

A CAREER DECISION TREE FOR PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS

Do you plan to go to professional school (law, medicine, ministry)?

If YES --Discuss with your faculty advisor appropriate psychology course selection. Also, see the advisor of the pre-professional program you intend to pursue.

If NO --

Do you plan to seek post baccalaureate employment outside of psychology?

If YES --Pursue skills-oriented minors. Take skills courses in other departments (e.g., Business, Communications). Choose your student work experiences with an eye toward career possibilities. Develop good writing, interpersonal, and speaking skills. Use the CPP Center to learn resume writing and interview skills.

If NO --

Do you plan to teach psychology at the secondary school level?

If YES --You will need to apply for admission to the Secondary Education Teacher Certification program. You will have to obtain teaching minors, also. See the coordinator of the Teacher Certification program for guidance. You will have to participate in student teaching in your senior year, which could negatively impact your psychology courses. Plan carefully.

If NO --

Do you plan to teach psychology in a two-year or community college?

If YES --You will need at least a master's degree in some area of psychology. Investigate graduate programs (M.A., M.S.) specifically designed to prepare students to teach psychology at the introductory college level.

If NO --

Do you plan to teach psychology in a four-year college or university?

If YES --You will need a graduate education, usually a doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., Psy.D.) in psychology. Investigate graduate programs in psychology.

If NO --

Do you plan to go to graduate school in psychology?

If NO --Seek out career counseling for help in clarifying your vocational goals.

If YES --

Are you a strong student (at least a 3.25 GPA overall and higher in psychology)? Are your SAT and GRE and MAT scores significantly above average? (Have you prepared for and/or taken these examinations?) Can you expect glowing letters of recommendation?

If NO --Make contingency plans for what you will do if you are not admitted to graduate school. If possible, bring up your grades and improve your credentials.

If YES --

Do you have above average quantitative skills and writing/thinking skills? Do you have significant research and field experiences in psychology?

If NO --Work to improve these skills or consider alternative career paths.

If YES --

Are you willing to commit the time, energy, money, and personal sacrifice required for graduate study?

If NO --Consider working for a while after you receive your B.A. degree. Perhaps graduate school will be a more realistic possibility later.

If YES --

Are you interested in a career as a scientist/scholar, primarily concentrating on designing, conducting, and evaluating research?

If YES --Identify graduate programs (Ph.D.) noted for scholarly productivity in the content area of your interests (i.e., specific topics in areas such as learning, motivation, cognition, development, etc.). Graduates of these programs are known as experimental psychologists.

If NO --

Are you interested in becoming a specialist in the teaching/learning process, doing research and consulting in educational settings?

If YES --Identify graduate programs (Ph.D., Ed.D.) in educational psychology.

If NO --

Do you plan to work as an applied psychologist (one who uses research findings about behavior to study and solve human problems)?

If NO --Consult a career counselor for help in clarifying your vocational goals.

If YES --

Are you interested in applying psychology in work settings?

If YES --Identify graduate programs (Ph.D.) in industrial/organizational psychology.

If NO --

Are you primarily interested in doing therapy, counseling, and psychological evaluations?

If NO --Consult a career counselor for help in clarifying your vocational goals.

If YES --

Do you plan to specialize in evaluating and treating problems of school-age children in school settings?

If YES --Identify graduate programs (Ph.D., Ed.D., Psy.D.) in school psychology.

If NO --

Do you plan to specialize in diagnosing and treating people who have relatively severe emotional and behavioral problems?

If YES --Identify graduate programs in clinical psychology (Ph.D., Psy.D.) and clinical (psychiatric) social work (M.S.W.). You might explore a pre-med program to prepare for medical school and psychiatry. Discuss with your advisor the differences among these and related fields. Also, discuss whether you should apply for terminal master's degree programs or doctoral programs. Be forewarned that admission into quality (i.e., APA accredited) doctoral clinical psychology programs is extremely competitive; only the top student in their class should consider such programs.

If NO --

Do you plan to focus on assessing and treating "normal" persons who are experiencing relatively short-term developmental or situational problems in adjustment?

If YES --Identify graduate programs in counseling psychology (Ph.D., Ed.D., Psy.D.) and related fields (e.g., pastoral counseling). Discuss with your advisor the differences among counseling, school guidance counseling, and community agency counseling. Discuss whether to apply for a terminal master's degree program or a doctoral program.

If NO --Consult a career counselor for help in clarifying your vocational goals.