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Six Fast-Growing Careers Taking Over The U.S.



Despite the delicate economy, these jobs are projected to experience significant growth until at least 2020.

By Terri Williams

Whether you are fresh out of college, unemployed, or considering a mid-career change, you want to land a job in a field that's growing.

But with the ever-changing global economy, how can you know if today's hot jobs will still be in demand years from now? There may never be an exact science for this type of grand economic prediction, but by looking at the fastest-growing jobs in the country, we can identify some career trends that provide useful direction for anyone wanting to plan their professional future.

Many careers throughout the country are experiencing modest growth, but some quickly expanding fields are seeing at least a 30 percent projected growth between 2010 and 2020, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Intrigued? Keep reading to learn more about six careers that are sweeping the nation.

Career #1: Personal Financial Advisor



Projected Job Growth 2010-2020: 32 percent*

If you're good with numbers, and you like to help people set financial goals and make sound financial decisions, you might be fulfilled in a fast-growing career as a personal financial advisor.

Personal financial advisors help individuals determine the best course of action regarding their money. The U.S. Department of Labor notes that they may assist with investments and help clients achieve financial goals. Personal financial advisors may also provide tax advice and help clients plan for important financial events like retirement.

Why It's Taking Over: "Financial advisors are in high demand to meet the growing number of aging Americans who are retiring," says Kristi Merritt, a career search coach at Claim It, a career consulting company. "These retirees have to make their money last for an indefinite amount of time, so they need investment and money management advice."

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Not only that, but the Department of Labor notes that a decrease in corporate and government pension plans will require retirees to take a more active role

in planning their financial futures. And this will, in turn, increase the need for personal financial advisors.

Education Options: The Department states that a bachelor's degree is usually required for this position. And while no specific field of study is required, the Department lists economics, business, accounting, finance, mathematics, or law as good preparatory majors if you're considering this career.

Career #2: Database Administrator



Projected Job Growth 2010-2020: 31 percent*

If you are excited by working with digital information, a rapidly-growing career as a database administrator may feed your data desire.

The U.S. Department of Labor states that database administrators are responsible for making sure that the company's computer database runs smoothly. This entails creating and managing the database, in addition to making revisions and performing tests when necessary. Database administrators also work to prevent security breaches and data loss, says the Department of Labor.

Why It's Taking Over: "With the explosion of digital information, database administrators, particularly in SQL Server and Oracle, are essential to protecting company information from digital security threats," says Merritt.

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The Department adds that the rise of electronic medical records will also spur demand for database administrators working in the health care industry. Additionally, the Department notes that database administrators are in high demand because there is simply a shortage of qualified workers in the field.

Education Options: To pursue a career as a database administrator, you may need a bachelor's degree in management information systems or a computer-related field, according to the Department. Companies with large databases may prefer those with an MBA.

Career #3: Market Research Analyst



Projected Job Growth 2010-2020: 41 percent*

If you're intrigued by the unofficial science of how products are sold to consumers, you should consider a high-demand career as a market research analyst.

Market research analysts monitor marketing and sales trends and create methods for collecting data, says the U.S. Department of Labor. They also assess the effectiveness of marketing strategies and create charts, graphs, and reports to present their analyses.

Why It's Taking Over: "Research occupations, such as market research analysts, are on the rise as consumerism reaches an all-time high and companies are scrambling to analyze and predict consumer buying trends," notes Merritt.

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The Department of Labor's 41 percent projected growth rate for the career between 2010 and 2020 confirms this insight. Why so high? The Department attributes the substantial growth to an increased use of data to understand the needs of customers.

Education Options: A bachelor's degree in market research or a related field is usually needed if you want to apply to a market research analyst position, says the Department. Many analysts hold degrees in math, computer science, or statistics, but others may have a background in other areas, such as communications, business administration, or the social sciences. The Department also states that many market research positions may require you to have a master's degree.

Career #4: Medical Assistant

Projected Job Growth 2010-2020: 31 percent*



If you like health and wellness, and you're a people-person who enjoys helping others, you might consider the hot career of medical assisting.

Medical assistants work in different types of medical offices and assist doctors with a variety of patient-related tasks, such as taking and measuring vital signs, giving injections, and preparing blood for laboratory tests, notes the U.S. Department of Labor. Additionally, they may handle administrative duties like answering phones, recording patient information, and scheduling appointments.

Why It's Taking Over: "With the increase of aging baby boomers, many more medical assistants will be needed to help with their health care needs, both in hospitals and elderly care facilities," says Merritt.

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Also, the Department of Labor states that as electronic health records (EHR) become more prevalent, the demand for medical assistants is expected to increase.

Education Options: The Department notes that if you want to pursue this career, most states do not have formal education requirements, but most assistants typically have a high school diploma. The Department also notes that some states might require you to graduate from an accredited program, or complete a medical assistant exam, or both.

Career #5: Physical Therapy Assistant



Projected Job Growth 2010-2020: 46 percent*

If you have a tolerant personality, and like the idea of helping injured or sick patients regain their mobility, you might enjoy an in-demand career as a physical therapist assistant.

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that physical therapy assistants treat injured patients using massage and other methods. They also help patients use walkers, stretch, or perform exercises. In addition, these professionals may execute other duties, like setting up the treatment area or providing clerical support, says the Department of Labor

Why It's Taking Over: "There's an increasingly older population that wants to remain independent and mobile - even when they fall or get injured," says Merritt. "They're turning to physical therapy as a way to restore their strength, flexibility, and range of motion, so they can continue to be self-reliant."

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The Department adds that the large number of aging baby boomers will require physical rehabilitation, as they are more susceptible to heart attacks, strokes, and other debilitating conditions.

Education Options: If you want to pursue a career as a physical therapy assistant, most states will require that you have an associate's degree in physical therapy, according to the Department.

Career #6: Software Developer



Projected Job Growth 2010-2020: 30 percent*

If the idea of combining analytical, technical, and creative skills to design computer software sounds intriguing, you may be hard-wired for a rapidly-growing career as a software developer.

Software designers evaluate a client's software needs, and then create software solutions, says the U.S. Department of Labor. They also test and maintain computer software as needed.

Why It's Taking Over: "Software development is exploding and the demand from software companies is far exceeding the number of developers available, including trainable students," says Merritt.

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The Department of Labor notes that the skyrocketing demand is due in part to an increase in products that use software. The prevalence of smartphones, increasing use of electronic health records, and additional need for cyber security, notes the Department, have also contributed to the boom in this career.

Education Options: According to the Department, you'll need to have a bachelor's degree in computer science, software engineering, or a related subject to pursue this career, which is typical for software developers.

** Projected job growth rates from the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 edition.*

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