

The 50 Best Careers of 2010

Biomedical engineer, curator, and urban planner made the cut

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Slide Show: America's Best Careers 2010

Video: Best Careers 

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?

[\[Slide Show: America's Best Careers 2010.\]](#)

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 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.

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