

## Career Advice: What can I do with a Major in German?<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to the various transferable skills you acquire when studying German at TTU, Foreign Language degrees are among the most versatile degrees that you can earn! This allows you a lot of flexibility when it comes to career paths.

Some general tips to keep in mind:

- Supplement the foreign language, preferably one that requires a high degree of technical skill. Most people with foreign language ability use those skills to assist them in a different career field such as business, education, journalism, law, etc.
- Study related or adjacent courses (e.g., geography, history, civilization, foreign relations, international law, world economics, etc.).
- Utilize a number of learning methods to develop language fluency. Combine listen and repeat drills, textbooks, audio lessons, and learning apps.
- Travel to a foreign country or study abroad in international exchange programs to develop your language skills and international/intercultural competency.
- Study and practice your foreign language skills by reading foreign newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Seek opportunities to interact with international students on your campus or members of your local community. Host international students, join relevant student organizations, and participate in international campus events.
- Watch foreign movies and listen to foreign broadcasts to maintain your fluency.
- Volunteer your language skills to churches, community organizations, and programs that work with people who speak your target language.
- Correspond with someone from a foreign country.
- Contact professional associations and read their publications to learn about job opportunities.
- Research job postings on the Internet to get an idea of jobs in which knowledge of a foreign language is useful.
- Participate in summer programs, co-ops, and internships to improve your skills.
- Network with others in the field to learn about job opportunities.
- Obtaining international positions is competitive and difficult. Be proactive in developing the skills and experiences international employers seek.
- Get your foot in the door in domestic positions because many international employers promote current employees into international positions.

Below are some employment areas you might want to consider if you majored in German.

### Employment area 1: Government

Translation/Interpretation	Civil service	Intelligence
Language analysis	Foreign service	Security and protection
Linguistics	Immigration/Naturalization	Law enforcement
Diplomacy	Customs	Journalism/Broadcasting

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<sup>1</sup> This page is based on the University of Tennessee's 1996 Handout "Foreign Language: What can I do with this Major?", © <https://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/foreign-language/>

### Potential employers:

- Federal government organizations including: Overseas aid agencies; Intelligence and law enforcement agencies (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, Drug Enforcement Administration)
- Department of State
- Homeland Security: US Customs and Border Patrol & US Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Department of Defense: US Armed Forces; National Guard; National Security Agency
- Department of Commerce
- Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Peace Corps, VISTA, Americorps
- Library of Congress
- Voice of America
- US District Courts
- United Nations

### Strategies:

- Complete an internship with a federal agency and maintain a high GPA to be a more competitive candidate.
- Learn application procedures for applying for government jobs. Plan to apply early and inquire frequently about job vacancies.
- Review special hiring authorizations to be hired and to advance more quickly.
- Participate in campus organizations and activities that promote interaction with international students.
- Attend a specialized school that teaches foreign languages for additional training.
- Live abroad and gain knowledge of politics and economics to prepare for a career in this field.
- Increase knowledge of geography, history, and international affairs.
- Join the armed forces as a way to get experience.
- Consider earning a graduate degree for more job opportunities.

### Employment area 2: Industry & Commerce

Translation/Interpretation	Engineering/Technical	Administrative services
Banking/Finance	Computer and software services	Advertising and marketing
Sales	Research	Human resources
Customer services	Operations management	Law
Manufacturing	Consulting	
Logistics and transportation/Supply chain mgmt.	Importing/Exporting	

### Potential Employers:

- Banks and financial institutions
- Import/Export companies

- International companies including: Foreign firms operating in the US; US firms operating in foreign countries
- Manufacturers: Automobile; Retail stores; Environmental firms; Consulting agencies
- Sports organizations
- Telecommunications companies
- Computer and software firms
- Advertising agencies
- Professional associations
- Law firms

Strategies:

- Supplement coursework with business classes or earn a business minor.
- Develop international competency by living and working abroad and by interacting with international students on campus.
- Get involved in student organizations and seek leadership roles.
- Research which companies do business with the countries in which German is spoken.
- Be prepared to start in a position in the US working for a firm with an overseas presence. Very few entry level positions are available in international business.
- Some jobs will require graduate degrees (e.g., business, law, etc.).

**Employment area 3: Travel & Tourism**

Translation/Interpretation	Booking and reservations	Localization Expert
Airline services	Travel services/Guidance	Event Planning
Management	Ecotourism	

Potential Employers:

- Tour and excursion companies
- Travel agencies
- Hotels/Motels
- Resorts
- Airlines/Airports
- Cruise lines
- Railroads
- Bus lines
- Car rental agencies
- Convention centers
- Chambers of commerce

Strategies:

- Take courses in hotel/restaurant administration or recreation and tourism management.
- Get a part-time job in a hotel or restaurant to gain experience.
- Spend time abroad to learn about various cultures and traditions.
- Brush up on your knowledge of geography.
- Consider attending a travel and tourism school.
- Develop office management and technology skills.

- Maintain a travel blog.
- Read international newspapers to keep up with overseas developments.

### Employment area 4: Service & Education

Educational administration: Student affairs; Study abroad programs; International houses or cultural centers; International student services

Translation/Interpretation	Civil service	Health services
Teaching	Social work	Counseling
Tutoring	Mission work	Nonprofit or public interest law
Linguistics	Library science	Research

### Potential Employers:

- K-12 schools, public and private
- Universities/Colleges
- Pre-schools
- Professional language schools
- English language institutes
- Overseas dependents' schools
- Foreign study exchange programs
- Libraries
- Adult education programs
- Religious and volunteer organizations
- International organizations
- Law enforcement agencies
- Social service agencies
- Nonprofit organizations
- Hospitals

### Strategies:

- Obtain state teacher licensure for K-12 teaching.
- Earn a graduate degree for college or university teaching opportunities.
- Develop superior written and oral communication skills in the English language including proper sentence structure and comprehensive vocabulary.
- Minor or double major in another subject that you could also teach.
- Get experience as a teaching assistant or tutor.
- Become familiar with the cultural base of your language (literature, art, politics, etc.) as well as with cultural traditions.
- Consider teaching English as a foreign language (overseas). Research courses and certifications for teaching English to non-native speakers.
- Volunteer with government programs such as VISTA or community programs such as ESL classes.
- Work abroad through volunteer programs or missions.
- Plan to take both written and oral examinations to become an interpreter.

- Notify local hospitals, schools, and chambers of commerce of your availability to translate or interpret for international visitors.
- Earn a graduate degree in a field of specialty (e.g. Student affairs administration, counseling, law, etc.).

### **Employment area 5: Arts, Media, & Entertainment**

Advertising and marketing	Writing	Film making
Translation/Interpretation	Publishing/Editing	Museum work
Journalism/Broadcasting	Public relations	Fashion
Photography	Performing	

#### **Potential employers:**

- Museums
- Foreign news agencies
- Book publishers
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- TV networks
- Radio stations
- Film companies
- Recording companies
- Internet media companies
- Advertising firms
- Design firms

#### **Strategies:**

- Learn about the customs and culture of the country in which German is primarily spoken.
- Supplement coursework with related classes (e.g., journalism, photography, art, etc.).
- Spend time studying or working abroad.
- Complete one or more internships in your field of interest.
- Work at campus and local newspapers or radio and television stations.
- Read international newspapers to keep up with developments overseas.
- Listen to foreign broadcasts.

### **Employment area 6: Interpretation & Translation**

- Interpretation (Simultaneous and consecutive): Business; Conference; Escort/Guide; Judiciary (Court)
- Translation: Legal; Literary; Localization; Machine; Medical; Technical
- Lexicography
- Steganography

#### **Potential Employers:**

- Freelance
- Educational services

- Business services
- Government agencies
- Healthcare organizations
- International organizations
- Nonprofit and social service organizations
- Courts
- Publishers
- Libraries

Strategies:

- Learn a third language for increased job opportunities. Some languages such as Middle Eastern or Asian ones are in more demand than others.
- Gain experience through internships or volunteering.
- Seek certification or accreditation from an interpretation/translation organization.
- Learn to listen to one language while speaking another at the same time.
- Gain experience with computers and relevant software programs.
- Interpreters and translators who have expertise in a particular area such as law or medicine may find more opportunities.
- Develop skills in negotiation and the ability to work well under stress.
- Most people work in this field freelance. Show language expertise, initiative, and motivation as this is a very competitive field.