

English

The skills you can develop while studying English are useful in almost every job.

Through the study of English, you can:

- communicate clearly in speech and writing
- study and interpret information
- follow and present an argument
- develop creativity and imagination
- improve your spelling and punctuation.

Most jobs need some English skills. There are many occupations where these kinds of skills are an important part of the job. These jobs can be split loosely into two groups - those where verbal communication is a main feature, and those where communicating in writing is more important.

Jobs that use verbal communication skills

There are many jobs where the ability to communicate effectively in speech plays an important role. You can split these jobs into three groups: giving information, giving help or advice, and gathering information. Here are some examples of jobs in these areas.

Giving help or advice

Welfare rights workers give members of the public advice and support on the social security benefits system. They help people to find out about their rights and to claim all the benefits they are entitled to. Welfare rights workers help with issues such as unemployment; housing; training; and child and sickness benefits. Good communication skills are very important because they need to explain complicated legislation. They also need written skills to keep records, and numerical skills to calculate benefit entitlements.

Personal advisers are part of the Connexions service, which aims to provide people aged 13-19 with the information, advice and practical help they need to reach their goals. Personal advisers work mainly in schools, colleges or drop-in centres. Personal advisers encourage their clients to consider and assess their likes, dislikes, skills and interests. They show them how to use up-to-date information to find the options open to them. Personal advisers need excellent communication skills.

Counsellors and **psychotherapists** help people to deal with problems, distress or loss of direction in their lives. They usually work with clients on a one-to-one basis, meeting them in private and treating their problems in confidence. They don't give advice, make judgements or impose solutions; instead, they work to create a trusting relationship with their clients, who are encouraged to talk about their feelings and experiences. They ask questions to help people examine situations and behaviour, think about the best ways to make changes, and increase their self-esteem and confidence. Some counsellors and psychotherapists work with groups.

Gathering information

Companies need to produce what people want to buy, in order to increase their sales. **Market research interviewers** find out what people need, want, like and dislike by interviewing members of the general public. They often collect information using questionnaires. Interviews could be carried out in the street, by phone or in someone's home. Market research interviewers must have a good level of spoken and written English. Listening skills and attention to detail are important. They need to record answers accurately and write down comments briefly and clearly.

Social researchers collect and analyse information about developments, trends and attitudes in society. Their findings help others to make social policy, comment on aspects of modern life, or market goods and services. Social researchers use methods such as questionnaire surveys and focus groups.

Quantitative research uses a large sample of people and involves measurable data. **Qualitative research** uses smaller numbers of people and concentrates more in-depth on their opinions and experiences. **Social researchers** find out about the public's attitude towards health, crime or the economy, for example.

Immigration officers and **assistant officers** make sure that people arriving at, and departing from, air and seaports meet current immigration laws. They inspect documents such as passports, work permits and visas. Immigration officers and assistant officers need to have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including tact and understanding. They might need to interview people to find out more information about them.

Giving information

Receptionists work in the entrance or reception area of organisations. For example, they might work as office receptionists, hotel receptionists, or in doctors' surgeries or leisure centres. Their work has two elements: direct contact with the public, and administration work behind the scenes. Typical duties include receiving and registering visitors, dealing with telephone enquiries and handling messages. They might need to ask questions to find out who a visitor is, the person they want to see, and whether they have an appointment. They also have to pass on information such as directions, details about available services, or guidance on how to complete forms. They might also have to deal with complaints from visitors.

Tourist information centre assistants give the public, usually holidaymakers and tourists, accurate information about accommodation, leisure facilities, travel and entertainment in a particular geographical area. Much of their work involves dealing with the public face to face and answering their queries. They use the internet and reference books to find answers to clients' questions. They also carry out research and organise, store and retrieve information on a variety of topics.

Resort reps work on behalf of a travel company, looking after its tourists and dealing with any problems. They give information on what to see and do in the area, health and safety matters and currency exchange rates. They help holidaymakers with any problems.

Couriers work for a tour operator during coach tour holidays. They usually give a commentary on places of interest.

Jobs that need written communication skills

There are also many jobs where being able to communicate well in writing is important. Let's look at them in three parts: jobs where you write to sell, where you write to inform, and where you write to entertain.

Writing to sell

Advertising copywriters write the original wording of advertisements (ads) that can take the form of newspaper, magazine or online ads, brochures, catalogues and posters, or the scripts for internet, TV and radio commercials. They write slogans, jingles and captions, as well as detailed texts. Copywriters need to understand the client's products and the interests and motivation of the audience, and develop ideas to attract their attention. They must be creative and original and able to write in different styles to suit different audiences.

Public relations officers (PROs) help to build and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organisation and its public. Tasks include using social media, writing reports and speeches and preparing press releases. They must develop good contacts with the media in order to publicise their organisation. They might write online and magazine features and give presentations. PROs must be able to speak and write persuasively and clearly.

Writing to entertain

Authors write novels, short stories or non-fiction material. Very few authors earn a living entirely from their writing, even if their work is published or performed. They must have a good understanding of language, sentence structure and grammar, as well as the ability to write creatively and with imagination. They must always keep their audience in mind and be able to write at the appropriate level.

Scriptwriters write material for performers to speak. This might be for a television programme, film, play or radio show. It's very important that they are aware of the differences between the written and spoken word. They must be able to reproduce the rhythm of speech so that dialogues sound natural. Scriptwriters need to be able to come up with original ideas for situations, characters and storylines.

Writing to inform

Journalists work on newspapers, magazines, online publications, television and radio. They collect information, investigate stories and events, and write articles for publication or broadcasting. Journalists need excellent English, an interest in current affairs and a good understanding of their audience. Interviewing skills are vital as a lot of information is gathered this way. They must be able to write clear, concise and unbiased reports. A knowledge of multimedia is increasingly important, as journalism becomes more and more web-based.

Fast Stream **civil servants** are graduates, who enter the Civil Service through its Fast Stream accelerated development programme. They help to form government policy and put it into practice. This can involve researching information and preparing documents for ministers. Report writing is a regular feature of the job. Fast Stream civil servants must be capable of handling and understanding a great deal of information. High standards of verbal and written communication skills are essential.

