

What is a college major?

Some colleges and universities require you to “**declare a major.**” This means that you decide you are going to take lots of classes in a particular subject area and let them know that officially (you “declare” your major). You will also have to take other required classes, but you will take more classes in your major than someone who has a different major. Some colleges also require you to choose a **minor** – a second subject area that you take additional classes in, but not as many as in your major. Liberal arts colleges are designed for you to get a broad education so that you know about a lot of different things, not just what you are most interested in. At many liberal arts colleges, you will not be asked to declare a major.

When you declare your major, you are required to take certain courses. You do not have to stick with your major, if you decide you are not interested in it later. **You can change your major** (or minor), but that can make your college experience take longer. If you have taken lots of classes in your major subject area and then change it, you may not be able to apply the credit hours you received in those classes to your new major.

Every college is different, but every course has a certain number of **credit hours**, usually based on the number of hours you meet each week. To graduate, you have to have enough credit hours. For example, at William & Mary, you must earn **120 credit hours to graduate** with a Bachelor’s degree, with 72 hours of that taken outside of your major (<http://catalog.wm.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=1035>). Some majors can have different required credit hours to graduate. It is wise to know how many credits in required and elective classes you need each year. Every college student is assigned an advisor and your advisor will help you figure this out, but this is your program – you must stay on top of your credits earned and needed throughout your college career. It is helpful to study your college program just as if it is another course you are taking (an independent study, with your advisor as your teacher).

Some people recommend taking classes in your major early in your four-year program, so you can find out if you like it. Others recommend taking general classes that are required for everyone to take *first* so that you don’t lose any credit hours if you later change your mind about what you’d like to study. It is good to explore your options in the early part of your college career. Try lots of different classes, but be sure to get the required classes on your schedule, too. A general introductory course may help you decide if you like a topic area. When you have a major, you are allowed to take more specialized classes after each class you take (because you know more about that subject now).

Every college or university has a *catalog* with information about degree requirements, majors, and courses available. The *schedule* describes what classes are offered each semester. You look at the catalog to see what degree programs and courses you might be interested in and plan your four-year program, then check the schedule to see what is being offered. Some classes are not taught every semester. It is important for you to be thinking ahead, so you know what classes have to be taken in what sequence and when they will be offered.

Types of degrees

4-year programs

- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.)
- Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)

Graduate programs (after you have a bachelor's degree)

- Master of Arts (M.A.)
- Master of Science (M.S.)
- Master of Laws (LL.M.)
- Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)

- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
- Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)
- Juris Doctor (J.D.)

Bachelor's degrees usually take four years to complete.

Master's degrees usually take one to two years after your bachelor's.

Doctoral degrees usually take five to ten years after your bachelor's. People often get a master's before their bachelor's; then it takes only three to seven years after your master's.

These times are all affected by changes – school transfers, changing your major, job requirements, living your life.

Here are some resources about college majors:

<http://www.wm.edu/majorsminors/>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers/college-majors/the-college-major-what-it-is-and-how-to-choose-one>

<http://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/top-ten-majors>

William & Mary Undergraduate Majors & Minors from <http://www.wm.edu/majorsminors>

MAJORS

Accounting
Africana Studies
American Studies
Anthropology
Art, Studio
Art History
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Biology
Chemistry
Chinese Language and Culture
Classical Archaeology
Classical Civilization
Computational and Applied
Mathematics and Statistics,
Applied Statistics Track
Computational and Applied
Mathematics and Statistics,
Mathematical Biology Track
Computer Science
Economics
Economics (St Andrews Joint
Degree)
English
English (St Andrews Joint Degree)
European Studies
Film & Media Studies
Finance
French and Francophone Studies
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's
Studies
Geology
Geology, Environmental
German
Global Studies
Government
Greek
Health
Health Sciences
Hispanic Studies
History
History (St Andrews Joint Degree)
International Relations
International Relations (St
Andrews Joint Degree)
Kinesiology & Health Sciences
Latin
Latin American Studies
Linguistics
Marketing
Mathematics, Applied
Mathematics, Standard
Mathematics, Pre-College
Teaching
Medieval and Renaissance Studies
Music
Neuroscience
Philosophy
Physics

Physics, Medical Track
Process Management and
Consulting
Psychology
Public Policy
Religious Studies
Russian and Post-Soviet Studies
Self-Designed
Sociology
Theatre

MINORS

Accounting
Africana Studies
American Studies
Anthropology
Applied Science
Arabic Language and Literature
Art
Art and Art History
Art History
Biochemistry
Biology
Chemistry
Chinese Language and Literature
Classical Studies
Community Studies
Comparative and Diaspora Studies
of Asia and the Middle East
Computational and Applied
Mathematics and Statistics,
Mathematical Biology Track
Computer Science
Creative Writing
Dance
East Asian Studies
Economics
English
Environmental Science and Policy
European Studies
Film & Media Studies
Finance
French and Francophone Studies
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's
Studies
Geology
German
Hispanic Studies
History
Italian Language, Literature, and
Culture
Italian Studies Interdisciplinary
Japanese Studies
Judaic Studies
Kinesiology & Health Sciences
Latin American Studies
Linguistics
Management
Marine Science

Marketing
Mathematics
Medieval and Renaissance Studies
Middle Eastern Studies
Music
Philosophy
Physics
Process Management and
Consulting
Psychology
Public Health
Religious Studies
Russian Language and Literature
Russian and Post-Soviet Studies
Sociology
South Asian Studies
Teaching English as a
Foreign/Second Language
Theatre

Secondary Majors

Education
Environmental Science
Environmental Studies
Pre-Professional Advising

General Information

Engineering
Pre-Law
Pre-Med, Pre-Vet, Pre-Dentist
and Pre-Pharmacy
Pre-Physical Therapy