GREAT JOBS FOR English Majors

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English: A Degree for Every Decade

Sometime, if you can, stop by your college or university library whether it holds a collection of yearbooks from the past. Perhaps they put away for safekeeping in a special collection. Ask to see them at through the galleries of past graduates. Begin in the 1960s and enjoy yourself as you look at the conservative haircuts and clothes. Note, too, how mature most of these students look, and reflect on how much less of a situation it must have been for them to pass, at least in appearance, from the world of college to the world of work.

Students of the past mimicked older adults in dress, manners, and behavior. Their closets and drawers were filled with a wardrobe that, with some change, would suffice for most adult occupations. The typical infracti college rules that warranted discipline tended not to be behavior that re adult norms, but rather actions that imitated adults even more closely as smoking or drinking.

A Degree with a History

Of course, you'll notice each graduate's degree displayed proudly under or her photograph. One thing that will immediately be apparent is how fewer degrees options there were. You'll see lots of teacher candidates or science majors. History majors and some foreign language majors a But, again and again, you'll see English boldly emblazoned under the graduates' serious but youthful mien as they stare out from a page that seems far more remote in time than it really is.

This was a time when, if you chose to major in English, people asked, "What are you going to do with that degree?" English was th
ship of the classic undergraduate liberal arts education, and its value lay in
its broad exposure to the sweep and history of a culture that spoke and wrote
in English. It was valued because of its history as one of the earliest degrees
in the middle-class American college tradition, as well as for its emphasis on
the disciplines of learning to read, write, and appreciate literature in many
forms.

The English majors whose faces appear in yearbooks of the past became
leaders in banking, finance, business, education, and medicine. Not only did
they feel prepared for these roles by their English degrees, but society also
agreed with them and valued that degree as excellent career preparation for
a host of possible employment situations.

English Majors Caught in Transition

Now, move through time and take a look at some yearbooks from the end
of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Things were quite different for these stu-
dents; there was an active rebellion against the norms of their parents’ gen-
eration. The hairstyles and clothes you see in these photos are a dead giveaway
of a rejection of traditional norms.

Changes were also taking place in degree programs as students sought out
more esoteric majors and many seemed to delight in pursuing studies for
which there seemed to be no immediate transferability to the world of work.
Students were disaffected with society’s power base, and rather than become
part of it and manage change from within, many chose to reject it entirely.

But, in the meantime, the technical revolution was under way. Space flight
was becoming a regular occurrence, and computer technology was becom-
ing more important in nearly every sector of the economy. Society was
adopting technology at an exponential rate. Everyone agreed that the more
technical your background was, the greater your chances of success and your
ability to master your environment would be. The press held much of this
growth up for public adulation, and parents, interested in a return on their
considerable investment in college, urged their sons and daughters to major
in specialized technical fields.

Just as colleges and universities began offering new technical degree pro-
grams, employers, too, developed a penchant for hiring college grads with
these narrowly defined degrees. They began to demand specialized gradu-
ates for specialized jobs. They only looked at business graduates or computer
science majors or economists. They increased the demand for students who
had some narrow skills but who did not read widely, who were not comfort-
able writing, and who had not been schooled in the critical analysis of
ideas.

A Failure in Priorities

Many programs that emphasized technology failed to teach students how to
communicate this new technology in a way others could easily understand.
They emphasized equipment before logical thinking, clarity of purpose, or
the ability to follow through in developing an idea. Exams in these subject
areas tended to emphasize the same dimensions of speed, efficiency, and eco-

nomics of effort as did the subject content; tests were heavily skewed in favor
of the true/false or multiple-choice exam. Students did well in selecting the
correct response but proved terribly deficient in interviews with prospective
employers, in completing graduate school personal essays, and in providing
writing samples because they had not had the opportunity to develop their
written and verbal communication skills.

Both educators and employers soon realized that what they were gaining
in depth in these subject areas, they were losing in breadth. The stage was
set for the return of the English major.

A Meaningful Degree for Today

Today’s students have to leap a far wider chasm of appearance, behavior, and
even idiomatic speech than did students of past decades to attain em-
ployment. In the contemporary youth-oriented culture, students (even older stu-
dents) mimic adolescents in their language, choice of entertainment, and
physical appearance. Therefore, after the long-held status of “student” is lost
upon graduation from college, inexperienced job candidates must negotiate
an unfamiliar terrain of language, behavior norms, and dress codes. Most
students sense the enormity of these changes, and this can add to their reluc-
tance to begin the job search.

In today’s world, the variety of degrees further obscures the choices for
first-year college students. Business concentrations have become specialized,
including marketing, advertising, and consumer behavior, all of which have
enjoyed enormous growth. Although they may have peaked in popularity,
they still compete for students.

Parents’ Concerns

Some of this trend to such new subject areas and increasing specialization of
study is not the students’ choice, but rather a response to their parents’
demands. Parents of college-age students tend to be keenly aware of how
their own employment prospects have or have not been fulfilled and which
of their peers has found success in a career. College places a difficult finan-
cial burden on families today, and parents naturally want to ensure a return on their investment in a college education. They have continued to stress new degree choices to their children, and some colleges have responded by creating curriculums around these demands. As a result, the English degree is not often termed “hot.”

Employers' Needs

Employers, however, are once again realizing that the English major not only already has an expertise employers need desperately, but also that English majors have, in their academic training, the kind of solid preparation needed to learn the ins and outs of any new environment. The world of work is filled with communications, made both easier and faster through technology. The proliferation of communications has for many firms created a quality crisis. Management now realizes through costly errors that even in this technological era businesses need employees who can use language correctly and effectively.

English as a major is now enjoying another in a continuing series of rediscoveries by both students and employers. This process of constant reevaluation of the English degree is one of the principle reasons it maintains its viability in the curriculum. Its current popularity came about through the failure of other programs to emphasize a bedrock need of the world outside of college: solid, effective communication skills.

Why a Degree in English Is So Important Now

An English major is an educational preparation that works for almost any field of endeavor. Human interaction is all about communication. Whether a person is trying to outline to a computer specialist the kind of database to be constructed or is attempting to convey to an executive caterer the ambiance a business function needs to achieve, he or she must rely on an understanding, appreciation, and mastery of the English language.

Work, be it teaching at a prestigious university or rigging an offshore oil derrick, is about people communicating—explaining, arguing, expostulating, describing, elaborating, defining, agreeing, questioning, probing, clarifying, and even obscuring meaning as we come together to get work done. Regardless of the project at hand, the cost, or the technology involved, almost all projects come down to the exchange of meaning between individuals through language.

The staying power of English as a major is based on its ability to meet our basic need for communication, for clarity, for the exchange of meaning to get our work done correctly, efficiently, and with some degree of harmony. Yes, we forget this need sometimes in our fascination with technology, but eventually we realize that workers who understand and appreciate how to use language—how to make it say what we want, how to refine and demystify it—are urgently needed in today’s workplace. This is why the English major will always be a welcome job candidate.

How does the English major acquire this skill with language? What do you study that helps you develop these abilities? Although college English departments vary dramatically and their offerings expand and contract depending on the size of the faculty and student body, we can make several solid generalizations about them.

Most English departments try to provide students with a comprehensive acquaintance with English literature from at least Chaucer's time until our own, and with American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. You may wonder what relevance Chaucer could possibly have for the modern age. Historians have long said, "If you want to know the future, read history." A study of the English language is a study of ideas, cultures, mores, and concepts through time. We study English to be truly educated, and the English major brings to his or her employment setting a high level of general information about the ideas of people and how those ideas have been expressed.

Chaucer may be the demarcation point for a study of English literature, but the author of The Canterbury Tales reappears in this career text as a contemporary technical writer! Six hundred years ago, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote A Treatise on the Astrolabe, now recognized as an early and quite competent piece of technical writing. What's more, it has reappeared in scientific journals as a model for infusing technical writing, which is often dense and turgid, with style, grace, and rhetoric. No other anecdote could better prove the point of the resiliency and potential application of an English degree.

English study expands your vocabulary, enriches your idiomatic expressions, and provides you with a never-ending set of alternatives in both verbal and written communications. The writing practice you've received has allowed you to enjoy the challenge of writing, not avoid it. You've grown to appreciate the importance of editing, proofreading, and clarifying written text to ensure the best presentation of your ideas.

Employers hope you'll consider putting these valuable skills to use in their workplace. Your reading skills will be of inestimable aid in mastering the technical jargon of whatever environment you select. You'll find yourself understanding policies and procedures and building a new vocabulary around your
workplace. Even advanced technical subjects are not beyond the scope of the well-prepared English major, who can read for content and use a dictionary when needed.

**A Degree for Today and the Future**

Just as Chaucer has proved remarkably current and long-lived, so will the English degree prove important, versatile, and supremely applicable to life in an ever more complicated world. Other academic subjects may move in and out of favor, but English will continue to maintain its hold on successive generations of students and employers because it prepares students well for life and work in innumerable settings.

Look at some of the issues waiting for English majors in the workplace. An increasing reliance on technology to enhance communication, from voice mail to electronic mail, has left many bemoaning the deterioration of language into shorter and more meaningless “sound bites.” A subject of a continuing dialogue in workplaces across the country is the growing schism between techno-language and traditional language. The English major can help establish better norms for electronic communication, demonstrating that condensation of language for reasons of cost or technology does not have to sacrifice clarity, grace, or style.

Hiring a generation of specialists has produced another startlingly embarrassing problem. Communications, even public communications, in the workplace have deteriorated in the quality of their spelling, composition, and syntax. Both internal and external communications are filled with errors that undermine the effectiveness and prestige of an organization and can do serious harm if miscommunication results. The English majors working in these environments, regardless of their work role, can help to reestablish quality writing through the high standards they maintain in their own writing and the editing and proofreading they contribute to those around them.

Planning what you want to say, outlining main points, providing effective visual aids, and ensuring that what you have to say is of interest to your audience all come naturally to English majors. They understand how to take complex material and make it clear to a wide audience. The opportunity to improve the effectiveness of a sales presentation, the clarity and structure of training and development programs, or the impact of public relations efforts are all fruitful vineyards for the English major who wonders, “What can I bring to the workplace?”

English majors might be surprised that their talents can be both so noticeable and so needed in the workplace. “How bad can it be?” they ask. The situation is quite poor, and many employers continue to insist in interviews and articles that many of their administrative problems would be eased if they could find management staff who have solid writing and speaking competencies.

No one need worry about the future of the English major in colleges and universities. Though its popularity has waxed and waned, it remains a solid choice for good reasons. Other majors may appear on the scene, only to fade as student interest shifts to something else, but English remains because it is timeless, has broad applications, and contains infinite pathways for exploration. English connects us through clarity of meaning and expression; it moves us through poetry, drama, and prose; and be it an ancient Valentine card or a high school commencement address, it is the stuff of memory.
The Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is the process by which you begin to acknowledge your own particular blend of education, experiences, values, needs, and goals. It provides the foundation for career planning and the entire job search process. Self-assessment involves looking inward and asking yourself what can sometimes prove to be difficult questions. This self-examination should lead to an intimate understanding of your personal traits and values, consumption patterns and economic needs, longer-term goals, skill base, preferred skills, and underdeveloped skills.

You come to the self-assessment process knowing yourself well in some of these areas, but you may still be uncertain about other aspects. You may be well aware of your consumption patterns, but have you spent much time specifically identifying your longer-term goals or your personal values as they relate to work? No matter what level of self-assessment you have undertaken to date, it is now time to clarify all of these issues and questions as they relate to the job search.

The knowledge you gain in the self-assessment process will guide the rest of your job search. In this book, you will learn about all of the following tasks:

- Writing résumés and cover letters
- Researching careers and networking
- Interviewing and job offer considerations

In each of these steps, you will rely on and often return to the understanding gained through your self-assessment. Any individual seeking employment must be able and willing to express these facets of his or her personality
to recruiters and interviewers throughout the job search. This communication allows you to show the world who you are so that together with employers you can determine whether there will be a workable match with a given job or career path.

How to Conduct a Self-Assessment

The self-assessment process goes on naturally all the time. People ask you to clarify what you mean, you make a purchasing decision, or you begin a new relationship. You react to the world and the world reacts to you. How you understand these interactions and any changes you might make because of them are part of the natural process of self-discovery. There is, however, a more comprehensive and efficient way to approach self-assessment with regard to employment.

Because self-assessment can become a complex exercise, we have distilled it into a seven-step process that provides an effective basis for undertaking a job search. The seven steps include the following:

1. Understanding your personal traits
2. Identifying your personal values
3. Calculating your economic needs
4. Exploring your longer-term goals
5. Enumerating your skill base
6. Recognizing your preferred skills
7. Assessing skills needing further development

As you work through your self-assessment, you might want to create a worksheet similar to the one shown in Exhibit 1.1, starting on the following page. Or you might want to keep a journal of the thoughts you have as you undergo this process. There will be many opportunities to revise your self-assessment as you start down the path of seeking a career.

**Step 1 Understand Your Personal Traits**

Each person has a unique personality that he or she brings to the job search process. Gaining a better understanding of your personal traits can help you evaluate job and career choices. Identifying these traits and then finding employment that allows you to draw on at least some of them can create a rewarding and fulfilling work experience. If potential employment doesn't allow you to use these preferred traits, it is important to decide whether you

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**Exhibit 1.1**

**SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET**

**Step 1. Understand Your Personal Traits**

- The personal traits that describe me are
  - (Include all of the words that describe you.)
- The ten personal traits that most accurately describe me are
  - (List these ten traits.)

**Step 2. Identify Your Personal Values**

- Working conditions that are important to me include
  - (List working conditions that would have to exist for you to accept a position.)
- The values that go along with my working conditions are
  - (Write down the values that correspond to each working condition.)
- Some additional values I've decided to include are
  - (List those values you identify as you conduct this job search.)

**Step 3. Calculate Your Economic Needs**

- My estimated minimum annual salary requirement is
  - (Write the salary you have calculated based on your budget.)
- Starting salaries for the positions I'm considering are
  - (List the name of each job you are considering and the associated starting salary.)

**Step 4. Explore Your Longer-Term Goals**

- My thoughts on longer-term goals right now are
  - (List down some of your longer-term goals as you know them right now.)

**Step 5. Enumerate Your Skill Base**

- The general skills I possess are
  - (List the skills that underlie tasks you are able to complete.)
- The specific skills I possess are
  - (List more technical or specific skills that you possess, and indicate your level of expertise.)
- General and specific skills that I want to promote to employers for the jobs I'm considering are
  - (List general and specific skills for each type of job you are considering.)

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Step 6. Recognize Your Preferred Skills
Skills that I would like to use on the job include
(List skills that you hope to use on the job, and indicate how often you'd like to use them.)

Step 7. Assess Skills Needing Further Development
Some skills that I'll need to acquire for the jobs I'm considering include
(Write down skills listed in job advertisements or job descriptions that you don't currently possess.)
I believe I can build these skills by
(Describe how you plan to acquire these skills.)

Consider Your Personal Traits in the Job Search Process. As you begin exploring jobs and careers, watch for matches between your personal traits and the job descriptions you read. Some jobs will require many personal traits you know you possess, and others will not seem to match those traits.

Working as a public relations information officer, for example, requires nearly nonstop communication with other members of the organization and with external constituents, and the ability to think on your feet and make quick decisions about how to respond to a wide variety of questions. Information officers must exude self-confidence and have an outgoing personality, the ability to express thoughts clearly and simply, and a good sense of humor. A writer's work, on the other hand, is often solitary and requires self-discipline, motivation, curiosity, and observation.

Your ability to respond to changing conditions, your decision-making ability, productivity, creativity, and verbal skills all have a bearing on your success in and enjoyment of your work life. To better guarantee success, be sure to take the time needed to understand these traits in yourself.

Step 2 Identify Your Personal Values
Your personal values affect every aspect of your life, including employment, and they develop and change as you move through life. Values can be defined as principles that we hold in high regard, qualities that are important and desirable to us. Some values aren't ordinarily connected to work (love, beauty, color, light, relationships, family, or religion), and others are (autonomy, cooperation, effectiveness, achievement, knowledge, and security). Our values determine, in part, the level of satisfaction we feel in a particular job.

Define Acceptable Working Conditions. One facet of employment is the set of working conditions that must exist for someone to consider taking a job.

Each of us would probably create a unique list of acceptable working conditions, but items that might be included on many people's lists are the amount of money you would need to be paid, how far you are willing to drive or travel, the amount of freedom you want in determining your own schedule, whether you would be working with people or data or things, and the types of tasks you would be willing to do. Your conditions might include statements of working conditions you will not accept; for example, you might not be willing to work at night or on weekends or holidays.

Focus on Selected Personal Traits. Of all the traits you identified, select the ten you believe most accurately describe you. Keep track of these ten traits.
If you were offered a job tomorrow, what conditions would have to exist for you to realistically consider accepting the position? Take some time and make a list of these conditions.

**Realize Associated Values.** Your list of working conditions can be used to create an inventory of your values relating to jobs and careers you are exploring. For example, if one of your conditions stated that you wanted to earn at least $30,000 per year, the associated value would be financial gain. If another condition was that you wanted to work with a friendly group of people, the value that went along with that might be belonging or interaction with people.

**Relate Your Values to the World of Work.** As you read the job descriptions you come across either in this book, in newspapers and magazines, or online, think about the values associated with each position.

For example, the duties of an English teacher include developing course content based on an established curriculum, presenting course material in meaningful ways for all types of learners, grading assignments, and inspiring attention and commitment to the material. Associated values are communication, effectiveness, creativity, and organization.

At least some of the associated values in the field you’re exploring should match those you extracted from your list of working conditions. Take a second look at any values that don’t match up. How important are they to you? What will happen if they are not satisfied on the job? Can you incorporate those personal values elsewhere? Your answers need to be brutally honest. As you continue your exploration, be sure to add to your list any additional values that occur to you.

**Step 3 Calculate Your Economic Needs**

Each of us grew up in an environment that provided for certain basic needs, such as food and shelter, and, to varying degrees, other needs that we now consider basic, such as cable television, e-mail, or an automobile. Needs such as privacy, space, and quiet, which at first glance may not appear to be monetary needs, may add to housing expenses and so should be considered as you examine your economic needs. For example, if you place a high value on a large, open living space for yourself, it would be difficult to satisfy that need without an associated high housing cost, especially in a densely populated city environment.

As you prepare to move into the world of work and become responsible for meeting your own basic needs, it is important to consider the salary you will need to be able to afford a satisfying standard of living. The three-step process outlined here will help you plan a budget, which in turn will allow you to evaluate the various career choices and geographic locations you are considering. The steps include (1) develop a realistic budget, (2) examine starting salaries, and (3) use a cost-of-living index.

**Develop a Realistic Budget.** Each of us has certain expectations for the kind of lifestyle we want to maintain. To begin the process of defining your economic needs, it will be helpful to determine what you expect to spend on routine monthly expenses. These expenses include housing, food, transportation, entertainment, utilities, loan repayments, and revolving charge accounts. You may not currently spend anything for certain items, but you probably will have to once you begin supporting yourself. As you develop this budget, be generous in your estimates, but keep in mind any items that could be reduced or eliminated. If you are not sure about the cost of a certain item, talk with family or friends who would be able to give you a realistic estimate.

If this is new or difficult for you, start to keep a log of expenses right now. You may be surprised at how much you actually spend each month for food or stamps or magazines. Household expenses and personal grooming items can often loom very large in a budget, as can auto repairs or home maintenance.

Income taxes must also be taken into consideration when examining salary requirements. State and local taxes vary, so it is difficult to calculate exactly the effect of taxes on the amount of income you need to generate. To roughly estimate the gross income necessary to generate your minimum annual salary requirement, multiply the minimum salary you have calculated by a factor of 1.35. The resulting figure will be an approximation of what your gross income would need to be, given your estimated expenses.

**Examine Starting Salaries.** Starting salaries for each of the career tracks are provided throughout this book. These salary figures can be used in conjunction with the cost-of-living index (discussed in the next section) to determine whether you would be able to meet your basic economic needs in a given geographic location.
Use a Cost-of-Living Index. If you are thinking about trying to get a job in a geographic region other than the one where you now live, understanding differences in the cost of living will help you come to a more informed decision about making a move. By using a cost-of-living index, you can compare salaries offered and the cost of living in different locations with what you know about the salaries offered and the cost of living in your present location.

Many variables are used to calculate the cost-of-living index. Often included are housing, groceries, utilities, transportation, health care, clothing, and entertainment expenses. Right now you do not need to worry about the details associated with calculating a given index. The main purpose of this exercise is to help you understand that pay ranges for entry-level positions may not vary greatly, but the cost of living in different locations can vary tremendously.

Let's say you want to find a job as an advertising coordinator in a large metropolitan community and you currently live in Columbus, Ohio. According to information contained on the American Society for Training and Development website (http://astd.salary.com), an advertising coordinator's salary varies according to geographic location. As of the publication date, the estimated average beginning advertising coordinator salaries in Columbus and two other cities were $37,780 in Burlington, Vermont, $38,633 in Phoenix, and $39,099 in Columbus.

Although the average beginning salary is highest in Columbus, if you will be relocating to either of the other cities you need to take into account the cost of living in each place to fully understand the impact of the salary you would earn there. For example, a comparison of the living expenses in Burlington and Columbus indicates that you would need to make $43,366 in Burlington to maintain the same purchasing power as you would have with a $39,099 salary in Columbus. So if you moved to Burlington from Columbus you would receive a lower salary and have a higher cost of living (see the following list), so you would experience a loss of almost $5,600 in disposable income.

Groceries are 4 percent higher in Burlington
Housing is about the same cost
Utilities are 20 percent higher in Burlington
Transportation is about the same cost
Health care is 25 percent higher in Burlington
Miscellaneous goods/services are 17 percent higher in Burlington

If a change in an advertising coordinator position involved moving from Columbus to Phoenix, you would need to earn $39,515 in Phoenix to have the same purchasing power as in Columbus—the cost of living in Phoenix is about 1 percent higher than in Columbus. Remember, the average beginning advertising coordinator salary in Phoenix is $38,633, so the lower salary would mean a loss of about $900 in disposable income. The cost-of-living comparison shows:

Groceries are about the same in the two locations
Housing is 10 percent higher in Phoenix
Utilities are 18 percent higher in Columbus
Transportation is 8 percent higher in Phoenix
Health care is 24 percent higher in Phoenix
Miscellaneous goods/services are 7 percent higher in Phoenix

You also need to evaluate whether an opportunity for employment that involves relocating to a different geographic location will advance your career or meet personal needs. Other cities may have more opportunities for advancement, but you need to make sure that relocating will be financially feasible.

You can work through a similar exercise for any type of job you are considering and for many locations when current salary information is available. It will be worth your time to undertake this analysis if you are seriously considering a relocation. By doing so you will be able to make an informed choice.

Step 4 Explore Your Longer-Term Goals
There is no question that when we first begin working, our goals are to use our skills and education in a job that will reward us with employment, income
and status relative to the preparation we brought with us to this position. If we are not being paid as much as we feel we should for our level of education or if job demands don't provide the intellectual stimulation we had hoped for, we experience unhappiness and as a result often seek other employment.

Most jobs we consider "good" are those that fulfill our basic "lower-level" needs of security, food, clothing, shelter, income, and productive work. But even when our basic needs are met and our jobs are secure and productive, we as individuals are constantly changing. As we change, the demands and expectations we place on our jobs may change. Fortunately, some jobs grow and change with us, and this explains why some people are happy throughout many years in a job.

But more often people are bigger than the jobs they fill. We have more goals and needs than any job could satisfy. These are "higher-level" needs of self-esteem, companionship, affection, and an increasing desire to feel we are employing ourselves in the most effective way possible. Not all of these higher-level needs can be met through employment, but for as long as we are employed, we increasingly demand that our jobs play their part in moving us along the path to fulfillment.

Another obvious but important fact is that we change as we mature. Although our jobs also have the potential for change, they may not change as frequently or as markedly as we do. There are increasingly fewer one-job, one-employer careers; we must think about a work future that may involve voluntary or forced moves from employer to employer. Because of that very real possibility, we need to take advantage of the opportunities in each position we hold. Acquiring the skills and competencies associated with each position will keep us viable and attractive as employees. This is particularly true in a job market that not only is technology/computer dependent, but also is populated with more and more small, self-transforming organizations rather than the large, seemingly stable organizations of the past.

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If you are considering a career in college admissions in higher education, you would gain a solid understanding of this path if you talked to an entry-level admissions representative, a director of college admissions, and, finally, someone who has risen through the ranks and now serves as the university's vice president of student affairs. Each will have unique perspectives, concerns, and value priorities.

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**Step 5  Enumerate Your Skill Base**

In terms of the job search, skills can be thought of as capabilities that can be developed in school, at work, or by volunteering and then used in specific job settings. Many studies have documented the kinds of skills that employers seek in entry-level applicants. For example, some of the most desired skills for individuals interested in the teaching profession are the ability to interact effectively with students one-on-one, to manage a classroom, to adapt to varying situations as necessary, and to get involved in school activities. Business employers have also identified important qualities, including enthusiasm for the employer's product or service, a businesslike mind, the ability to follow written or oral instructions, the ability to demonstrate self-control, the confidence to suggest new ideas, the ability to communicate with all members of a group, an awareness of cultural differences, and loyalty, to name just a few. You will find that many of these skills are also in the repertoire of qualities demanded in your college major.

To be successful in obtaining any given job, you must be able to demonstrate that you possess a certain mix of skills that will allow you to carry out the duties required by that job. This skill mix will vary a great deal from job to job; to determine the skills necessary for the jobs you are seeking, you can read job advertisements or more generic job descriptions, such as those found later in this book. If you want to be effective in the job search, you must directly show employers that you possess the skills needed to be successful in filling the position. These skills will initially be described on your résumé and then discussed again during the interview process.

Skills are either general or specific. To develop a list of skills relevant to employers, you must first identify the general skills you possess, then list specific skills you have to offer, and, finally, examine which of these skills employers are seeking.

**Identify Your General Skills.** Because you possess or will possess a college degree, employers will assume that you can read and write, perform certain basic computations, think critically, and communicate effectively. Employers will want to see that you have acquired these skills, and they will want to know which additional general skills you possess.

One way to begin identifying skills is to write an experiential diary. An experiential diary lists all the tasks you were responsible for completing for each job you've held and then outlines the skills required to do those tasks. You may list several skills for any given task. This diary allows you to dis-
tistinguish between the tasks you performed and the underlying skills required to complete those tasks. Here's an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answering telephone</td>
<td>Effective use of language, clear diction, ability to direct inquiries, ability to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting on tables</td>
<td>Poise under conditions of time and pressure, speed, accuracy, good memory, simultaneous completion of tasks, sales skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each job or experience you have participated in, develop a worksheet based on the example shown here. On a résumé, you may want to describe these skills rather than simply listing tasks. Skills are easier for the employer to appreciate, especially when your experience is very different from the employment you are seeking. In addition to helping you identify general skills, this experiential diary will prepare you to speak more effectively in an interview about the qualifications you possess.

**Identify Your Specific Skills.** It may be easier to identify your specific skills because you can definitely say whether you can speak other languages, program a computer, draft a map or diagram, or edit a document using appropriate symbols and terminology.

Using your experiential diary, identify the points in your history where you learned how to do something very specific, and decide whether you have a beginning, intermediate, or advanced knowledge of how to use that particular skill. Right now, be sure to list every specific skill you have, and don't consider whether you like using the skill. Write down a list of specific skills you have acquired and the level of competence you possess—beginning, intermediate, or advanced.

**Relate Your Skills to Employers.** You probably have thought about a couple of different jobs you might be interested in obtaining, and one way to begin relating the general and specific skills you possess to a potential employer's needs is to read actual advertisements for these types of positions (see Part Two for resources listing actual job openings).

For example, you might be interested in working as a brand manager. A typical entry-level assistant brand manager job listing might read, "Provide support to brand managers. Interact daily with members of a cross-functional team and with external vendors. Requires bachelor's degree with one year experience." If you then use any one of a number of general sources of information that describe the job of brand manager, you would find additional information. Assistant brand managers also help design new packaging, identify new product opportunities, and research current dynamics in the marketplace.

Begin building a comprehensive list of required skills with the first job description you read. Exploring online job advertisements of several related positions will reveal an important core of skills that is necessary for obtaining the type of work you're interested in. In building this list, include both general and specific skills.

The following is a sample list of skills needed to be successful as an assistant brand manager. These items were extracted from both general resources and actual job listings.

**JOB: ASSISTANT BRAND MANAGER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Skills</th>
<th>Specific Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attention to detail</td>
<td>Manage marketing project budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical approach to problem solving</td>
<td>Develop new product marketing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>Manage iterative design process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Develop new product names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational skills</td>
<td>Coordinate artwork development, photography, and printing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try to generate a comprehensive list of required skills for at least one job you are considering.

The list of general skills that you develop for a given career path will be valuable for any number of jobs. Many of the specific skills would also be transferable to other types of positions.

For example, managing a project budget is a required skill for
some assistant brand managers, and it also would be required of some media planners as well.

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Step 6  Recognize Your Preferred Skills
In the previous section you developed a comprehensive list of skills that relate to particular career paths that are of interest to you. You can now relate these to skills that you prefer to use. We all use a wide range of skills (some researchers say individuals have a repertoire of about five hundred skills), but we may not particularly be interested in using all of them in our work. There may be some skills that come to us more naturally or that we use successfully time and time again and that we want to continue to use; these are best described as our preferred skills. For this exercise use the list of skills that you created for the previous section, and decide which of them you are most interested in using in future work and how often you would like to use them. You might be interested in using some skills only occasionally, while others you would like to use more regularly. You probably also have skills that you hope you can use constantly.

As you examine job announcements, look for matches between this list of preferred skills and the qualifications described in the advertisements. These skills should be highlighted on your résumé and discussed in job interviews.

Step 7  Assess Skills Needing Further Development
Previously you compiled a list of general and specific skills required for given positions. You already possess some of these skills; those that remain to be developed are your underdeveloped skills.

If you are just beginning the job search, there may be gaps between the qualifications required for some of the jobs you’re considering and the skills you possess. The thought of having to admit to and talk about these underdeveloped skills, especially in a job interview, is a frightening one. One way to put a healthy perspective on this subject is to target and relate your exploitation of underdeveloped skills to the types of positions you are seeking. Recognizing these shortcomings and planning to overcome them with either on-the-job training or additional formal education can be a positive way to address the concept of underdeveloped skills.

On your worksheet or in your journal, make a list of up to five general or specific skills required for the positions you’re interested in that you don’t currently possess. For each item list an idea you have for specific action you could take to acquire that skill. Do some brainstorming to come up with possible actions. If you have a hard time generating ideas, talk to people currently working in this type of position, professionals in your college career services office, trusted friends, family members, or members of related professional associations.

In the chapter on interviewing, we will discuss in detail how to effectively address questions about underdeveloped skills. Generally speaking, though, employers want genuine answers to these types of questions. They want you to reveal “the real you,” and they also want to see how you answer difficult questions. In taking the positive, targeted approach discussed previously, you show the employer that you are willing to continue to learn and that you have a plan for strengthening your job qualifications.

Use Your Self-Assessment
Exploring entry-level career options can be an exciting experience if you have good resources available and will take the time to use them. Can you effectively complete the following tasks?

1. Understand your personality traits and relate them to career choices
2. Define your personal values
3. Determine your economic needs
4. Explore longer-term goals
5. Understand your skill base
6. Recognize your preferred skills
7. Express a willingness to improve on your underdeveloped skills

If so, then you can more meaningfully participate in the job search process by writing a more effective résumé, finding job titles that represent work you are interested in doing, locating job sites that will provide the opportunity for you to use your strengths and skills, networking in an informed way, participating in focused interviews, getting the most out of follow-up contacts, and evaluating job offers to find those that create a good match between you and the employer. The remaining chapters in Part One guide you through these next steps in the job search process. For many job seekers, this process can take anywhere from three months to a year to implement. The time you will need to put into your job search will depend on the type of job you want and the geographic location where you’d like to work. Think of your effort as a job in itself, requiring you to set aside time each week to complete the needed work. Carefully undertaken efforts may reduce the time you need for your job search.
One reason for confusion is perhaps a mistaken assumption that a college education provides job training. In most cases it does not. Of course, applied fields such as engineering, management, or education provide specific skills for the workplace as well as an education.

**What Do They Call the Job You Want?**

Your overall college education exposes you to numerous fields of study and teaches you quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, writing, and speaking, all of which can be successfully applied to a number of different job fields. But it still remains up to you to choose a job field and to learn how to articulate the benefits of your education in a way the employer will appreciate.

"What can I really do with my degree?" English majors are much more likely to pose this question than students earning teaching, accounting, and management information systems degrees, just to name a few, because they have not been taught how to begin their careers. Your friend who’s an accounting major knows she’ll most likely start her career with an accounting firm. Or your friend who’s a marketing major is planning to go into sales. If you are not sure what kind of work you are qualified for, or the type of employer that would hire you, this chapter will help you gain that understanding.
Collect Job Titles

The world of employment is a complex place, so you need to become a bit of an explorer and adventurer and be willing to try a variety of techniques to develop a list of possible occupations that might use your talents and education. You might find computerized interest inventories, reference books and other sources, and classified ads helpful in this respect. Once you have a list of possibilities that you are interested in and qualified for, you can move on to find out what kinds of organizations have these job titles.

Computerized Interest Inventories. One way to begin collecting job titles is to identify a number of jobs that call for your degree and the particular skills and interests you identified as part of the self-assessment process. There are excellent interactive career-guidance programs on the market to help you produce such selected lists of possible job titles. Most of these are available at colleges and at some larger town and city libraries. Two of the industry leaders are CHOICES and DISCOVER. Both allow you to enter interests, values, educational background, and other information to produce lists of possible occupations and industries. Each of the resources listed here will produce different job title lists. Some job titles will appear again and again, while others will be unique to a particular source. Investigate all of them!

Reference Sources. Books on the market that may be available through your local library or career counseling office also suggest various occupations related to specific majors. The following are only a few of the many good books on the market: College Majors and Careers: A Resource Guide for Effective Life Planning by Paul Phifer, Guide to College Majors by Erik Olson and Lisa M. Rovito, and College Majors Handbook with Real Career Paths and Payoff by Paul Harrington and Thomas Harrington. All of these books list possible job titles within the academic major.

As you begin exploring the types of employers that hire English majors interested in, say, technical writing, you will begin to see that some seem like a better fit than others. Technical writers work in major corporations selling either consumer or industrial goods, in medical institutions, in financial organizations, or in small venture capital start-up companies that produce specialized computer software.

Each employer offers a different environment or "culture" with associated norms in the pace of work, in the formality of communications, in office attire, and the background and training of those you'll be working alongside. Do any of the following types of employers seem more interesting to you: nonprofit agency, federal government agency, county education department, private school, state government agency, or international corporation? As with job titles, look for work environments that are more attractive to you.

Each job title deserves your consideration. Like removing the layers of an onion, the search for job titles can go on and on! As you spend time doing this activity, you are actually learning more about the value of your degree. What's important in your search at this point is not to become critical or selective but rather to develop a list of possibilities as you can. Every source used will help you add new and potentially exciting jobs to your growing list.

Classified Ads. It has been well publicized that the classified ad section of the newspaper represents only a small fraction of the current job market. Nevertheless, the weekly classified ads can be a great help to you in your search. Although they may not be the best place to look for a job, they can teach you a lot about the job market. Classified ads provide a good education in job descriptions, duties, responsibilities, and qualifications. In addition, they provide insight into which industries are actively recruiting and some indication of the area's employment market. This is particularly helpful when seeking a position in a specific geographic area and/or a specific field. For your purposes, classified ads are a good source for job titles to add to your list.

Read the Sunday classified ads in a major market newspaper for several weeks in a row. Cut and paste all the ads that interest you and seem to call for something close to your education, skills, experience, and interests. Remember that classified ads are written for what an organization hopes to find; you don't have to meet absolutely every criterion. However, if certain requirements are stated as absolute minimums and you cannot meet them, it's best not to waste your time and that of the employer.

The weekly classified want ads exercise is important because these jobs are out in the marketplace. They truly exist, and people with your qualifications are being sought to apply. What's more, many of these advertisements describe the duties and responsibilities of the job advertised and give you a beginning sense of the challenges and opportunities such a position presents. Some will indicate salary, and that will be helpful as well. This information will better define the jobs for you and provide some good material for possible interviews in that field.
Explore Job Descriptions
Once you've arrived at a solid list of possible job titles that interest you and for which you believe you are somewhat qualified, it's a good idea to do some research on each of these jobs. The preeminent source for such job information is the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, or DOT (http://online.onetcenter.org). This directory lists every conceivable job and provides excellent up-to-date information on duties and responsibilities, interactions with associates, and day-to-day assignments and tasks. These descriptions provide a thorough job analysis, but they do not consider the possible employers or the environments in which a job may be performed. So, although a position as public relations officer may be well defined in terms of duties and responsibilities, it does not explain the differences in doing public relations work in a college or a hospital or a factory or a bank. You will need to look somewhere else for work settings.

Learn More About Possible Work Settings
After reading some job descriptions, you may choose to edit and revise your list of job titles once again, discarding those you feel are not suitable and keeping those that continue to hold your interest. Or you may wish to keep your list intact and see where these jobs may be located. For example, if you are interested in public relations and you appear to have those skills and the requisite education, you'll want to know which organizations do public relations. How can you find that out? How much income does someone in public relations make a year and what is the employment potential for the field of public relations?

To answer these and many other questions about your list of job titles, we recommend you try any of the following resources: Careers Encyclopedia, the professional societies and resources found throughout this book, College to Career: The Guide to Job Opportunities, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (http://stats.bls.gov/oco/home.htm). Each of these resources, in a different way, will help to put the job titles you have selected into an employer context. Perhaps the most extensive discussion is found in the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which gives a thorough presentation of the nature of the work, the working conditions, employment statistics, training, other qualifications, and advancement possibilities as well as job outlook and earnings. Related occupations are also detailed, and a select bibliography is provided to help you find additional information.

Continuing with our public relations example, your search through these reference materials would teach you that the public relations jobs you find attractive are available in larger hospitals, financial institutions, most corporations (both consumer goods and industrial goods), media organizations, and colleges and universities.

Networking
Networking is the process of deliberately establishing relationships to get career-related information or to alert potential employers that you are available for work. Networking is critically important to today's job seeker for two reasons: it will help you get the information you need, and it can help you find out about all of the available jobs.

Get the Information You Need
Networking will review your résumé and give you feedback on its effectiveness. They will talk about the job you are looking for and give you a candid appraisal of how they see your strengths and weaknesses. If they have a good sense of the industry or the employment sector for that job, they'll get their feelings on trends in the industry as well. Some networking will be very forthcoming about salaries, job-hunting techniques, and suggestions for your job search strategy. Many have been known to place calls right from the interview desk to friends and associates who might be interested in you. Each networker will make his or her own contribution, and each will be valuable.

Because organizations must evolve to adapt to current global market needs, the information provided by decision makers within various organizations will be critical to your success as a new job market entrant. For example, you might learn about the concept of virtual organizations from a networker. Virtual organizations coordinate economic activity to deliver value to customers by using resources outside the traditional boundaries of the organization. This concept is being discussed and implemented by chief executive officers of many organizations, including Ford Motor, Dell, and IBM. Networking can help you find out about this and other trends currently affecting the industries under your consideration.

Find Out About All of the Available Jobs
Not every job that is available at this very moment is advertised for potential applicants to see. This is called the hidden job market. Only 15 to 20 percent of all jobs are formally advertised, which means that 80 to 85 per-
percent of available jobs do not appear in published channels. Networking will help you become more knowledgeable about all the employment opportunities available during your job search period.

Although someone you might talk to today doesn’t know of any openings within his or her organization, tomorrow or next week or next month an opening may occur. If you’ve taken the time to show an interest in and knowledge of their organization, if you’ve shown the company representative how you can help achieve organizational goals and that you can fit into the organization, you’ll be one of the first candidates considered for the position.

Networking: A Proactive Approach
Networking is a proactive rather than a reactive approach. You, as a job seeker, are expected to initiate a certain level of activity on your own behalf; you cannot afford to simply respond to jobs listed in the newspaper. Being proactive means building a network of contacts that includes informed and interested decision makers who will provide you with up-to-date knowledge of the current job market and increase your chances of finding out about employment opportunities appropriate for your interests, experience, and level of education. An old axiom of networking says, “You are only two phone calls away from the information you need.” In other words, by talking to enough people, you will quickly come across someone who can offer you help.

Preparing to Network
In deliberately establishing relationships, maximize your efforts by organizing your approach. Five specific areas in which you can organize your efforts include reviewing your self-assessment, reviewing your research on job sites and organizations, deciding who you want to talk to, keeping track of all your efforts, and creating your self-promotion tools.

Review Your Self-Assessment
Your self-assessment is as important a tool in preparing to network as it has been in other aspects of your job search. You have carefully evaluated your personal traits, personal values, economic needs, longer-term goals, skill base, preferred skills, and underdeveloped skills. During the networking process you will be called upon to communicate what you know about yourself and relate it to the information or job you seek. Be sure to review the exercises that you completed in the self-assessment section of this book in preparation for networking. We’ve explained that you need to assess which skills you have acquired from your major that are of general value to an employer; be ready to express those in ways he or she can appreciate as useful in the organizations.

Review Research on Job Sites and Organizations
In addition, individuals assisting you will expect that you’ll have at least some background information on the occupation or industry of interest to you. Refer to the appropriate sections of this book and other relevant publications to acquire the background information necessary for effective networking. They’ll explain how to identify not only the job titles that might be of interest to you but also which kinds of organizations employ people to do that job. You will develop some sense of working conditions and expectations about duties and responsibilities—all of which will be of help in your networking interviews.

Decide Who You Want to Talk To
Networking cannot begin until you decide who you want to talk to and, in general, what type of information you hope to gain from your contacts. Once you know this, it’s time to begin developing a list of contacts. Five useful sources for locating contacts are described here.

College Alumni Network. Most colleges and universities have created a formal network of alumni and friends of the institution who are particularly interested in helping currently enrolled students and graduates of their alma mater gain employment-related information.

It is usually a simple process to make use of an alumni network. Visit your college’s website and locate the alumni office and/or your career center. Either or both sites will have information about your school’s alumni network. You’ll be provided with information on shadowing experiences, geographic information, or those alumni offering job referrals. If you don’t find what you’re looking for, don’t hesitate to phone or e-mail your career center and ask what they can do to help you connect with an alum.

Alumni networkers may provide some combination of the following services: day-long shadowing experiences, telephone interviews, in-person interviews, information on relocating to given geographic areas, internship information, suggestions on graduate school study, and job vacancy notices.
Present and Former Supervisors. If you believe you are on good terms with present or former job supervisors, they may be an excellent resource for providing information or directing you to appropriate resources that would have information related to your current interests and needs. Additionally, these supervisors probably belong to professional organizations that they might be willing to utilize to get information for you.

Employers in Your Area. Although you may be interested in working in a geographic location different from the one where you currently reside, don't overlook the value of the knowledge and contacts those around you are able to provide. Use the local telephone directory and newspaper to identify the types of organizations you are thinking of working for or professionals who have the kinds of jobs you are interested in. Recently, a call made to a local hospital's financial administrator for information on working in health-care financial administration yielded more pertinent information on training seminars, regional professional organizations, and potential employment sites than a national organization was willing to provide.

Employers in Geographic Areas Where You Hope to Work. If you are thinking about relocating, identifying prospective employers or informational contacts in the new location will be critical to your success. Here are some tips for online searching. First, use a "metasearch" engine to get the most out of your search. Metasearch engines combine several engines into one powerful tool. We frequently use Dogpile.com and Metasearch.com for this purpose. Try using the city and state as your keywords in a search. New Haven, Connecticut will bring you to the city's website with links to the chamber of commerce, member businesses, and other valuable resources. By using Looksmart.com you can locate newspapers in any area, and they, too, can provide valuable insight before you relocate. Of course, both Dogpile and Metasearch can lead you to yellow and white page directories in areas you are considering.

Professional Associations and Organizations. Professional associations and organizations can provide valuable information in several areas: career paths that you might not have considered, qualifications relating to those career choices, publications that list current job openings, and workshops or seminars that will enhance your professional knowledge and skills. They can also be excellent sources for background information on given industries: their health, current problems, and future challenges.

There are several excellent resources available to help you locate professional associations and organizations that would have information to meet your needs. Two especially useful publications are the Encyclopedia of Associations and National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States.

Keep Track of All Your Efforts
It can be difficult, almost impossible, to remember all the details related to each contact you make during the networking process, so you will want to develop a record-keeping system that works for you. Formalize this process by using your computer to keep a record of the people and organizations you want to contact. You can simply record the contact's name, address, and telephone number, and what information you hope to gain.

You could record this as a simple Word document and you could still use the "Find" function if you were trying to locate some data and could only recall the firm's name or the contact's name. If you're comfortable with database management and you have some database software on your computer, then you can put information at your fingertips even if you have only the zip code! The point here is not technological sophistication but good record keeping.

Once you have created this initial list, it will be helpful to keep more detailed information as you begin to actually make the contacts. Those details should include complete contact information, the date and content of each contact, names and information for additional networkers, and required follow-up. Don't forget to send a letter thanking your contact for his or her time! Your contact will appreciate your recall of details of your meetings and conversations, and the information will help you to focus your networking efforts.

Create Your Self-Promotion Tools
There are two types of promotional tools that are used in the networking process. The first is a résumé and cover letter, and the second is a one-minute "infomercial," which may be given over the telephone or in person.

Techniques for writing an effective résumé and cover letter are discussed in Chapter 2. Once you have reviewed that material and prepared these important documents, you will have created one of your self-promotion tools.

The one-minute infomercial will demand that you begin tying your interests, abilities, and skills to the people or organizations you want to network with. Think about your goal for making the contact to help you understand
what you should say about yourself. You should be able to express yourself easily and convincingly. If, for example, you are contacting an alumnus of your institution to obtain the names of possible employment sites in a distant city, be prepared to discuss why you are interested in moving to that location, the types of jobs you are interested in, and the skills and abilities you possess that will make you a qualified candidate.

To create a meaningful one-minute infomercial, write it out, practice it as if it will be a spoken presentation, rewrite it, and practice it again if necessary until expressing yourself comes easily and is convincing.

Here’s a simplified example of an infomercial for use over the telephone:

Hello, Mrs. Jones? My name is Beau Hays. I am a recent graduate of the University of Maryland, and I hope to pursue a career in technical writing. My major was English, and I feel I’ve developed entry-level skills that would be valued by an employer. I’m an active listener, a critical thinker, and a clear and concise writer. I’m also familiar with a variety of word-processing software.

Mrs. Jones, I’m calling you because I still need more information about working as a technical writer, and one of my professors recommended that I talk with you. I’m hoping you’ll have time to meet with me for about half an hour to discuss your perspective on this type of writing career. There are so many types of jobs and employers, and I’m seeking advice on the options that would be the best fit for my combination of skills and experience.

Would you be willing to meet with me? I am available any afternoon after one o’clock, if that would work for you.

It very well may happen that your employer contact wishes you to communicate by e-mail. The infomercial quoted above could easily be rewritten for an e-mail message. You should “cut and paste” your résumé right into the e-mail text itself.

Other effective self-promotion tools include portfolios for those in the arts, writing professions, or teaching. Portfolios show examples of work, photographs of projects or classroom activities, or certificates and credentials that are job related. There may not be an opportunity to use the portfolio during an interview, and it is not something that should be left with the organization. It is designed to be explained and displayed by the creator. However, during some networking meetings, there may be an opportunity to illustrate a point or strengthen a qualification by exhibiting the portfolio.

**Beginning the Networking Process**

**Set the Tone for Your Communications**
It can be useful to establish “tone words” for any communications you embark upon. Before making your first telephone call or writing your first letter, decide what you want the person to think of you. If you are networking to try to obtain a job, your tone words might include descriptors such as genuine, informed, and self-knowledgeable. When you’re trying to acquire information, your tone words may have a slightly different focus, such as courteous, organized, focused, and well-spoken. Use the tone words you establish for your contacts to guide you through the networking process.

**Honestly Express Your Intentions**
When contacting individuals, it is important to be honest about your reasons for making the contact. Establish your purpose in your own mind and be able and ready to articulate it concisely. Determine an initial agenda, whether it be informational questioning or self-promotion, present it to your contact, and be ready to respond immediately. If you don’t adequately prepare before initiating your overture, you may find yourself at a disadvantage if you’re asked to immediately begin your informational interview or self-promotion during the first phone conversation or visit.

**Start Networking Within Your Circle of Confidence**
Once you have organized your approach—by utilizing specific researching methods, creating a system for keeping track of the people you will contact, and developing effective self-promotion tools—you are ready to begin networking. The best way to begin networking is by talking with a group of people you trust and feel comfortable with. This group is usually made up of your family, friends, and career counselors. No matter who is in this inner circle, they will have a special interest in seeing you succeed in your job search. In addition, because they will be easy to talk to, you should try talking some risks in terms of practicing your information-seeking approach. Gain confidence in talking about the strengths you bring to an organization and the underdeveloped skills you feel hinder your candidacy. Be sure to review
the section on self-assessment for tips on approaching each of these areas. Ask for critical but constructive feedback from the people in your circle of confidence on the letters you write and the one-minute infomercial you have developed. Evaluate whether you want to make the changes they suggest, then practice the changes on others within this circle.

**Stretch the Boundaries of Your Networking Circle of Confidence**

Once you have refined the promotional tools you will use to accomplish your networking goals, you want to make additional contacts. Because you will not know most of these people, it will be a less comfortable activity to undertake. The practice that you gained with your inner circle of trusted friends should have prepared you to move outside of that comfort zone.

It is said that any information a person needs is only two phone calls away, but the information cannot be gained until you (1) make a reasonable guess about who might have the information you need and (2) pick up the telephone to make the call. Using your network list that includes alumni, instructors, supervisors, employers, and associations, you can begin preparing your list of questions that will allow you to get the information you need.

**Prepare the Questions You Want to Ask**

Networkers can provide you with the insider’s perspective on any given field and you can ask them questions that you might not want to ask in an interview. For example, you can ask them to describe the more repetitious or mundane parts of the job or ask them for a realistic idea of salary expectations. Be sure to prepare your questions ahead of time so that you are organized and efficient.

**Be Prepared to Answer Some Questions**

To communicate effectively, you must anticipate questions that will be asked of you by the networkers you contact. Revisit the self-assessment process you undertook and the research you’ve done so that you can effortlessly respond to questions about your short- and long-term goals and the kinds of jobs you are most interested in pursuing.

**General Networking Tips**

**Make Every Contact Count.** Setting the tone for each interaction is critical. Approaches that will help you communicate in an effective way include politeness, being appreciative of time provided to you, and being prepared and thorough. Remember, *everyone* within an organization has a circle of influence, so be prepared to interact effectively with each person you encounter in the networking process, including secretarial and support staff. Many information or job seekers have thwarted their own efforts by being rude to some individuals they encountered as they networked because they made the incorrect assumption that certain persons were unimportant.

Sometimes your contacts may be surprised at their ability to help you. After meeting and talking with you, they might think they have not offered much in the way of help. A day or two later, however, they may make a contact that would be useful to you and refer you to that person.

**With Each Contact, Widen Your Circle of Networkers.** Always leave an informational interview with the names of at least two more people who can help you get the information or job that you are seeking. Don’t be shy about asking for additional contacts; networking is all about increasing the number of people you can interact with to achieve your goals.

**Make Your Own Decisions.** As you talk with different people and get answers to the questions you pose, you may hear conflicting information or get conflicting suggestions. Your job is to listen to these “experts” and decide what information and which suggestions will help you achieve your goals. Only implement those suggestions that you believe will work for you.

**Shutting Down Your Network**

As you achieve the goals that motivated your networking activity—getting the information you need or the job you want—the time will come to inactivate all or parts of your network. As you do, be sure to tell your primary supporters about your change in status. Call or write to each one of them and give them as many details about your new status as you feel is necessary to maintain a positive relationship.

Because a network takes on a life of its own, activity undertaken on your behalf will continue even after you cease your efforts. As you get calls or are contacted in some fashion, be sure to inform these networkers about your change in status, and thank them for assistance they have provided.

Information on the latest employment trends indicates that workers will change jobs or careers several times in their lifetime. Networking, then, will be a critical aspect in the span of your professional life. If you carefully and thoughtfully conduct your networking activities during your job search, you
will have a solid foundation of experience when you need to network the next time around.

Where Are These Jobs, Anyway?

Having a list of job titles that you've designed around your own career interests and skills is an excellent beginning. It means you've really thought about who you are and what you are presenting to the employment market. It has caused you to think seriously about the most appealing environments to work in, and you have identified some employer types that represent these environments.

The research and the thinking that you've done thus far will be used again and again. They will be helpful in writing your résumé and cover letters, in talking about yourself on the telephone to prospective employers, and in answering interview questions.

Now is a good time to begin to narrow the field of job titles and employment sites down to some specific employers to initiate the employment contact.

Find Out Which Employers Hire People Like You

This section will provide tips, techniques, and specific resources for developing an actual list of specific employers that can be used to make contacts. It is only an outline that you must be prepared to tailor to your own particular needs and according to what you bring to the job search. Once again, it is important to communicate with others along the way exactly what you're looking for and what your goals are for the research you're doing. Librarians, employers, career counselors, friends, friends of friends, business contacts, and bookstore staff will all have helpful information on geographically specific and new resources to aid you in locating employers who'll hire you.

Identify Information Resources

Your interview wardrobe and your new résumé might have a dent in your wallet, but the resources you'll need to pursue your job search are available for free. The categories of information detailed here are not hard to find and are yours for the browsing.

Numerous resources described in this section will help you identify actual employers. Use all of them or any others that you identify as available in your geographic area. As you become experienced in this process, you'll quickly figure out which information sources are helpful and which are not. If you live in a rural area, a well-planned day trip to a major city that includes a college career office, a large college or city library, state and federal employment centers, a chamber of commerce office, and a well-stocked bookstore can produce valuable results.

There are many excellent resources available to help you identify actual job sites. They are categorized into employer directories (usually indexed by product lines and geographic location), geographically based directories (designed to highlight particular cities, regions, or states), career-specific directories (e.g., Sports MarketPlace, which lists tens of thousands of firms involved with sports), periodicals and newspapers, targeted job posting publications, and videos. This is by no means meant to be a complete treatment of resources but rather a starting point for identifying useful resources.

Working from the more general references to highly specific resources, we provide a basic list to help you begin your search. Many of these you'll find easily available. In some cases reference librarians and others will suggest even better materials for your particular situation. Start to create your own customized bibliography of job search references.

Geographically Based Directories. The Job Bank series published by Bob Adams, Inc. (aip.com) contains detailed entries on each area's major employers, including business activity, address, phone number, and hiring contact name. Many listings specify educational backgrounds being sought in potential employees. Each volume contains a solid discussion of each city's or state's major employment sectors. Organizations are also indexed by industry. Job Bank volumes are available for the following places: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas–Ft. Worth, Denver, Detroit, Florida, Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, Ohio, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and other cities throughout the Northwest.

National Job Bank (careercity.com) lists employers in every state, along with contact names and commonly hired job categories. Included are many small companies often overlooked by other directories. Companies are also indexed by industry. This publication provides information on educational backgrounds sought and lists company benefits.

Periodicals and Newspapers. Several sources are available to help you locate which journals or magazines carry job advertisements in your field. Other resources help you identify opportunities in other parts of the country.
- Where the Jobs Are: A Comprehensive Directory of 1200 Journals Listing Career Opportunities
- CorpTech Fast 5000 Company Locator
- National Ad Search (nationaladsearch.com)
- The Federal Jobs Digest (jobsfed.com) and Federal Career Opportunities
- World Chamber of Commerce Directory (chamberofcommerce.org)

This list is certainly not exhaustive; use it to begin your job search work.

**Targeted Job Posting Publications.** Although the resources that follow are national in scope, they are either targeted to one medium of contact (telephone), focused on specific types of jobs, or less comprehensive than the sources previously listed.

- Careers.org (careers.org/index.html)
- The Job Hunter (jobhunter.com)
- Current Jobs for Graduates (graduatejobs.com)
- Environmental Opportunities (ecojobs.com)
- Y National Vacancy List (ymca.net/employment/ymca_recruiting/jobright.htm)
- ArtSEARCH
- Community Jobs
- National Association of Colleges and Employers: Job Choices series
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (jobweb.com)

**Videos.** You may be one of the many job seekers who likes to get information via a medium other than paper. Many career libraries, public libraries, and career centers in libraries carry an assortment of videos that will help you learn new techniques and get information helpful in the job search.

**Locate Information Resources**

Throughout these introductory chapters, we have continually referred you to various websites for information on everything from job listings to career information. Using the Web gives you a mobility at your computer that you don't enjoy if you rely solely on books or newspapers or printed journals. Moreover, material on the Web, if the site is maintained, can be the most up-to-date information available.

You'll eventually identify the information resources that work best for you, but make certain you've covered the full range of resources before you begin to rely on a smaller list. Here's a short list of informational sites that many job seekers find helpful:

- Public and college libraries
- College career centers
- Bookstores
- The Internet
- Local and state government personnel offices
- Career/job fairs

Each one of these sites offers a collection of resources that will help you get the information you need.

As you meet and talk with service professionals at all these sites, be sure to let them know what you're doing. Inform them of your job search, what you've already accomplished, and what you're looking for. The more people who know you're job seeking, the greater the possibility that someone will have information or know someone who can help you along your way.
There is perhaps no major less subject to academic fads and fancies than English. It has always been not only a mainstay of the college curriculum, but also the foundation of work in many other academic areas. Of all the liberal arts degrees, it opens the most doors and makes the graduate versatile and highly employable in any number of entry-level positions. The importance of English skills in all academic disciplines has been heightened by initiatives such as writing across the curriculum and other similar programs designed to emphasize to faculty in all subject areas the importance of writing skills and the need to introduce writing exercises into all fields of study.

Applying Your Skills to the World of Work

Spoken and written English are important in every aspect of employment for every level of worker. Conferences, one-on-one meetings, memoranda, short and long reports, agenda, instructions, training materials, and a host of other communications mark every decision in the workplace. Video productions; user's manuals; procedures, specifications, and similar technical materials; and promotional materials all benefit from the attention of someone who is proficient in English usage. Business and industry leaders consistently call for applicants with a solid command of written and spoken English. It is what they need most and what they see least in interviewing sessions.

Forty years ago, an English degree from a four-year school was all a graduate needed to launch a successful career. The vanguard of that generation are now at the senior levels of their careers and are anticipating retirement.
A review of the biographies of many leaders and innovators from past generations across a number of occupational areas shows this to be true. What is equally true is that the English graduate today, armed with an aggressive and disciplined approach to the job search, can find an equally wide array of employment opportunities as the graduate of forty years ago.

English is full of possibilities for a career based on solid skill with the written and spoken word. English can be marketing when expressed through the medium of copywriting. English can be computer science through technical writing. English can be newspaper reporting or book publishing through the techniques of editing and proofreading. English can be historical through the interpretation and archiving of ancient English and near-English texts. English can be international commerce as well, because English is increasingly the language of global business. English can be art through creative writing in fiction, poetry, and prose. What other degree offers so much?

Although today's English graduates do well in their chosen careers, as has been frequently documented, these new graduates have also been found to have difficulties in making the transition from college to the workplace. The root of this problem may be confusion over what has been learned in college and its transferability to the workplace. English as a major is not job training; it is an education in the history and grandeur of the English language and what has been created from it. The content of this academic major, in and of itself, is only immediately transferable to occupations such as editing, writing, publishing, and teaching English.

Let's look again at your English education to see what is there for the employer. Of course, you have developed writing skills; these are very important to any employer. Look deeper. Behind writing is skill in research—understanding how to use informational resources and seek out the data you need. This investigative skill is an important function in all employment and is equally valuable. You also learned critical thinking; you needed to decide what pieces of information to include and not to include in your writing to have the most impact. Style, too, became a consideration as you learned to present your written material from a particular point of view. Style causes the reader to retain the importance of the writing and to return to it again and again.

Reading, too, loomed large in the educational process for an English major. But how can that reading help in the employment picture? There is reading for pleasure and reading for content. Each morning, the president of the United States reads a digest of important news culled for him from many, many sources. These original sources were read by others who selected critical pieces for the president to read. Or, after reading, they were edited down to more concise expressions of the original for speed and convenience. All of this is within the capabilities of the English major. The president isn't the only one who needs to have material read, selected, and digested.

But there is, of course, more to reading than this. English majors develop an appreciation of literary styles throughout history—the Old English of Beowulf, the Middle English of Chaucer, or the contemporary prose of Joyce Carol Oates. The sweep of human history has been conveyed in both fiction and nonfiction, and the English major whose own vocabulary has been enriched through that study can use that vocabulary in the workplace.

Freewriting, keeping a journal, college newspaper work, or a writing internship can all contribute to the finely honed communication skills that allow you to say what you want, directly, clearly, and concisely. Every employer needs those abilities in its workers. But be ready to express these wonderful skills in a context the employer understands and finds desirable. To talk about your research skills in the context of the tradition of romance novelists would not make much sense to a newspaper editor. For example, research that an editor could appreciate would be background work for an article on AIDS. Perhaps you have researched the lineage of published books, films, and short stories that used AIDS as a metaphor for loss. Describing this research to a potential employer in the newspaper industry would be very meaningful.

You will need to isolate each of your skills and find a new context in which to explain their importance. That context may be in one of the career paths outlined here:

1. Writing, editing, and publishing
2. Teaching
3. Advertising and public relations
4. Business administration and management
5. Technical writing

Or it might be something entirely different, like screenwriting. Whatever you choose, you will learn how to make a case for your English degree.

A Special Note: Computers and the English Major

A crucial skill set needed in all of the career paths presented in this book is education and training in the use of computer technology. More than simply a new technique for inscribing the English language, computer technol-
ogy is determining language forms itself. Whether it is e-books that can be read online or downloaded to a variety of devices; business intelligence software and solutions including enterprise reporting, query and analysis, data integration, and performance management tools; or new software that can help antiterrorism planners determine how best to allocate limited resources, English majors at a minimum need to possess a solid understanding of word-processing, spreadsheet, and database software. Employers will want to know that you are comfortable with computer technology and willing to learn industry-specific technology. Throughout the following discussion of career paths, we cite many advertisements for jobs that seek English graduates but also demand a high level of computer facility.

Computers are omnipresent in the world of professional writers. Fiction and nonfiction writers, poets, and word artists of all kinds use this technology. Specialized research studies in graduate school areas such as comparative literature have been greatly enhanced by computer search skills.

Research, a staple of the undergraduate and graduate-level English student's academic program, is now commonly done electronically via the Internet and CD-ROM technology, which are increasingly taking the place of printed reference materials because of durability, ease in cataloging, and cost.

The message here is crystal clear. If you are still in school as you read this, any computer skills you can acquire will be to your distinct advantage in the job search process. If you have already graduated, do what you can through community programs, self-study, and continuing education to learn some of the software packages you'll see mentioned in this book. If you are employed, take advantage of professional development opportunities and your educational benefits and learn all you can about the technology that's available. It's a natural and essential adjunct to your English degree.

Path I: Writing, Editing, and Publishing

As an English major, creativity and visualization should come relatively easily to you. So let's do an exercise using both of these skills. Place yourself in the middle of Times Square in New York City. Look around you. What do you see? Listen to the people going by—what do you hear? Then on the Ginza in Tokyo, the Place de la Concorde in Paris, or the Spanish Steps in Rome, along with the other visual and auditory reminders of a shrinking world, you will see and hear English in constant use. English is preeminent in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia and is increasingly dominant around the world as the language of technology, business, and industry.

Let's return to Times Square. We go into a major bookstore and immediately are impressed with the breadth and scope of publications available: books, manuals, newspapers, and magazines all written, edited, and published using English skills. But even the largest general bookstore contains only the tip of the iceberg of published materials. Much more is published in the fields of education and industry, which rival the consumer sector for employment possibilities. We are an information society, and much of that information is written.

We step into a corporate office tower, and at the reception desk we find the corporation newspaper or journal, an in-house publication written, edited, and produced for its employees. Many mid- to large-sized organizations need a number of in-house communication organs to share information about standards, employees and their activities (both professional and personal), new developments, and prospects for growth. These publications serve as vital communications links in large organizations and also help to build the esprit