

# Re: Why major in physics

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- *From:* [hhc314@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hhc314@xxxxxxxxxx)
  - *Date:* 17 Apr 2005 14:52:28 -0700
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Wonderfully put.

Still, a student should be cautioned that unless he is some sort of a mathematical genius, it's arguably one of the most difficult majors in any university to complete.

The B.S. level is arguably the most difficult, because it's at that level where they seriously 'cull the herd'...usually employing the required math course for this purpose. Still, if you can make it through the first 2-years, you have a good chance of earning this degree.

Prospective physics major should assume that during the school year there will be no time available for recreation. You'll attend class and lectures for from 5-7 hours per day, and the assigned problem sets will consume another 8-12 hours to complete (unless a genius). Also, if you don't complete the problem sets, you're likely to flunk the mid-term and final exams...because you learn more physics and math from the problem sets than from the lectures, class work, or textbooks. You learn to survive on 4-5 hours of sleep per night.

I earned my M.S. from Drexel, but the pattern at better known schools such as MIT and Cal Tech is exactly the same. A physics degree issued by a school that doesn't require this level of effort is barely worth the paper that it's written on. At any of these schools, assume that between 1/2 to 2/3rds of the entering class will not complete the program.

Earn a B.S. in physics and you'll likely go on to graduate studies, which I personally found to be a bit more relaxed. The trick is getting the B.S. with reasonable grades.

After graduation, in addition to academia (where the pay levels are insufficient to support a family), there are many professions open to you. I started in particle accelerator design, but switched for a couple of years to the design of orbiting photographic systems, then to railway signaling, and eventually to work in real-time defense software for Raytheon. I'm retired now, but my salary maxed out at around \$100k (in 1992) after 30 years experience. It's not a bad life, and I really

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enjoyed my work.

Still, those years earning my B.S. were a bitch.

Just thought that I would share that with you.

Harry C.

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• ***Follow-Ups:***

- ◆ ***Re: Why major in physics***  
◇ *From: PD*
- ◆ ***Re: Why major in physics***  
◇ *From: Jon Bell*
- ◆ ***Re: Why major in physics***  
◇ *From: T Wake*

• ***References:***

- ◆ ***Why major in physics***  
◇ *From: Jschoet*
- ◆ ***Re: Why major in physics***  
◇ *From: T Wake*

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