

Study This, Earn That

Learn why your salary is a matter of degrees.

By Chris Kyle

The college diplomas of an engineering and music major look nearly identical. Their bank accounts at the mid-career mark... not so much. Not long after the ink dries on their degrees, a petroleum engineer will make \$100,000 more per year than a music major, according to mid-career salary statistics from Payscale's 2010-2011 College Salary Report. For those curious about the average pay that comes with different bachelor's degrees, we count down some of the most popular degrees from highest to lowest. The results may surprise you...

Study Finance, Earn \$91,500

While it may pale in comparison to petroleum engineers, who earn a whopping \$157,000, finance graduates with a bachelor's degree still do quite well, earning an average mid-career salary of \$91,500. Typical finance careers include financial planners, bankers, and stockbrokers.

Study Information Technology (IT), Earn \$79,300

Information technology gave birth to today's paperless business world, making an IT bachelor's degree valuable in every profession imaginable, from the computer industry to health care and beyond. According to Payscale's 2010-2011 report, IT grads make nearly \$80,000 mid-career.

Study Accounting, Earn \$77,500

Forget about Mandarin, Spanish, or even English. The most important language in the business world is accounting. According to Payscale, those with a bachelor's degree in accounting have an average salary of \$77,500 mid-career. It's also a smart choice for those seeking an associate's degree since many accountants enter the workforce with only two years of training.

Study Marketing, Earn \$77,300

Knowing how to market a product to the masses is a skill that will always be in demand. Grads with a bachelor's degree in marketing get paid handsomely for their efforts, averaging at \$77,300 per year mid-career. For even quicker training, you can earn a marketing associate's degree.

Study Business, Earn \$70,600

While business administration remains one of the most popular bachelor's degrees, Payscale broke down undergraduate business degrees into two categories: international business and business. Today's global economy gives a slight edge to international business majors, who average at \$73,700 mid-career, just ahead of the \$70,600 in average salary for business majors.

Study Literature, Earn \$65,700

Sure, you will strengthen your reading and writing skills by studying literature. But reading great books can also deepen your ability to understand the human condition. Literature majors often move on to study law or work in communications or marketing as writers and editors.

Study Human Resources (HR), Earn \$61,900

Recruiting and retaining the best and brightest employees is an HR professional's goal. By gaining a bachelor's in human resources, you can position yourself for a mid-career salary of nearly \$62,000 by learning how to best use your people skills in all kinds of workplace environments.

Study Criminal Justice, Earn \$58,000

Lawyers and paralegals aren't the only ones who study laws and how to apply them. Everyone from federal agents and police officers to private investigators can benefit from studying criminal justice. A mid-career salary of \$58,000 is the norm for those with a bachelor's degree.

*All salary data is based upon mid-career averages of those with a bachelor's degree and comes from Payscale's 2010-2011 College Salary Report.