

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

What can I do with this major?

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Basic
Applied
Quality Control
Administration
Grant Writing

Industry and laboratories:
Pharmaceutical
Healthcare
Agriculture
Food processing and safety
Environmental
Private research institutions
Public health departments
State and federal government:
National Science Foundation
National Institutes of Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Food and Drug Administration
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Agriculture
Armed Services
Department of Homeland Security
Colleges and universities

Learn to set up, operate, maintain laboratory instruments and equipment, and monitor experiments. Select courses with laboratory components, and seek research experience with professors. Gain related experience through part-time jobs, internships, or volunteering. Complete a certificate training program, usually one year, to learn specialized laboratory techniques. Take a course in grant writing, as often research is funded in this manner. A bachelor's degree in biology qualifies one for laboratory technician or research assistant positions. Earn master's degree for advancement opportunities, more responsibility and higher pay. Obtain Ph.D. to direct research projects and lead research teams. Maintain a high grade point average and secure strong faculty recommendations to gain admittance into graduate school.

HEALTHCARE

See also What can I do with this major in medical fields?

Medicine
Dentistry
Optometry
Podiatry
Pharmacy
Veterinary Medicine
Allied Health:
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy
Medical Technology
Nuclear Medicine

Group or private practice
Hospitals
Clinics
Health networks
Nursing homes
Rehabilitation centers
Mental health institutions
Federal, state, and local health departments
Government agencies
Armed services
Correctional facilities
Colleges or universities
Medical schools
Large corporations

Plan to attend medical school or other related graduate program. Meet with a pre-health advisor periodically to discuss curricular decisions. Maintain a high grade point average, particularly in the sciences, to improve chances of admission to graduate or professional school. Research accredited institutions. Check graduation rates, success rates on licensing exams, cost, location, etc. Speak with current students. Secure strong faculty recommendations. Join related student organizations and demonstrate leadership abilities.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

HEALTHCARE CONTINUED

Seek experience in healthcare settings through volunteer, shadowing, part-time jobs, or internships.
Research all of the various fields within medicine to determine career goals, and develop a back-up plan in case medical/graduate school admission is denied.

BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Some Areas of Specialization:

Biophysics
Biochemistry
Cellular and Molecular Biology
Genetics
Immunology
Pathology
Pharmacology
Physiology
Virology

Colleges and universities
Professional schools including colleges of pharmacy, dentistry, medicine, veterinary medicine, and agriculture
Federal government:
National Institutes of Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Food and Drug Administration
State and local public health departments
Clinics and hospitals
Private research foundations
Independent laboratories
Pharmaceutical companies

Gain laboratory experience through coursework and through faculty-led research projects.
Learn to set up, operate, maintain laboratory instruments and equipment, and monitor experiments.
Seek internships, part-time employment and volunteer opportunities in the biomedical field. Utilize your campus career center for assistance securing government internships.
Take courses in area(s) of specialization, such as genetics or pharmacology.
Join student chapters of professional organizations related to your area of interest to maintain knowledge of your desired field.
Obtain a Ph.D. for teaching and advanced research and management positions, which requires navigating a competitive admissions process with strong faculty recommendations, grades, and relevant experience.

AREAS

ORGANISMAL/ECOLOGICAL BIOLOGY

Structure, Function, Development, Evolution

Some Areas of Specialization:

Botany

Ecology:

Behavioral, community, ecosystem, evolutionary, population biology

Conservation Biology

Entomology

Marine Biology

Genetics

Microbiology:

Bacteria, algae, fungi, molds, yeasts, viruses, protozoa

Taxonomy

Zoology

EMPLOYERS

Colleges and universities, especially colleges of agriculture and veterinary medicine

Veterinary hospitals

State and federal government:

National Science Foundation

National Institutes of Health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Food and Drug Administration

Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Agriculture

Independent laboratories:

Food production

Textiles

Agriculture

Pharmaceutical

Zoos and aquariums

Fish hatcheries

Wildlife preserves and parks

Conservation agencies

Botanical gardens and arboretums

Museums

Agricultural experiment stations

Inspection agencies and control boards

National and international environmental organizations

Private recreation organizations

STRATEGIES

Conduct research or assist in research including the collection of information and samples of water, soil, plants, animals, etc.

Pursue extensive laboratory and research experience by working with faculty, through independent research classes, as a student employee, or through other departmental programs.

Plan to gain related part-time jobs, internships, or volunteer experiences.

Seek additional coursework in an area of specialty, i.e., botany, ecology, genetics.

Join student chapters of professional organizations related to your area of interest.

Build relationships with faculty who can serve as graduate school references, and maintain a high GPA for competitive admission to medical school.

Obtain a Ph.D. for teaching and advanced research and management positions.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Medicine
Agriculture
Food Science
Biological Engineering
Bioremediation
Environmental Protection/Regulation

Biotechnology companies:
Agricultural chemicals
Food safety
Pharmaceutical
Medical device and equipment
Research and testing
Federal government:
National Institutes of Health
Food and Drug Administration
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Agriculture
Plant propagation and production businesses
Colleges and universities

Gain practical experience conducting research, collecting and analyzing data, and using laboratory/field techniques in collaboration with professors and through internships.
Hone your ability to gather, assess, evaluate, interpret, and share technical and scientific information.
Seek current knowledge of medical, agricultural, pharmaceutical, or environmental issues, trends, regulations.
Join horticultural, agronomy, biotechnology clubs or other student professional associations to network and cultivate related academic interests.
Pursue a master's or doctoral degree to specialize and for advancement in the field. Some federal and private agency and research positions require a graduate degree.
Maintain a strong grade point average to be competitive for graduate school admission.

BIOINFORMATICS

Algorithm and Statistical Techniques
Data Analysis and Interpretation
Information Management
Organization and Retrieval

Colleges and universities
Private research foundations
Software development firms
Biotechnology companies:
Agricultural chemicals
Pharmaceutical
Medical device and equipment
Research and testing
Federal laboratories and regulatory agencies:
National Institutes of Health
Food and Drug Administration
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Agriculture

Develop multiple areas of specialization through coursework, minors, double-majors in molecular biology, mathematics, statistics, computer science, or machine learning.
Develop strong programming and database management skills; fluency in several programming languages is helpful.
Learn biological software systems.
Complete an internship in the areas of tool building, usage, or maintenance.
Seek master's or Ph.D. degree for increased advancement opportunities.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

EDUCATION

Teaching:

Elementary

Secondary

Post-Secondary

Non-classroom Education

Public and private schools, K-12

Two-year community colleges/technical institutes

Four-year institutions

Professional schools including colleges of pharmacy, dentistry, medicine, veterinary medicine, and agriculture

Museums

Zoos

Nature centers and parks

Gain experience working with students through tutoring, part-time employment, or volunteering.

Learn to work well with people of varying backgrounds and skills.

Develop excellent interpersonal, communication, and content area knowledge.

Complete a teacher preparation program for K-12 positions, which varies by state. A major in content area is required for secondary education in most states.

Master's degrees may be sufficient for teaching at community or two-year institutions.

Seek Ph.D. for teaching opportunities at colleges and universities.

COMMUNICATION

Technical Writing

Editing

Illustrating

Photography

Public Relations

Publishing companies including scientific magazines, professional journals, periodicals, textbooks, and online publishers

Newspapers

Educational and scientific software companies

Zoological and environmental societies

Medical, dental, and veterinary colleges

Research centers

Federal government agencies

Related nonprofit organizations

Museums

Acquire thorough knowledge of photographic procedures and technology.

Take specific courses in biological, medical, and ophthalmic photography; courses in illustration and printing are also helpful.

Develop strong writing skills and command of the English language.

Take advanced courses in technical writing or journalism classes or consider a minor in either.

Join professional associations like the National Association of Science Writers or the Public Relations Student Society of America.

Seek related volunteer or paid experiences with student/local publications to increase marketability.

Consider earning an advanced degree in a communications field to specialize, i.e. scientific journalism or public relations.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

LEGISLATION/LAW

Lobbying
Regulatory Affairs
Science Policy
Patent Law
Environmental Law
Nonprofit or Public Interest
Mediation

Law firms
Corporations
State and federal government:
 Department of Energy
 Environmental Protection Agency
Environmental compliance services companies
Regulatory commissions
Advocacy organizations

Develop strong research and writing skills. Enhance communication skills through public speaking courses, debate team, or Toast Masters (a public speaking organization).
Maintain current knowledge of industry trends, laws and policies specific to area of interest, i.e. environment, food safety, regulatory programs, etc.
Acquire internships in federal or state government. Utilize applicable websites and seek assistance from your college career center.
Take courses in history, political science and/or legal studies to supplement science curriculum.
To pursue a J.D., participate in mock trial and pre-law associations, learn law school admissions process.

BUSINESS/INDUSTRY

Technical and Pharmaceutical Sales
Management
Consulting
Marketing

Manufacturing companies:
 Food/Feed
 Agricultural chemicals
 Pharmaceuticals
 Medical device and equipment
 Consumer products
Marketing firms
Consulting firms

Develop excellent communication and interpersonal skills, and demonstrate a high energy level.
Take courses in anatomy, pharmacology, and chemistry to supplement curriculum. Consider a business minor.
Seek experience through part-time jobs and internships in business; experience in sales may be necessary for some positions.
Join related student associations and pursue leadership positions.
Be prepared to start in entry level positions, such as management trainee programs.
Consider an MBA or Professional Science Master's to advance into higher levels of business management, consulting, research, and brand management.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- A bachelor's degree will qualify one for work as a laboratory assistant, technician, technologist, or research assistant in education, industry, government, museums, parks, and gardens.
- An undergraduate degree can also be used for nontechnical work in writing, illustration, sales, photography, and legislation.
- A master's degrees allow for greater specialization in a field and more opportunities in research and administration. Some community colleges will hire Master's level teachers.
- Doctoral degrees are necessary for advanced research and administrative positions, university teaching, and independent research.
- The biological sciences are good preparation for a career in healthcare such as medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science, and professional degrees and licenses are also necessary to practice in these fields.
- Learn laboratory procedures and become familiar with equipment.
- Obtain summer, part-time, volunteer, co-op, or internship experience to test the fields of interest and gain valuable experience. Take independent research classes if possible.
- Participate in summer research institutes. Submit research to local poster competitions or research symposiums.
- Develop strong analytical, computer, mathematics, and communications skills.
- Join professional associations and community organizations to stay abreast of current issues in the field and to develop networking contacts.
- Read scientific journals related to your area of interest.
- Maintain a high grade point average to improve chances of graduate and professional school admission.
- Become familiar with the specific entrance exam for graduate or professional schools in your area of interest.
- Secure strong relationships and personal recommendations from professors and/or employers.
- Consider completing a post-doctoral experience after graduate school.
- Learn federal, state, and local government job application process.
- Gain experience with grant writing and fundraising techniques. Often research must be funded in this manner.