

US News Annual List of 30 Best Careers

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US News & Annual Reports - December 11, 2008 - If you've recently been laid off, you've probably had someone tap you on the shoulder and tell you something like:

- "Out of crisis comes opportunity," or
- "When one door closes, another opens."

It probably feels a little pat, but the truth is that many workers will use the downturn to switch out of a slow growth career and into work with a much more promising future.

The financial crisis and economic recession have made quick work of an expected gradual evolution in our economy.

In the next few years, it could look very different:

- A shrunken Wall Street will force bankers to find jobs in other industries
- A massive "Green Energy" effort could create jobs that are barely on the map today
- An expanding healthcare sector could offer new opportunities for a broad swath of workers

So whether you're out of work or you're gainfully employed, you should keep an eye on the changing nature of our job market.

U.S. News has plowed through hundreds of careers, looking for the jobs with:

- The best outlook in this recessionary economy and beyond
- The highest rates of job satisfaction
- The least difficult training necessary
- The most prestige
- The highest pay

These careers have staying power: They're smart moves now, and they'll be smart moves for years to come.

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The aging of the baby boomer generation promises to place major demands on the healthcare system. There will be more need for physical therapists as active seniors work their way back from hip and knee replacements. A couple of national surveys also found that physical therapists rank high in job satisfaction.

Registered Nurses, Biomedical Equipment Technicians and Physician Assistants will also be in hot demand.

Equipment technicians install, train, calibrate, and maintain a cadre of fast-evolving medical equipment, such as PET/CT scanners and robotic radio-surgery units.

Computer systems know how is increasingly useful, and you can be an everyday hospital hero after only a two-year associate's degree.

Physician assistants need two or three years of postgraduate education. Then they can do about 80 percent of what physicians do, and their salaries can reach six figures.

It's also important to consider the effect of an Obama presidency on the labor market. The President-Elect has indicated that healthcare reform will be a priority for his administration.

Overhauling our existing system to make way for universal healthcare will require the hard work of many health policy specialists, who will be called upon to examine, analyze, or advise on everything from economic approaches to ethical outcomes of policy changes.

Schools like Harvard, Penn, and Johns Hopkins offer interdisciplinary health policy programs, but there will be good job opportunities for people with primary expertise in economics, politics, medicine, accounting, management, and ethics, as well.

Some best careers may surprise you:

- Did you know that hair stylists rank among the most satisfied with their jobs? (No need to fear that your work will be outsourced, either.)
- Pharmacists are increasingly in demand as medical advisers, thanks to soaring physicians' costs and appointment delays.
- Firefighter is among the most prestigious careers, as ranked by the public in a Harris poll. It ranks behind "Scientist" and "Physician", two careers that require much bigger investments in higher education.

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- The Veterinarian career, long a favorite for kids who love pets, is a surprisingly smart adult choice, with plenty of opportunities in the field, a variety of work environments, and, although it can be stressful, great reward for your labor.

Some careers fly well under the radar, so competition is less intense, even if job satisfaction runs high.

Have you ever thought of a job as an audiologist? Probably not, but this career lets you work closely with the rapidly improving technology of hearing aids, and you spend lots of time out of the office while working one-on-one with patients in clinics or hospitals.

Workers who crave job security may find their last bastion of hope in the federal government. Government can always raise taxes or print more money and it still offers full-time, well-paying positions with generous benefits, including ample holidays, sick days, and vacation days.

More good news: There will be plenty of jobs to choose from, as a big chunk of federal employees become eligible for retirement over the next decade.

Opportunities for a government manager abound in everything from human resources to finance, research to public relations, and technology to art, with jobs throughout the United States and the world.

Our full list of “Best Careers for 2009” include the following:

- Audiologist
- Biomedical equipment technician
- Clergy
- Curriculum/training specialist
- Engineer
- Firefighter
- Fundraiser
- Genetic counselor
- Ghostwriter
- Government manager
- Hairstylist/Cosmetologist
- Health policy specialist
- Higher education administrator
- Landscape architect
- Librarian
- Locksmith/Security system technician
- Management consultant

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- Mediator
- Occupational therapist
- Optometrist
- Pharmacist
- Physical therapist
- Physician assistant
- Politician/Elected official
- Registered nurse
- School psychologist
- Systems analyst
- Urban planner
- Usability/User experience specialist
- Veterinarian

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