



جامعة الناصر  
AL-NASSER UNIVERSITY

## The Most Common Fields of Psychology and the Different Degrees in Psychology

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**Abstract**

Psychology is a field of study in which human nature and temperament is studied in a variety of ways. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics employment for psychologists is expected to have a 12 percent growth between 2012 and 2022. There are a wide range of psychology career options to choose from and in 2012 the median wage for psychologists was \$69,280.

**Introduction**

The field of psychology is a career that utilizes a vast array of methods and tools to gain an insight into the management of human behavior. With a career in psychology, depending on the degree you earn and your experience, you will be entering into a top paying career as well as a career that offers growth and various levels of optional interest. Although the optimum career prospects are for those who have earned a doctoral degree, there are also numerous career options with an Associate, Bachelor or Masters degree in psychology. The field of psychology is vast, but the following information will guide you through the various psychology career options and the various psychology degree options.

**Associates Degree in Psychology**

An associates degree typically requires a minimum of two years of courses from a college or university. You will have the option of earning an associate of science degree or an associate of the arts degree. Both degrees will require you to take a specified amount of credit hours in psychology. With an associates degree you can typically find employment as a mental health technician, a technician in a drug and alcohol facility and in some states you may find work as a mental health case-manger.

**Bachelors Degree in Psychology**

A bachelors degree is an undergraduate degree that is typically completed in four years, depending on whether you are a full time or part time student. A bachelors degree can be earn on campus or through an online college and the degree can either be in the arts or the sciences. You should consider the type of work you are interested in and whether you intend to further your education, before settling on either an arts or a science degree. With a bachelors degree, the job options are similar to those with an associates degree, however, your salary will typically be higher.

**Masters Degree in Psychology**

You will have to have earned a bachelors degree before enrolling in a Masters program. The courses in a masters of psychology program are narrowed down to the specific specialty you are interested in, such as clinical psychology, child psychology or criminal psychology. With

a masters degree in psychology, in many states you can operate a practice, however, you are typically required to work under a doctor of psychology. The salary for those with careers in psychology who hold a masters degree is significantly higher than those with a bachelors degree.

### **Doctorate in Psychology**

This is the highest degree earned and you will have the option of earning either a PhD or a PsyD. It is important to understand the difference between the two degrees to determine which is the best path for your intended career. A PhD is a research and science focused degree. The programs vary among each university, but you will be required to submit a doctorate dissertation that requires you to devise the plan, research and provide an analysis of your research studies.

A PsyD is a doctorate degree in psychology that has a primary focus on the individual or group as opposed to the scientific research about the situation. You will be required to submit a dissertation that focuses on a current problem as opposed to creating a new research as in the PhD program. Both degrees provide the opportunity for lucrative and rewarding careers as well as offer a wide range of career options.

### **Career Options**

If you are just beginning your education in psychology, you should have a general idea of the type of specialty you are interested in. While earning your associates and/or bachelors degree, many of the courses are specific to all fields of psychology. However, before entering a masters program, you will need to know the field of psychology you want to specialize in. The most common fields include; child psychology, clinical psychology, sports psychology, forensic psychology and criminal psychology. Some specializations school psychology, social psychology and/or organizational psychology offer rewarding careers after earning a masters degree.

### **Child Psychology**

This is one of the most popular as well as in demand psychology careers. Child psychologists study the temperament, nature and behavior of children, including but not limited to children who have experienced a traumatic situation, abuse or have behavior problems. As a child psychologist you will focus on the behavior of children ranging in age from infancy to adulthood. It is important to note that in some situations, child psychology is thought to be one of the most difficult, yet rewarding careers in psychology. When choosing this specialization it is important to keep in mind that although the child will be your client, you will also have to deal with parents and caregivers. This specialization can also be extremely difficult for many people to deal with, because it is children and you may encounter extremely difficult, sad and overwhelming situations.

### **Clinical Psychology**

A specialization in clinical psychology means you will have a focus on evaluating, diagnosing

and treating a wide range of mental health illnesses. Clinical psychologists are typically involved in private practice, however, many choose to work in hospitals or in a clinic that offers the services of various psychology specializations. As a clinical psychologist you will be working with individuals, families, groups, organizations and/or institutions. The roles of a clinical psychologist are similar to those of a psychiatrist, with the exception that a clinical psychologist cannot prescribe medications. In most situations the clinical psychologist will either work in the same clinic as a psychiatrist or medical doctor to prescribe medications when necessary for their clients. Clinical psychologists will be responsible for treating clients with a wide range of mental health problems, including depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, drug and alcohol addictions and/or schizophrenia.

### **Sports Psychology**

Psychologists who specialize in sports psychology are concerned with sports and athletes. As a sports psychologist you will be responsible for helping individual athletes as well as entire teams maintain a balanced and healthy mental state, how to keep their body healthy while playing sports, teamwork and how to improve their overall playing in the game. Sports psychologists often work for high schools, colleges and universities, however, some also choose to work in facilities such as a childrens hospital where they can provide treatment to children who have experienced physical and mental injuries while playing sports.

### **Forensic Psychology**

Many people confuse forensic psychology with criminal psychology, but they are two completely different specialization, but both types are involved with law related situations. A forensic psychologist is involved in the legal justice system in a variety of ways, with a majority of their work being related to individuals who plead insanity when charged with a crime. Forensic psychologists often work in law firms, government agencies, jails and police departments as well as other institutions where there is direct contact with defendants, victims, institutionalized criminals and the families of both victims and defendants. Forensic psychologists are often called upon to provide expert testimony in court as to the creditability of the defendant or witnesses. They are well versed in legal terms as well as have a deep understanding of the law as well as behavior. Forensic psychologists are often depicted on television and movies as criminal profilers. Although a forensic psychologist can choose to work as a criminal profiler and many do, this is an extremely restricted field, in that there are very few jobs available as a criminal profiler and those who work in this specialty have often expanded their career and education to include specialized police training, such as through the FBI.

### **Criminal Psychology**

Criminal psychologists also have an interest in criminology and/or sociology. Criminal psychologists often work with law enforcement officers to evaluate the criminals as well as to evaluate the ability and mental state of those in law enforcement. For example, if a police officer shoots and kills someone while on the job, it may affect their ability to use good

judgment in future situations, so the criminal psychologist will evaluate the mental state of the officer to determine if they are mentally stable to potentially be involved in the same scenario. Criminal psychologists are also interested in criminal behavior, their reasons behind the crimes and to provide treatment to those who have been charged with a serious crime and are seeking help for mental problems that may have contributed to their behavior. Criminal psychologists may also choose to work as criminal profilers, however, like forensic psychologists along with a psychology degree, they typically also go through some type of law enforcement training.

### **School Psychologist**

If you are interested in a psychology career that allows you to work with children, but in a more personal environment, you could consider a career as a school psychologist. As a school psychologist your role would be to assist children perform well in school, learn at their own pace and determine the child's weaknesses and strengths. School psychologists work with school children ranging in age from pre-school through college. While earning your degree in psychology, you will typically be required to internship in a school system. School psychologists also work closely with school children to guide them through the process of preparing for college, counsel children during disasters and provide individual counseling to children in the school system who are experiencing difficult situations, such as bullying, abuse, eating disorders and/or low self-esteem.

### **Social Psychology**

A social psychologist is someone who studies the relationships among people who live or socialize in a group. Social psychologists have a deep understanding of various behavioral aspects that relate to aggression, social influence, altruism, attitude and cognitive dissonance as they relate to the interpersonal behaviors, instead of the individual state of mind. Social psychologists study the behavior of humans and how they interact together in a given environment. For example, a social psychologist may study the behaviors of how a group of gang members relate to each other and how one member's behaviors affects another member's behaviors. This type of psychologist frequently studies, researches and develops methods relating to cults, gangs and small sectors of civilized and/or non-civilized societies.

### **Organizational Psychology**

Organizational psychologists typically work in large organizations doing various tasks such as working with employees to encourage creative thinking. Organizational psychologists often work in non-profit organizations that need a professional who is trained in leadership skills, budgeting, finances, organizational development, resource planning, analysis and tasks relating to human resources. Organizational psychologists are excellent communicators, display excellent leadership, motivators and have an interest in business as well as behavior.

**Licensure**

Once you have completed your education to earn a doctorate degree, you will be required to sit for a state exam to earn your license. The exams vary from state to state, but in most situations you may be required to take a written exam as well as go before a panel for an oral examination. It is highly recommended that you prepare for the examinations as early as possible. If you fail the examinations, either the written, the oral or both, in most situations you will be able to retake the examination, but there is a waiting period.

**Finding the Best Psychology Program**

The majority of psychology degrees can be earned through a campus program or an online degree program. In most situations, if you are earning a masters degree or your doctorate degree, you will be required to complete a specified number of hours in an internship, so if you are studying for your degree online, you may be responsible for finding facilities that will allow you to intern. While earning a masters degree or a doctorate degree you will need to either submit a thesis and/or dissertation; however, in some situations you given the option of presenting a dissertation or completely a specified number of hours working in an environment that is a representative of your specialization. It is extremely important to have a general idea of what type of psychology you are interested in as early as possible, in order to take as many courses as possible that are related to the specialization. When choosing a college or university, especially for a masters or doctorate degree it is important to choose a school that provides all of the requirements for your specialization. If you choose to earn your degrees online, it is critical that you only register for classes through an accredited college.

**Conclusion**

The above psychology careers are only a handful of the opportunities that await you with a degree in psychology. The primary requirement to being a great psychologist is to go into a specialization that you love, one that you have deep desire to learn about and one that you will be comfortable working in. There are many different subcategories of psychology careers as well as a wide range of options outside of working in a mental health environment. Many people earn a degree in psychology, but never step foot in an environment that requires them to make a diagnosis or provide therapy. Employers seek out employees who have psychology degrees simply because of the vast array of education and training they have undergone. Throughout your educational years you will obtain a wide range of knowledge that pertains to business, science, the arts, human behavior, mathematics and economics. Psychology is one of the most widely versed educations available, which means you will have the knowledge to not only work in mental health environments, but offices, corporations and as academic professors. The options are limitless and entirely up to you and what you see yourself doing in a career.

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