

## 10 Tips to Use Your Sociology Major to Land Your Dream Job

“Why wouldn’t a ratio of enterprise value over net income be a useful measurement?” Here I was in New York, interviewing for a position at a large investment bank and I had no idea what my interviewer was asking me. When I began college as a sociology major, I was very excited to hear that “I could do anything” with my sociology major. Sometimes, however, it felt like being able to do anything was the same thing as being qualified for nothing. A recent experience I had applying for an internship with a large investment bank in New York changed my view. When I applied I had taken a grand total of two finance-related classes, and to be totally honest I wasn’t completely sure what an investment bank did. To my surprise, I ended up being offered the position. The following are some tips that I learned through that experience that I hope will help all of my fellow sociology majors land their dream jobs as well!

1. **Apply!** Many jobs have a list of skills that they require or are looking for in the job description. Don’t feel like you have to check all of the boxes on that list before you can apply for the position! If you can get an interview, and effectively convince your interviewer that you know how to learn, then what exact skills you have right now are not as important.
2. **Practice explaining sociology:** Your interviewer may not know all that much about sociology, so be ready to explain it. Don’t dive into a Sociology 1010 lecture though, be brief! Help them see how sociology is an important field. For example, in my interviews I chose to highlight that sociology studies how power is distributed within a society, and how an individual is influenced by the society around them.
3. **Talk about data:** A recent survey found that one of the top qualities Utah employers care about in their employees is the ability to read, understand, and communicate data to facilitate decision making.<sup>1</sup> Your employer may not be aware that sociology has taught you a great deal about data, and that sociology is driven by data. I would argue that sociology is one of the best majors for teaching students how to interpret data. An employer can hire plenty of people from the computer science program who will write codes to organize their data, but the unique skill that you bring to the table is you have been trained to look at data and understand what story that data is trying to tell, and its broader implications.
4. **Talk about diversity:** Sociology has taught you a lot about diversity. Hopefully during the course of your degree you’ve developed tools to understand individuals from different races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and class backgrounds. You may not think of this as an important skill but working



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<sup>1</sup> Survey of Utah employers by Dan Jones & Associates and the Sandy Chamber of Commerce

well with diverse peers is one of the top qualities recruiters and career counselors look for.<sup>2</sup> Communicate this skill to your employer!

5. **Be proud of your degree:** Avoid the tendency to be apologetic about your sociology degree. Your degree is what makes you unique among the various other applicants the employer may be considering. By the end of the interview, your interviewer should be wishing they had a degree in sociology!
6. **Communicate Intellectual Curiosity:** Why did you major in sociology? Was it because you were genuinely interested in it? You wanted to know more? If yes, then you probably have intellectual curiosity, and guess what? Employers are looking for people with that attribute!
7. **Communicate Ethics:** During the course of my four interviews with this investment bank, it became clear that they were concerned with ensuring I would act ethically in my position, because the Finance industry can be riddled with ethical dilemmas. I assured them that my training in sociology had helped me to consider how my actions would affect society or an organization before making a decision.
8. **Know as much as possible about the position you're applying for:** Just in case your employer has any reservations about hiring a sociology major, your knowledge about the position you are applying for will help them feel more confident that you are prepared for it.
9. **Finally, get involved in undergraduate research:** If there is one piece of advice I would give to sociology majors who want to have amazing career paths available to them upon graduation, it would be to get involved in undergraduate research. Being involved in undergraduate research gave me concrete experiences I could tell my interviewers about such as working on a team, asking good questions, learning from correction of my work, interpreting data, and oral and written presentation skills. Talking about an experience you have had that improved your writing, or interpreting data is always more powerful than simply saying "I'm a good writer," or "I know how to work with data."

You may be wondering how I replied to the question posed at the beginning of this article. First, I said, "I'll be honest, not only do I not know the answer, I'm not even sure exactly what you're talking about," followed up with, "But now I'm curious about it. Could you tell me more about enterprise value ratios?" From there, what was initially an interview became a lesson on financial ratios, and the interviewer was impressed how quickly I was able to grasp the concept. It wasn't about the ratios, it was about my willingness and ability to learn, and that is something I learned from sociology. Sociology helped me get my dream job, and it will help you get yours!

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<sup>2</sup> Associated Press interviews with corporate recruiters and campus career counselors