements that support this information
- Consider different points of view to gain an objective perspective and make appropriate decisions
- Knowledge of literary works, both as art forms and as written expressions of cultural and historical events
- Ability to read and analyze complex texts
- Compare information or opinions to identify similarities and differences

## **Research**

- Identify appropriate information sources (books, scientific articles, author's opinion, etc.) to support a hypothesis
- Perform a literature review on a topic
- Identify, from the information available, the different perspectives, views on a topic
- Ability to apply techniques of literary research

## **Communication (written or as part of a presentation)**

- Use proper grammar, syntax and vocabulary to present information
- Ability to edit and proofread written material
- Effectively present and defend your opinion on a subject
- Ability to select, interpret, organise and summarize information on a subject
- Present information to solicit reader's interest or to persuade them to adopt a specific point of view
- Explain difficult concepts or complex topics
- Ability to adjust style, form and content to a particular audience

## **Critical Thinking**

- Identify historical and cultural factors that may have influenced an author's opinion or view of the world
- Experience in critical reading to evaluate the quality and pertinence of information
- Formulate questions that will provide the information needed to clarify and understand a particular problem or situation
- Ability to evaluate existing ideas and opinions to generate new perspectives that may be more appropriate for a specific situation

## Creativity

- Think and write creatively
- Visualise concepts, solutions and results
- Think independently
- Creative approaches to problem solving

*The description of each profession presented in this document comes mostly from the information found on the Career Cruising Website. [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com) and Repères (<https://reperes.qc.ca/asp/reperes.aspx> Password required)*

## CAREERS WITHOUT ANY FURTHER TRAINING

Your undergraduate degree has given you the basic knowledge and skills to meet the requirements and to accomplish the tasks related to the professions listed below. However, depending on the demand for such positions and the availability of skilled professionals in the area that you want to work in, you may need to gain more specialized skills or knowledge to enhance your candidacy (e.g.: by gaining work experience or by pursuing short specific training).

***This list is not thorough; it's designed to help you think of possibilities***

### Advertising Copywriter

This type of copywriter creates and writes ads in various mediums for a wide range of clients. For example, their ads can appear in print, on the Internet or on television. Their objective is to create ads that will incite people to buy a company's product or that will project a positive image of the company.

### Assistant Editors

Assistant editors can be found in many different publishing environments (e.g.: magazines, newspapers or publishing houses). They usually work directly for the Editor. Their tasks may vary depending on their environment, but they will usually be responsible for editing or rewriting the texts submitted to them by writers.

## TESTIMONIAL OF MICHAEL GOLDBLOOM-

Principal of Bishop's University, former journalist for *The Montreal Gazette* and former publisher of *The Montreal Gazette* and *The Toronto Star*,

To be successful in journalism, the ability to write with precision, clarity and simplicity is absolutely critical. I'm a big advocate of writing for the campus paper or other publications. You just need to keep writing and honing your writing to make your writing as sparse and as clear as possible. Second, you need a broad curiosity and you need to be an inquisitive person; you need to get joy and pleasure from learning new things. Third, the best and really outstanding journalists are able to take complex situations and understand what the core of the story and message is and distill that into something that can be accessible to a broad public. I think to some degree it also helps to be a storyteller, because much of communication is concerned with narrative. You also have to be prepared to work hard and have enormous determination.

I strongly believe that getting an undergraduate degree in a discipline other than journalism is actually an asset to anyone who wants to pursue a career in journalism, since it gives you specific knowledge in one or more areas that will positively influence the quality of your journalism. Furthermore, because journalism jobs are pretty rare these days, I think getting a first degree in another discipline is a good path.

I loved journalism and I think it is a noble profession. However, if I was asked to advise Bishop's students, I would probably give contradictory advice: if you're passionate about journalism, go for it, there are still opportunities. At the same time, keep a broader perspective about what effective writing and communications skills can lead to and remain open to other career opportunities.

### TESTIMONIAL OF SAMUEL PARENT-

General Director of Association des professionnels de la communication et du marketing (APCM),

Communications is a very broad field and can be divided in two main areas: marketing and public relations/copywriting. Professions that are in the marketing area usually require skills and an interest for tasks that are business oriented, while professions that involve more public relations and/or copywriting tasks require greater writing and storytelling skills, to spin a good tale.

In communications, one of the aspects currently growing is content marketing. Brands have realized that they now can become their own media and they can talk directly to consumers. That requires good storytelling and it requires them to say something that has value to the reader, to the user. It has to be interesting, so it can't just be sales pitch over sales pitch. Because of that, the demand for good writers and good content producers is going up.

In order to succeed nowadays, you need to bathe in digital. You have to be able to bend to your audience; put your ego aside. You also need insatiable curiosity, which has to be combined with an open mind. Another important trait is not only being open to change, but actively seeking it out. You have to adapt and you have to always be looking at and embracing change. Doing that keeps you on the forefront. If you don't, you're stuck behind trying to catch up.

They can be found in various community or non-profit organizations. In order to be a successful activist you must not only have a passion for the cause you are advocating for, but you also need to understand and effectively use different media to inform the public and get their support. The tasks of an activist may vary greatly for one position to another, yet most of them will be involved in activities such as writing speeches, policy briefs, press releases or petition letters.

### *Critic/Blogger/Columnist*

Critics, bloggers and columnists are professionals that share many similarities. All three involve writing from a personal and subjective stance. In order to stand out, all three professionals must be able to deliver unique and interesting articles that will captivate readers. However they also have subtle differences between them.

- Columnists work for newspapers and are responsible for writing a regular column which shares their opinion. This opinion will often be related to a specialized field, such as sports or arts.
- Bloggers are writers that share their point of view or their knowledge on the Internet via a blog. Bloggers must have a great understanding of social media and digital communication in order to be effective.
- Critics are journalists who specialize in reviewing various things, such as restaurants, plays, movies, books, products, etc.

### *Communications Specialist*

Communications specialists can be found in a wide variety of settings, such as the private or public sectors, as well as community organizations. Their main tasks are to assist their employer in explaining the services, actions and policies to clients, the general public or other employees. They may also be involved in evaluating past and future communication strategies.

### *Activist*

Activists are responsible for raising awareness about issues they care about, be they societal, political or environmental. They also aim to achieve positive change in regards to these issues.

### **JOB SEARCH TIP #1**

**Do not wait for job postings to send your résumé!**

Find organizations or businesses that interest you. Often, employers will look at résumés they already have before listing a job. Show that you can take initiative!

## ***Public Relations Specialist***

Public relations specialists must have strong written and oral communication abilities and persuasion skills. Their objective is to promote the product, person or business they represent and to control the public's perception of it. Public relations specialists have a variety of responsibilities. They do a lot of research to improve their knowledge of the trends, social issues, policies that may have an impact on the business or person they represent. They may write and edit various promotional documents, plan fundraising events, organize publicity campaigns, as well as deal with politicians and the media.

## ***Technical Writer***

Technical writers can work in a variety of settings, such as companies, research laboratories, manufacturing firms or training institutions. They are in charge of writing instructional manuals, equipment manuals, educational materials, online help files or procedural documents, to name a few. Their main tasks involve researching, analyzing complex information, or identifying the different steps required to perform a task, build a product, etc.

## ***Volunteer Coordinator***

Volunteer coordinators help recruit, train, supervise volunteers as well as coordinate their work. Their main objective is to help organizations, which offer services mostly through volunteers, to run smoothly. Their tasks may involve writing grant proposals and year end reports, contacting potential donors and keeping statistics on volunteers and activities. Volunteer coordinators may work for government institutions, but most of them work in community or non-profit organizations.

## ***CAREERS WITH ADDITIONAL TRAINING (graduate certificate or master's degree)***

***Again, this list is not thorough. It's designed to help you think of possibilities***

## ***Archivist***

Archivists can be found working mostly in government agencies, libraries, museums or large companies. They are responsible for collecting and organizing various types of records. In government, these records mostly concern legislation, history and politics. In libraries or museums, they will mostly deal with valuable and rare books or papers. In corporate settings, they will work primarily with the company's historical, financial and operational records.

## ***College/Cégep teacher***

A teacher at the post-secondary level is responsible for preparing and giving courses in a specific area of study. They instruct students by using presentations, lectures, demonstrations or other teaching methods. They are required to work outside the classroom, by preparing lesson plans, grading or preparing assignments and exams.

## ***Public Policy Analyst***

Public policy analysts are responsible for studying a wide range of societal problems, policies, programs, laws. They use all this information in order to help evaluate the effectiveness of current government policies and programs as well as to identify potential ways that governments can solve identified problems. Public policy analysts can be found working in either the federal or provincial government, but they can also work in the private sector for lobbying or consulting firms.

## ***Post-secondary Education Administrator***

Post-secondary education administrators are responsible for the daily operations of colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions. Their exact duties will vary, based on the department in which they work (e.g.: admissions, registration, financial aid, etc.). However, regardless of their department, they must be comfortable interacting with various individuals, such as students, professors, staff and other administration professionals. They will also often be called upon to plan presentations, write reports and deal with various administrative tasks.

## ***Curator***

Curators mostly work in museums or art galleries. They are responsible for managing collections and acquiring new artifacts. They must research these new acquisitions to understand their history, value and to authenticate them. Curator may also take part in teaching classes, conducting guided tours or giving lectures.

## ***English Second Language (ESL) Teacher***

ESL teachers can work in various settings, such as elementary and high schools, community or non-profit organizations, private language schools or colleges. The requirements are variable based on the setting that you choose. For example, in order to work at the primary or secondary level, you need to obtain either a Bachelor's in Teaching English as a Second-Language or complete a two-year Master's program that will allow you to obtain a teaching permit. In all these settings, ESL teachers help their students learn proper pronunciation, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, reading and listening comprehension, and writing abilities.

## ***Human Resources Specialist***

Human resources specialists can hire, train or fire employees. They assist in determining the requirements for new positions and interviewing candidates. They are also responsible for ensuring that the employees are satisfied with their job. They can do this by acting as mediators when there are internal work conflicts and by creating and running training and development programs. They also keep detailed records about employees in order to keep track of their salary, their vacations, sick days, etc.

## ***Librarian***

Librarians have many responsibilities. They develop and manage the library's print and electronic inventory, they help clients find relevant information, they answer their questions and they show them how to use various search resources.

### **TESTIMONIAL OF SHARON MCCULLY-**

#### **Publisher at The Sherbrooke Record**

There is nothing like working for a community newspaper. You're an agent of change in your local community. You can make things happen at a grassroots level, where it's most important to people. You can celebrate the heroes that people never would have heard about otherwise and you can really call out the villains. You can look at situations that people would not have known about and you can institute change by making them noticed. Some of the major issues over the ages, like gender equality, didn't happen at a top-down level. They happened at the grassroots level. I would never have a different job than the one I have and I could never have one that is more impactful. We live the story and we get to see the positive and concrete change!

Every year we hire students and most of them do not have a journalism degree. Nevertheless, they need to have excellent interview, language and writing skills as well as a degree in a related discipline. I look for candidates that have traveled outside their community and therefore, have a broader perspective and are open to other cultures. Finally, these candidates must be interested in people and have a high level of integrity because it's a lot of responsibility to handle a story that can impact someone's life.



## RESOURCES

**Association des agences de communication créative:** <http://a2c.quebec/>

**Association des archivistes du Québec:** <http://www.archivistes.qc.ca/>

**Association of Canadian Archivists:** <http://archivists.ca/>

**Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English:** [www.accute.ca](http://www.accute.ca)

**Association of Canadian Publishers:** <http://publishers.ca/>

**Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec:** [www.ajiq.qc.ca/](http://www.ajiq.qc.ca/)

**Association nationale des éditeurs de livres:** <http://www.anel.qc.ca>

**Association des professionnels de la communication et du marketing:**  
<http://www.communicationmarketing.org/index.html>

**Association québécoise des critiques de cinéma:** <http://www.aqcc.ca/>

**Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre:** <http://www.aqct.qc.ca/>

**Canadian Association of Second-Language Teachers:** <http://caslt.org/>

**Canadian Authors Association:** <http://canadianauthors.org/national/>

**Canadian Comparative Literature Association:** <http://complit.ca/>

**Canada Council for the Arts:** <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/>

**Canadian Library Association:** [www.cla.ca/](http://www.cla.ca/)

**Canadian Media Production Association:** <http://www.cmpa.ca/>

**Canadian Museum Association:** [www.museums.ca](http://www.museums.ca)

**Canadian Teacher's Federation:** <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/en/Pages/default.aspx>

**Canadian Theatre Critics Association:** <http://canadiantheatre critics.ca/>

**Cultural Human Resources Council:** <http://www.culturalhrc.ca/>

**Editors' Association of Canada:** <http://www.editors.ca/>

**Language Industry Association:** [www.ailia.ca](http://www.ailia.ca)

**League of Canadian Poets:** [www.poets.ca](http://www.poets.ca)

**Newspapers Canada:** <http://www.cna-acj.ca/>

**Professional Writers Association of Canada:** [www.pwac.ca](http://www.pwac.ca)

**Quebec Library Association:** <http://abqla.qc.ca>

**Quebec Writers' Federation:** <http://www.qwf.org/>

**L'union des écrivaines et des écrivains québécois:** <http://www.uneq.qc.ca/>

**Writers' Union of Canada:** <http://www.writersunion.ca/>

### **JOB SEARCH TIP #2**

#### **Volunteer!**

Volunteering has become a form of experience that is now really recognized in community organizations and in other sectors. It is a great way to gain experience in your field!

### **SHORT ADDITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS**

As mentioned earlier, depending on the profession you want to pursue or the employment requirements and perspectives of this profession, it may be in your best interest to get specialized knowledge or skills in this field. The following table contains examples of undergraduate or graduate certificates that can be paired with your bachelor's degree to enhance your candidacy or allow you to specialize in a specific field while developing new skills. Some programs may require previous field experience. This list is not exhaustive but it is a good place to start your research.

<b>ADDITIONAL PROGRAM IDEAS</b>		
Adult Education	Digital Archives Management	Muséologie et diffusion de l'art
Archival Studies	Edition (Editing)	Muséologie et patrimoine
Art History	Human Resources Management	Playwriting
College Teaching Curatorial Studies	Mass Communication and Media Studies	Technical and Professional communication
Communication	Journalism	Public Relations
Comparative Literature	Labour Relations	Professional Communication
Modern Languages	Library and Information Studies	Cultural and Media Studies
Communication Studies	Linguistics	Translation
Creative Writing	Littérature pour la jeunesse	Teaching English as a Second Language
World Literature	Industrial Relations	Political Science

### **ADDITIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

There are several Masters' programs that can be paired with your Bachelor's degree in English. Their goal is to offer specialization in a field of study and/or gain research abilities. Depending on the Masters' program, the university may require that you take additional undergraduate courses. This may range from a couple courses to a full year (qualifying year) to gain the knowledge you may be missing to pursue the graduate program you are interested in. They may also require that you gain relevant work/volunteer experience. Here are some examples of program titles that can be found in certain universities across Canada. This list is not exhaustive but it is a good place to start your research.

MASTER'S PROGRAMS		
Communication Studies	Investigative Reporting	History
Adult Education	Comparative Literature	Political Science
Library and Information Studies	Teaching and Learning-English Language Arts	Littérature et arts de la scène et de l'écran
Journalism Studies	Children's Literature	Art History
Linguistics	Museum Studies	Cultural Studies
Create Writing	Interdisciplinary Humanities	Archival Studies

## REFERENCES

**Bishop's University- English Department:** <http://www.ubishops.ca/academic-programs/faculty-of-arts-and-science/humanities/english-department/>

**National Occupation Classification:**

<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/QuickSearch.aspx?val65=5123>

**McGill University- CAPS, What can I do with a degree in English?:**

[http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/files/caps/major\\_english.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/files/caps/major_english.pdf)

**Carleton University- Co-op and Career Services, What can I do with my degree in English?:**

<http://carleton.ca/cc/career/resources/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree/english/>

**Simon Fraser University- Career Services, What can I do with a degree in English? :**

<http://www.sfu.ca/career/WCID/fass/english/skills-english.html>

**Red Deer College- Counselling and Career Services, What can I do with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English? :** <http://rdc.ab.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/53849/ba-english-updated-april-2015.pdf>

**University of Toronto-Mississauga- Career Planning, Careers by major:**

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/careers-by-major-english>

**York University- Career Centre, What can I do with my degree in English?:**

<http://careers.yorku.ca/my-degree/english/>

**Université Laval- Répertoire de sites Web des associations et ordres professionnels:**

<https://www.spla.ulaval.ca/imt/associations-ordres-professionnels>

**Universities Canada- Program database :** [http://www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/?k=&program\\_level\\_merged=Undergraduate+level+certificate%2Fdiploma&program\\_language=ENGLISH](http://www.universitystudy.ca/search-programs/?k=&program_level_merged=Undergraduate+level+certificate%2Fdiploma&program_language=ENGLISH)

**Job Description-Assistant Editor:** <http://www.jobdescriptions.org/arts/assistant-editor.html>

**Careers State University-Columnist:** <http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/7837/Columnist.html>

**Careers State University-Blogger:** <http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/7709/Blogger.html>