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Best Careers of 2010

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Biomedical engineer, curator, and urban planner made the cut

It's not a little bit optimistic to be establishing a list of best careers now, at the tail end of a particularly hard-knocks recession that has helped put 15.4 million Americans out of work. That's particularly so because no industry or occupation was spared the misery of layoffs, hiring freezes, benefit cuts, and general anxiety. But some industries were much safer harbors for workers than others. Healthcare, most notably, managed to expand its payrolls, though not at the clip customary for a healthier economy. It's clear that the recession is ending and that employers aren't slashing jobs with the blunt instrument they used over the past two years, but many unemployed workers and college students have a question that can't be answered by upticks in the GDP, namely: Where on earth will the jobs be?

For this year's list, *U.S. News* examined the Labor Department's brand-new job growth projections for 2008 to 2018. We looked for occupations that will add jobs at an above-average rate over the next decade or so and those that provide an above-average median income. We analyzed the data for jobs with enough bulk to make them worth mentioning. Since not everyone wants to be a nurse or an engineer, we looked for occupations in a broad range of categories. And since not everyone can go back to school for a doctorate, we included a broad range of educational requirements. We also considered, where possible, data on job satisfaction, turnover, and impending retirements, which crank up openings in jobs that may have only slightly above-average employment growth.

In the end, we found a list of 50 jobs that present some of the best opportunities for workers in five categories. In the science and technology field, jobs range from network architect to meteorologist. This category includes the fastest-growing occupation—with a 72 percent growth rate that far outstrips the 10 percent average across careers—of biomedical engineer. Biomedical engineers help develop the equipment and devices that improve or enable the preservation of health. They're working to grow cardiac tissue or develop tomorrow's MRI machines, asthma inhalers, and artificial hearts. Computer software engineers, on the other hand, are working to develop tomorrow's hottest video game—or missile system.

As the baby boomer generation ages, the healthcare industry will continue to offer some of the best opportunities for employment. Aside from better known—but still promising—careers such as registered nurse or veterinarian, there are slightly more under-the-radar careers that require less schooling, such as X-ray technician, lab technician, or physical therapist assistant. There are also promising occupations at the intersection of healthcare and education: school psychologist and medical and public-health social worker. Those drawn to teaching or to civic service might want to take a look at urban planning, firefighting, or special education.

There are plenty of promising jobs in the business and finance fields, although the opportunities have shifted a bit because of the economic shake-up. Consumers continue to seek the advice and experience of personal financial advisers, while investment banks, insurance companies, and fund management firms increasingly rely on the work of financial analysts, who gauge the performance, health, and value of

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companies in which a firm may want to invest. There are less well-known careers here, too, including cost estimator, a job critical to companies that need to price out projects before they start, and logistician, the unsung hero of global commerce who manages the supply chain.

Creative jobs often get short shrift as promising opportunities, given that competition can be fierce and interest high. However, there will be plenty of demand for technical writers, curators, and film and video editors. Some service jobs can also be easily overlooked despite the excellent opportunities they provide. Plumbers are the butt of plenty of jokes, but the career could be a great choice for someone who wants on-the-job training and has the needed physical stamina. Likewise, employment of security system installers is forecast to jump 25 percent between 2008 and 2018. Sometimes, a recession shows you that the best jobs aren't the ones that grab headlines or dazzle strangers. Rather, they're the ones that offer a stable paycheck and a little satisfaction at the end of the day.

1. X-Ray Technician

Demand for X-ray technicians is expected to grow as the massive baby boomer generation ages and increases demand for diagnostic imaging. Radiologic technologists and technicians held about 215,000 jobs in 2008, primarily in hospitals, and that number is expected to shoot up more than 17 percent to 252,000 positions by 2018.

2. Veterinarian

Employment for veterinarians is expected to grow by 19,700 jobs, or 33 percent, between 2008 and 2018. There aren't a lot of veterinarians—60,000 in 2008, according to U.S. estimates; 90,000 in 2008, according to industry data—and demand for vets is strong.

3. Meteorologist

Employment growth of meteorologists is expected to be faster than average. The occupation is expected to add 1,400 jobs between 2008 and 2018, expanding by nearly 15 percent.

4. Computer Software Engineer

Employment of computer software engineers is expected to swell by a whopping 295,200 jobs, or more than 32 percent, between 2008 and 2018. That rate is well above the average for all occupations, as companies continually integrate new technologies and design their own.

5. Firefighter

Job growth through 2018 is likely to be about 19 percent, which is above the average for all occupations. But there's a lot of competition for jobs, since firefighting is stable, government-supported work that often comes with a pension--and is recession-resistant.

6. Special-Education Teacher

Employment of elementary and preschool special-education teachers is expected to jump by 44,300 jobs, or 20 percent, between 2008 and 2018--well above average for all occupations.

7. Financial Adviser

Financial adviser is forecasted as one of the faster-growing occupations over the next decade, with a projected growth rate of more than 30 percent. The impending retirements of 78 million baby boomers is expected to create strong demand for advisory services.

8. Meeting Planner

Employment of meeting and convention planners is expected to grow faster than the average for all professions over the next decade or so. The number of jobs planners hold is forecast to jump 16 percent, thanks to the growing importance of meetings to increasingly global companies.

9. Funeral Director

Expect solid growth for funeral directors between 2008 and 2018. Employment should increase by 3,600 jobs, or 12 percent, over the 10-year period. However, the number of openings resulting from growth and replacement needs, particularly from retirements, will be three times as much.

10. Multimedia Artist

Employment in the multimedia arts, whether in film, advertising, or Web development, is expected to rise by 11,200 jobs, or more than 14 percent, between 2008 and 2018, boosted in part by the growth in mobile technology and in the production of 3-D animated movies.

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