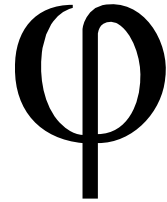


## **Information on Majoring in Philosophy**

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### **Why Be a Philosophy Major?**

So you can be cool, like me!

On a more serious note, there are many reasons to major in philosophy. Philosophy is one of the most versatile majors in the humanities. It intersects with economics, politics, mathematics, psychology, history, etc.... So, in general, studying philosophy will give you a good understanding of both yourself and the world in which you live. Who wouldn't want that?

### **Philosophy Majors and Standardized Tests:**

There are also other reasons to major in philosophy, particularly if you are considering graduate school of any sort. Perhaps the biggest of these is that philosophy majors tend to perform better on the tests required for various sorts of graduate studies.

With respect to the **GRE** (Graduate Records Examination, usually required for graduate studies in the humanities and sciences):

- Philosophy majors have the highest average score of any major on the verbal reasoning section
- Philosophy majors have the highest average score of any major on the analytic writing section
- Philosophy majors have the highest average score of any humanities major on the quantitative reasoning section (15<sup>th</sup> overall all out of a total of 50 majors. But even here, philosophy is the *only* humanities major with an average score above the median).

With respect to the **LSAT** (used for admission to law schools):

- Philosophy majors have the highest average overall score of any humanities major
- Philosophy majors have a higher average overall score (157.0) than the other most common pre-law majors: economics (156.2), history (154.5), english (153.5), political science (151.5).

With respect to the **GMAT** (used for admission to business school):

- Philosophy majors have an average score 15% higher than any type of business major (e.g., accounting, finance, management).
- Philosophy majors have a higher average score than any major except mathematics

### **Philosophy Majors have 'da skills':**

The reason for these results is that the philosophy major will help you develop the skills needed to succeed in virtually any field or career path. These include:

#### **Critical Thinking Skills:**

- The ability to think logically
- The ability to identify the key issues in a discussion
- The ability to assess the pros and cons of proposed solutions
- The ability to ask the right questions
- The ability to see beyond superficial categorizations (i.e., "to think outside the box")
- The ability to draw accurate conclusions from confusing data
- The ability to clarify purposes, principles, and general objectives

**Problem-Solving Skills:**

- The ability to find creative solutions to hard problems
- The ability to define the parameters of a problem
- The ability to look at a problem from different angles and to identify alternative courses of action
- The ability to identify useful resource materials for solving a problem
- The ability to divide complex problems into solvable pieces
- The ability to discern what is valuable from what is irrelevant

**Communication Skills:**

- The ability to express and to explain difficult ideas clearly and straightforwardly
- The ability to express one's point of view while respecting the views of others
- The ability to use a variety of tools and strategies to convey information
- The ability to use argumentation techniques to persuade others
- The ability to assess the implications of a proposal

As these skills indicate, there is a real sense in which majoring in philosophy prepares you for just about anything (except, perhaps, the circus—but that's what clown college is for).

Despite all this, some students still aren't convinced. They want to know...

**But What Could I Do With a Philosophy Major?**

Like me, you could get paid to corrupt young minds (I mean, teach!).

But there are many other things you could do as well:

- Law (This is the single biggest career path for philosophy majors.)
- Editing and Publishing
- Writing (creative, technical or even journalism)
- Computers (Many technology companies have started to recruit philosophy majors. For more information, see this page from the University of South Carolina: <http://www.cla.sc.edu/PHIL/computers.html>)
- Public Service

For more information, talk to a philosophy professor. If you want to talk with me, my office is in Founders 165A. Or give me a call (ext. 7768) or shoot be an email ([ktimpe@sandiego.edu](mailto:ktimpe@sandiego.edu)).

Kevin Timpe

**Other links:**

<http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/%7Eeschroed0/ForMajors.html>

<http://www.clemson.edu/caah/philosophy/website/html/Famous%20majors.html>

[http://phil-www.tamu.edu/Undergrad/what\\_philosophers\\_do.html](http://phil-www.tamu.edu/Undergrad/what_philosophers_do.html)

<http://www.philosophy.eku.edu/scores.htm>

<http://www.philosophy.eku.edu/Illinoisstate.htm>

<http://web.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad/ugcrhbk.html>