

Psychology Major Options: BA or BS?

Both the BA and the BS provide a broad foundation in psychology. Your choice will depend on the kinds of courses you wish to take outside of psychology and how much your future plans require undergraduate coursework in math and science.

BA: Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

- About 70% of psychology majors at UNC complete a BA.
- The breadth of psychology courses taken for a BA is good preparation for graduate school in psychology.
- The BA gives students greater freedom to select courses they wish to complete for general education requirements and electives.

BS: Bachelor of Science in Psychology

- The BS requires more math, physical science, life science, social science, and laboratory courses from other departments.
- The BS is appropriate preparation for a science-intensive career, such as lab research or medicine.
- The BS is appropriate for a student who wishes to specialize in quantitative psychology, behavioral neuroscience, or biological psychology.

Which one is better for graduate school?

Psychology graduate programs do not care whether you have a BS or a BA. Having a BS does not give you any special advantage when applying to psychology graduate programs. Graduate programs focus on the following factors when evaluating applicants:

- Overall GPA
- GRE scores
- Psychology courses completed
- Grades in psychology courses
- Research experience
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- For clinical and counseling psychology graduate programs: Volunteer or paid work in a setting in which you have helped people

For More Information

1. Tar Heel Tracker: Your Tar Heel Tracker is a personalized, live-updating display of your requirements. It shows your progress toward degree completion by evaluating your coursework against the appropriate general education, degree, and major requirements. Access your Tar Heel Tracker through ConnectCarolina.
2. Academic Advising: To declare your major or to ask an academic advisor to review your Tar Heel Tracker with you, make an appointment to see an advisor in the Academic Advising Program in Steele Building. Use the online scheduling system to make your appointment. Go to advising.unc.edu and look for the link to "See an Advisor."
3. Psychology Department Faculty: Several faculty members are available to answer questions about psychology courses, research opportunities, and other matters specific to the psychology major. The current list of faculty advisors is on the Psychology Department website at psychology.unc.edu/undergraduate-studies.

What Can I Do With a Psychology Major?

What will I learn?

Psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes. As you complete courses for the psychology major, you will learn about research methods and statistics as well as concepts in several subareas of psychology, such as developmental, cognitive, clinical, social, and behavioral neuroscience. Some employers favor psychology majors because they usually develop the following skills as they study psychology:

- Research skills which can be applied in a wide variety of settings
- Quantitative reasoning skills (i.e., knowing how to make judgments with statistics)
- Understanding and applying scientific reasoning
- Application of knowledge and concepts to real-life situations
- Critical thinking and logical analysis
- Appreciation for diversity
- Computer skills
- Communication skills

Will I Get a Job?

In spring 2015, the unemployment rate for psychology majors was about 6%. In other words, about 94% of psychology majors are employed. With an undergraduate degree, jobs loosely related to psychology are abundant, and jobs specifically related to psychology are more difficult to find. Jobs loosely related to psychology include jobs in administrative support, public affairs, education, business, sales, service industries, health care, computer support, human resources, personnel, public relations, and many others. A job more specifically related to psychology may include working in a group home as a direct care provider, or working as a research assistant to help carry out psychological research. Students seeking the most intensive psychology-related careers and those who wish to become psychologists will need to complete a graduate degree.

How Much Money Will I Make?

Income varies greatly depending on the type of job you obtain upon graduation. In September 2014, the National Association of Colleges and Employers reported that average starting salary for Class of 2014 college graduates with a psychology major was \$36,900. Remember that this is the average, and how much you earn depends on your work-related skills, personal characteristics, and unique experiences. To a prospective employer, these matter more than the particular psychology courses you took as an undergraduate. In addition, geography and the location of the position can have a significant impact on salary.

For More Information:

- 1) University Career Services, 2nd floor Hanes Hall, online at careers.unc.edu
- 2) *Careers in Psychology* by the American Psychological Association, available online: apa.org/careers/resources/guides/careers.aspx
- 3) *Occupational Outlook Handbook* by the Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov/ooh/Life-Physical-and-Social-Science/Psychologists.htm