

Frequently Asked Questions

What skills will I develop with a major in Economics and how will these skills apply to a career?

Analytical skills, a strong quantitative background, and clarity and precision of expression are qualities developed in the economics major. Additionally, knowledge of the operations of a complex economic system and its institutions provides skills applicable to a wide variety of job responsibilities in a number of occupational areas. The skills listed below are representative of those acquired from the study of economics and may be applied in various occupations.

Financial	Research/Analysis	Communication
Maintaining accurate records Tabulating figures Manipulating numerical data Developing budgets Performing cost/benefit analyses Creating and evaluating financial records	Designing projects Generating/developing ideas Organizing materials Computing data Analyzing results Testing an idea/hypotheses Using computers	Writing reports/articles Summarizing Writing proposals Justifying a position Reading and interpreting reports Speaking persuasively Explaining ideas/goals Problem Solving Assessing needs Defining problems

What can I do to make certain that my resume will really impress employers?

Employers are looking for a variety of attributes in their employees. Some are specific to your study of economics and others are skills that you will develop outside of the classroom. All of the skills listed below are things that you should include on your resume if you possess them. If not, you should get started early in your career at CSULB to build these skills!

Grade Point Average

I know that some of you were hoping this would not be on the list, but it is! People often wonder why employers care about GPA since taking exams is not going to be part of our job. On the other hand, doing well in courses often requires a lot of skills that are correlated with responsibility and attention to detail, skills that will be part of your job. For example, in order to get high marks you need to: turn in all of your assignments on time (something your employer will value).

- Show up to class (surprise, employers expect you to show up on-time and be prepared for work).
- Prioritize tasks.
- Follow directions.
- Ask questions if you have them rather than making mistakes because you do not understand something.
- Respect and work well with others.
- Take responsibility for yourself.

How high does your GPA need to be?

The higher the better. Employers who will ask about GPA look for averages as high as 3.75 and as low as 2.75. Most who ask want to see at least a 3.0. This does not mean that if you have a low GPA you should give up! Most employers will consider a higher "in major" GPA or one calculated for our last two years. This helps people who switch from another major (unsuccessful) early in their college career.

What if you can't even get your GPA up?

You will still get a job; however, students with a low GPA may be offered a lower starting salary. You are an economics major--you decide whether this difference in salary is worth doing more work in school.

Technical Skills

Econometrics and Statistical Skills

Many of our best employers are interested in economics majors to perform some type of data analysis work. This is one type of "training" that you can learn in school that translates directly into a job skill.

What else?

More math is better than less. Solving tougher math problems in class makes you better able to solve problems concerning numbers on the job.

Leadership and Team Skills

This is where you get credit for things you are probably doing for fun anyway. Employers are interested in seeing what you are able to do when no one is "making" you do it. This is how they can get a feel for whether you can commit to a goal and see it through. For example, were you a member of a fraternity or sorority? If so, what role did you play? Did you sit around and let others do the work or were you the officer that organized the group's charity drive your senior year? Participating in sports is also good. The more serious you are about the sport, the more credit you get. Captains of teams (even intramural teams) get extra consideration. Even people who do solitary sports get credit if they are serious competitors. Be advised that employers will read something about "who you are" by which sports you choose. They will pick soccer players for team oriented jobs and marathon runners for people who need to be self-starters and work independently.

Work Experience

Work experience definitely counts. Internships are ideal. If you have some management responsibility in your part-time job during the school year that will count. Staying in the same part-time job for a long time can demonstrate that you can make a long-term commitment and get along well with people.

Other

One thing that will impress employers once you get into an interview is an ability to speak fluently and confidently. To develop this skill, you need to get used to performing in situations where you are under pressure. A course in public speaking will help, but so will any opportunity to "perform" that you can find, whether it is acting, poetry reading, singing, playing a musical instrument, etc.

Is economics a good degree for people who want to go to Law School?

The score on the LSAT exam is the primary statistic that Law Schools use to determine admission into their schools and award Financial Aid. To prepare for law school, advisors often suggest a number of various undergraduate degrees that provide students with a sound background necessary for their later studies in law school. The relevant question is which undergraduate degree best prepares students for admission into law school and for top consideration for financial assistance in such schools.

As the table below indicates, first obtaining an undergraduate degree in Economics is the best preparation for those students interested in studying law. What is the explanation for why first studying economics is the best preparation for law school? It may be that, unlike other disciplines, studying Economics does not teach you particular answers to a given question, but rather how to approach a question and reasonable and rational methods of obtaining an answer. The importance of this is that in an ever-changing world, it is far better to understand how to answer a question instead of remembering particular answers. If there is one thing Economics is famous for, it is for teaching students how to analyze a problem.