

MASTER'S- AND DOCTORAL-LEVEL CAREERS IN PSYCHOLOGY AND RELATED AREAS

This section describes a number of psychology and psychology-related career options that require graduate degrees. If you want to help people with problems (do "counseling"), you are not limited to the field of psychology. You should *definitely* consider careers in education and social work.

Psychology

Teaching and Research. If you're interested in *teaching* undergraduate, master's-level, or doctoral-level students, you will probably work in a university setting, where you will probably also do research. If you are not interested in teaching and want to focus on *research*, you can work for government agencies (for example, the Centers for Disease Control) or for private research organizations. To work as a psychologist in these settings, you typically will need a Ph.D. in psychology--not in another field such as education or social work. You might be able to get a teaching job at a two-year school with a master's degree in psychology; however, the job market is glutted, and Ph.D.'s are taking many of these jobs. For more information about the various subfields in psychology, see "[Areas of Specialization in Psychology](#)" and visit the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#).

Applied Work. Psychologists in selected subfields have the option not only of teaching (sharing knowledge) and research (generating knowledge) but also of working in settings in which they apply their knowledge. These subfields include clinical psychology, counseling psychology, forensic psychology, health psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, and sports psychology (see below) School psychology is also one of these applied areas, but I'll discuss it under the heading of "Education" because school psychologists are trained in departments of education, not psychology.

Clinical Psychology. Clinical psychologists assess and treat people with psychological problems. They may act as therapists for people who are experiencing normal psychological crises (e.g., grief) or for individuals suffering from chronic psychiatric disorders. Some clinical psychologists are generalists who work with a wide variety of populations, while others work with specific groups such as children, the elderly, or those with specific disorders (e.g., eating disorders). They are trained in universities or professional schools of psychology (for information about professional schools, see information about PsyD degrees in the section "[Graduate School Options for Psychology Majors](#)"). Clinical psychologists work in academic settings, hospitals, community health centers, or private practice. For more information about clinical psychology, visit the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) and locate Division 12 (Clinical Psychology).

Counseling Psychology. Counseling psychologists do many of the same things that clinical psychologists do. However, counseling psychologists tend to focus more on persons with adjustment problems rather than on persons suffering from severe psychological disorders. They may be trained in psychology departments or in education departments. Counseling psychologists are employed in academic settings, college counseling centers, community mental health centers, and private practice. For more information about counseling psychology, visit the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) and locate Division 17 (Counseling Psychology).

Forensic Psychology. The title "forensic psychologist" can mean quite a number of things. Some forensic psychologists do clinical work in corrections settings; some work as

consultants to trial lawyers; some serve as expert witnesses in jury trials; some formulate public policy on psychology and the law. Some forensic psychologists have PhDs in clinical psychology; others have both PhDs in clinical psychology and JDs in law. (There are several graduate programs in the country where you can earn the two degrees at the same time.) For more information about forensic psychology, visit the [subpage on psychology and the law](#) and the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) and locate Division 41 (American Psychology-Law Association).

Health Psychology. Health psychologists are concerned with psychology's contributions to the promotion and maintenance of good health and the prevention and treatment of illness. They may design and conduct programs to help individuals stop smoking, lose weight, manage stress, and stay physically fit. They are employed in hospitals, medical schools, rehabilitation centers, public health agencies, academic settings, and private practice. For more information about health psychology, visit the [home page of Division 38 \(Health Psychology\)](#) and the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) and locate Division 38.

Industrial/Organizational Psychology. I/O psychologists (as they are usually called) are concerned with the relationships between people and their work environments. They may develop new ways to increase workplace productivity or be involved in personnel selection. They are employed in business, government agencies, and academic settings. For more information about i/o psychology, visit the [home page of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology](#) and the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) and locate Division 14 (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology).

Sports Psychology. Sports psychologists are concerned with the psychological factors that improve athletic performance. They also look at the effects of exercise and physical activity on psychological adjustment and health. Sports psychologists typically work in academic settings and/or as consultants for sports teams. For more information about sports psychology, visit the [home page of Division 47 \(Exercise and Sport Psychology\)](#) and the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) and locate Division 47.

Many jobs are available for those with *master's degrees* in some of these subfields--e.g., clinical psychology and i/o psychology. Nonetheless, if you want to utilize a broad range of skills, you will need a doctoral degree (PhD, PsyD, or EdD) to work in any of these fields except school psychology (which typically requires a special degree between a master's and a doctoral degree). If you want to work independently (as a consultant or in your own private practice), you will also need to be licensed by the state in which you work. (See "What Are Licenses and Certificates?" in the next section.)

To learn more about the various subfields and what psychologists in these subfields do, read the 37-page pamphlet published by the American Psychological Association (APA), *Psychology/careers for the 21st century: Scientific problem solvers* (see "[Books on Careers for Psychology Majors](#)"). You can obtain a copy of the pamphlet by call the APA Order Department: 1-800-374-2721. If you live in the Washington, DC (where the APA offices are located), call (202) 336-5510.

For additional general information about psychologists, read the description in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#).

Education

The field of education offers a number of counseling-related career options at the master's and doctoral level. If you're like most people, you probably assume that careers in the field of education require one to work in a school setting. While it is true that most individuals with education degrees (in fields such as school counseling, school psychology, and educational psychology--see below) work in school settings, individuals with education degrees in *agency counseling* or *community counseling* do not. Thus, if you want to "do counseling," do *not* want to work in a school setting, and do not want to get a degree in psychology, you should definitely consider this career/degree option.

Agency/Community Counseling. Graduate programs in agency or community counseling train you to do counseling in human service agencies in the local community--for example, in community mental health centers. They may also train you to administer a limited number of psychological tests (vocational interest tests, for example). The work is similar to that done by a person with a master's or doctoral degree in clinical or counseling psychology: psychotherapy and, perhaps, limited psychological testing. Be sure you understand, however, that a degree from a program in agency counseling will *not* permit you to work in a public school setting should you want to shift settings at some point. (Here's an example of why it's important to be informed about the strengths and limitations of various degrees before you choose one!)

If you *do* want to work in a *school setting*, consider these career options (all of which require at least a master's degree):

Educational Psychology. Educational psychologists attempt to understand the basic aspects of human learning and to develop materials and strategies for enhancing the learning process. For example, an educational psychologist might study reading and then develop a new technique for teaching reading. Educational psychologists are typically trained in departments of education (vs. departments of psychology) and employed in colleges and universities. You can find additional information about Educational Psychology by visiting the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) (look for Division 15 (Educational Psychology)).

School Counseling. School counselors work with children who are troubled, helping such children function more effectively with their peers and teachers, deal with family problems, etc. They work at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. You can find more information about this area in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) under "counselors" (school counseling is discussed there).

School Psychology. The work of school psychologists, who work in the public school system, is varied. A key aspect of the school psychologist's job is testing--mostly of children who are having difficulties in school--to try to diagnose the problem and, sometimes, to suggest ways of dealing with the problem. School psychologists also work closely with teachers to develop effective interventions for children in academic, emotional, and behavioral problems. Too, some provide individual and group counseling. Most school psychologists are trained in departments of education, but some are trained in psychology departments. You can obtain additional information about this specialty at the [home page of Division 16 \(School Psychology\)](#) of the American Psychological Association or the [division information page of the American Psychological Association](#) (look for Division 16-School Psychology).

Note: If you plan to work in a public school setting, you must have a *degree in the field of*

education; any kind of degree taken in a psychology department will be useless here. (An exception to this rule would be those few programs in school psychology that are offered in psychology departments vs. education departments.)

For information about master's (M.Ed.) and doctoral (Ed.D) degrees that will prepare you for counseling jobs, see the section, "Graduate School Options for Psychology Majors."

Social Work

Another career option to consider if you're interested in counseling is social work. As is true with other disciplines, there are a variety of subfields in social work. Social workers who practice psychotherapy are usually called either *clinical* social workers or *psychiatric* social workers.

Clinical social workers are trained to diagnose and treat psychological problems. Note that they do not do psychological testing, so you should consider careers in psychology or education if this is of interest to you. Psychiatric social workers provide services to individuals, families, and small groups. They work in mental health centers, counseling centers, sheltered workshops, hospitals, and schools. They may also have their own private practice--even with only a master's degree. This is because clinical social workers are eligible for licensing in all 50 states with only a master's degree. (See "What Are Licenses and Certificates?" in "Graduate School Options for Psychology Majors" for more information about this.)

To obtain more information about social work, visit the web site of the National Association of Social Workers or write to:

National Association of Social Workers

750 First Street, NE
Suite #700
Washington, DC 20002-4241
(202) 408-8600

Art Therapy

For more information about this area and a complete list of art therapy programs approved by the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), visit the web site of the American Art Therapy Association.

I believe that the AATA recommends that a number of courses be taken at the undergraduate level for admission to graduate programs in art therapy. These include the following psychology courses: general, abnormal, developmental, personality, statistics, and research methods. Recommended non-psychology courses include fine art materials, processes, and procedures, cultural diversity courses, and --if available--introduction to the history of art therapy and professional/ethical issues.

Music Therapy

To qualify as a "registered music therapist" by the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), one needs a bachelor's degree in music therapy or a master's degree in it along with making up the required undergraduate hours. For more information about this area and a list of programs in music therapy (at the bachelor's and master's level), visit the AMTA web site.
