BGGS Careers Newsletter

Issue 17

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION **2**

EVENTS **2**

19 November: Bond Medical Program Information Session for 2027 Intake
1 December: SAE Online Info Session: IT & Computer Science
16-18 December: Griffith Explore Your Options for School Leavers
18 December: QUT Year 12 ATAR Advice Webinar
18 December: UQ ATAR Advice Online Event for School Leavers

SCHOLARSHIPS **3**

UQ Excellence Scholarship
Future Founders Bursary: Knoei Colab 2027

COMPETITIONS **4**

The 2027 Penguin Literary Prize

EXPERIENCES **4**

QUT 2027 Science & Engineering Challenge

FEES & SCHOLARSHIPS **4**

How to stay organised when applying for scholarships

COMMUNICATION SKILLS, SKILLS FOR WORK **6**

4 surprising ways you're already an amazing communicator

HEALTH & WELLBEING **8**

Feel like a fraud? Learn to beat imposter syndrome

JOBS & CAREERS, WORK EXPERIENCE **10**

Careers in the pharmaceutical industry: where to start

JOB SPOTLIGHTS **13**

How to become a Data Analyst

STUDY TIPS **15**

Should you listen to music while you study?

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Introduction

As we near the end of the year and students and families are focused on finishing well, you may have less time to peruse careers newsletters; however, please don't miss out on reading about how to become a data analyst or careers in the pharmaceutical industry if either is of interest. In this issue, you'll also find information about QUT's Science and Engineering Challenge and some last-minute study tips.

Events

19 November: Bond Medical Program Information Session for 2027 Intake

Organisation: Bond University
Location: Online
Date: November 19, 2026
The Bond University Medical Program offers students opportunities to bring to life their ambitions to become outstanding practitioners, thinkers, and leaders, well-equipped to deliver evidence-based, patient-centred health care that meets the needs of a diverse community.
We invite you to join the Dean of Medicine who will provide an overview of the Medical Program at Bond University. Get the answers to all your questions during this information and interactive chat session. It's your opportunity to ask the important questions, explore your options and discover if Bond University is the right fit for you.
Your information session topics of discussion:

- Entry requirements and tuition fees
- Program structure and subjects
- How to apply and the admissions process
- Upcoming key dates
- Pathways into the program

Find out more

1 December: SAE Online Info Session: IT & Computer Science

Organisation: SAE University College
Location: Online
Date: December 1, 2026
From software development and cyber security to cloud computing and AI, technology careers are evolving fast. At SAE's Online Info Session: IT & Computer Science, you'll explore our complete range of technology courses, including our new Information Technology qualifications launching in February 2027, alongside our established Computer Science and Cyber Security pathways.
Find out more

16-18 December: Griffith Explore Your Options for School Leavers

Organisation: Griffith University
Location: Online

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Date: December 16 to December 18, 2026
If your ATAR results don't go as planned, or you're reconsidering what you want to study, you have options at Griffith.
Griffith study advisers can help you explore alternative entry pathways, identify ways to boost your entry rank, and map out a clear route into your preferred degree. With the right advice, you can make informed decisions and plan your next steps with confidence.
Find out more

18 December: QUT Year 12 ATAR Advice Webinar

Organisation: Queensland University of Technology
Location: Online
Date: December 18, 2026
If you're planning to study in 2027, we're here to help you finalise your decision. Join us on Friday 18 December for advice about pathways to your preferred course, ordering your QTAC preferences, guaranteed entry, study costs and support.
Find out more

18 December: UQ ATAR Advice Online Event for School Leavers

Organisation: University of Queensland
Location: Online
Date: December 18, 2026
Wondering what to do after you get your ATAR? Whether you're seeking advice, information, or simply some reassurance, we can help. We'll answer all your ATAR-related questions at our free ATAR Advice online event.
What to expect:

- Live chat one-on-one with UQ Admissions staff.
- Understand your options if your ATAR is higher or lower than expected.
- Get personalised advice on the best pathway to UQ for you.
- Find out how to change your QTAC preferences, and how to respond to an offer.
- Explore our world-class facilities through virtual campus tours.

Find out more

Scholarships

UQ Excellence Scholarship

Organisation: University of Queensland
Location: Queensland
Value: AU$6,000
Open Date: August 7, 2026
Close Date: November 20, 2026
Find out more

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Future Founders Bursary: Knoei Colab 2027

Organisation: Brisbane City Council
Location: Brisbane
Value: See details
Close Date: November 16, 2026
Find out more

Competitions

The 2027 Penguin Literary Prize

Organisation: Penguin Random House
Location: Australia
Value: AU$20,000
Close Date: December 14, 2026
Find out more

Experiences

QUT 2027 Science & Engineering Challenge

Organisation: Queensland University of Technology
Location: Queensland University of Technology, Gardens Point Campus
Date: February 8, 2027
Find out more

Fees & Scholarships

How to stay organised when applying for scholarships

Applying for scholarships is straightforward, but there can be a few elements to keep track of. There's a deadline here, a reference letter there, an essay question that's slightly different from the last one you answered – so it can be easy to drop the ball, especially if you have a few applications happening. The good news? A simple system could help you glide through the process seamlessly to get you the scholarships you're gunning for.
Whether you're in high school or returning to study later in life, a little organisation at the start can save you a lot of stress down the track, and help you put your best foot forward with every application.

Start with research
Begin by looking for scholarships that line up with your interests, your circumstances, and the course you're planning to study. There are scholarships for all sorts of things, including academic results, sporting or creative talent, community involvement, financial need and specific fields of study. Scholarship

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databases, your school careers adviser, universities and local community organisations are all great places to look.
As you go, jot down the key details for each one in a notebook, app, or spreadsheet: who it's for, what it's worth, what you'll need to submit, and when applications close.

Build a calendar that works for you
Once you've got your list, turn it into a plan by adding each closing date to a calendar. A phone calendar, diary, or wall planner all work, as long as it's something you'll actually check.
Here's the trick: don't just mark the application deadline. Work backwards and add mini-deadlines too, like "ask for a reference letter", "finish first draft" and "final check".
You probably won't be able to apply for everything, and that's okay. Prioritise each scholarship based on:

- how well you meet the eligibility criteria
- the value of the award
- how much effort the application involves
- how soon it closes

Gather your documents in one place
Most applications ask for similar supporting documents, such as school reports or academic transcripts, proof of identity, reference letters, and sometimes evidence of your circumstances, like a doctor's letter or proof of financial hardship.
Create one dedicated folder – physical, digital or both – and keep everything there. Having a scholarship toolkit means that when an application asks for something, you can reach straight in and grab it, rather than turning the house upside down looking for it. Clear file names will make life easier too.

Ask for references early
A strong reference letter can give your application a real boost, so choose someone who knows you well and can speak to your strengths, like a teacher, coach, employer or mentor.
Give them plenty of notice, and make their job easier by sharing a few details: what the scholarship is for, when it closes, and a reminder of some things you've achieved or contributed. The more they have to work with, the stronger their letter is likely to be.

Tailor every essay
It can be tempting to write one essay and paste it into every application, but that's not going to work for the majority of applications. Whilst your ticking a box, it won't be the right fit for any of them.
Read each question carefully and think about what the provider is really looking for. Then shape your response around it, highlighting the achievements, goals and experiences that show why you're a great match for that particular award. You can absolutely reuse ideas and stories – just adapt them to suit each question. Give yourself time to draft, step away, and come back with fresh eyes.

Double-check before you submit

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Before you hit submit on any application, take a few minutes to review everything. Are all the fields filled in? Have you attached the right documents? Are your contact details correct? Have you stuck to any word limits? Are there any typos!
It can also help to ask a friend, family member or teacher to read over your application. A second pair of eyes will often spot the typo you've skimmed past ten times. It would be a shame to let a small slip cost you a great opportunity.

Keep track of your submissions
Once an application is in, update your list. Note the date you applied, save any confirmation emails or reference numbers, and add the date you can expect to hear back, if it's listed. That way, if you need to follow up or something goes wrong, you'll have all the details at your fingertips.

Be patient and keep going
It can take a while to hear back, so try not to put everything on hold while you wait. Use the time to keep searching for other opportunities, or switch gears and focus on other important applications, like courses or accommodation.

Follow up, whatever the outcome
If you're offered a scholarship, congratulations! Take a moment to thank the provider, as well as the people who wrote your references. A short email or note shows your appreciation and leaves a great impression.
If things don't go your way this time, try not to be discouraged. Some providers are happy to share feedback, so it's worth asking politely. Every application is practice for the next one, and you'll get sharper each time.

Find scholarships to apply for
Staying organised won't just help you put together stronger applications – it'll also save you from that last-minute race against the clock. Set up your list, build your calendar and get your toolkit ready, and you'll be in a great position to make the most of every opportunity that comes your way.
Ready to get started? Explore our scholarships page to find opportunities that could help fund your future.

Communication Skills, Skills for Work

4 surprising ways you're already an amazing communicator

Think group chats, gaming sessions, and social media are just for fun? Look a little closer and you'll find they're actually training you in one of the most useful skills for any workplace: communication. Just like learning to ride a bike builds balance and coordination without you really noticing, your everyday habits are building skills you'll carry into every job you ever have. Let's look at four ways you might already be a brilliant communicator, and where those skills could take you.

You can read the vibe in a group chat

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Ever noticed how you just know when to drop a funny meme to lighten the mood, or when the group needs someone to say, “OK, so what’s the plan?” That instinct is communication in action.
Managing a group chat is a bit like being the DJ at a party. You’re sensing the mood, choosing appropriate communication styles for the moment, and keeping everyone on board. You can switch between casual banter and getting things sorted, often without even thinking about it.
At work, this is called reading the room – noticing how people are feeling and adjusting your approach to match. And if you know when a quick emoji reaction will do and when a voice message or longer reply is needed, you’re also learning to choose the right channel for the right message. In a job, that might mean knowing when an email is fine and when it’s better to pick up the phone or have a face-to-face chat.

You can explain game tactics or sports plays
Whether you’re teaching a friend how to play your favourite video game or talking a teammate through a set play, you’re flexing some serious communication muscles. Taking something complicated and breaking it into bite-sized pieces is harder than it looks.
Think about the last time you explained something like this. Did you notice when your friend was nodding along but not really getting it? Maybe you tried a different example, sketched it out on paper, or compared it to something they already knew. That’s exactly what teachers, trainers, and presenters do every day; they watch their audience and adjust as they go.

You’ve helped sort out friendship drama
If you’ve ever helped two friends work through a misunderstanding or explained one person’s perspective to another, you’ve been doing some delicate comms work. Being the go-between is a lot like being a translator, you’re helping each person understand what the other actually meant, not just what they said. To do this well, you need to listen carefully (active listening), be able to see things from different points of view, choose your words with care, and pick up on body language and tone of voice. You also need to know when to talk and when to simply listen. These are the same skills people use at work to resolve disagreements, negotiate, and keep teams working well together.

You create content people actually engage with
Writing a caption that gets a laugh, making a TikTok people watch to the end, or running a social media account for a club or hobby all take real communication skill. You’re thinking about who your audience is, what tone will connect with them, and how to get your message across quickly.
You’re also learning from feedback. Views, comments, and likes work a bit like a scoreboard, showing you what’s landing and what isn’t. Over time, you tweak your approach based on what you see. Businesses do exactly the same thing when they test marketing campaigns, write newsletters, or share updates with customers.

Where these skills show up at work
Communication is useful in almost every job, so the skills you’re building now can travel with you wherever you go. Here’s how some of them might translate:

- **Client relations:** Explaining game strategies becomes explaining ideas to customers or clients in a way they can understand and act on.

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- **Change management:** Managing group chat dynamics becomes keeping a team informed and on track during a project, or when plans change.
- **Conflict resolution:** Sorting out friendship drama becomes handling disagreements calmly and helping people find common ground.
- **Creating content** (a career in itself) could also translate to writing presentations, reports, social media posts or marketing materials.
- **Training and development:** Breaking down tricky ideas becomes training new team members or writing instructions that actually make sense.
- **Project management:** Just like managing a group chat working towards plans, you'll need to keep multiple stakeholders informed and aligned.
- **Team leadership:** Being aware of and understanding different communication styles, as well as knowing when to use each one is crucial for effective leadership.

How to build your communication skills further

Like any skill, communication gets stronger with practice, and the best place to start is noticing what you already do. Next time you explain something, pay attention to how you change your approach depending on who you're talking to. Notice which messages in your group chats get the response you hoped for, and which ones fall flat.

You could also try stepping a little outside your comfort zone. Volunteer to present in class, take on a role in a club or team, or offer to help a younger student with something you're good at. Each one is a chance to practise in a slightly different setting.

Remember, great communication isn't about always saying the perfect thing. It's about getting your message across in a way that works for the people you're talking to.

Find out more

You're probably already doing more than you realise to build your communication skills. The next step is recognising them, so you can talk about them with confidence in a job application or interview. Want to discover more skills that will help you thrive at work? Explore our Skills for Work blogs for heaps more tips and ideas.

Health & Wellbeing

Feel like a fraud? Learn to beat imposter syndrome

You've just been picked for the debate team, received a promotion at your first part-time job, or been asked to mentor a junior cohort. Everyone seems pleased for you, but a quiet voice in your head won't let you enjoy the moment, instead you're thinking; they've made a mistake, sooner or later, they'll work out I don't belong here.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. In fact in up to 82% of people reported experiencing the feeling, and it was common among both men and women as well as across a range of age groups from adolescents to late-stage professionals (Bravata et al 2020). So it's no surprise that voice has a name –

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imposter syndrome. Once you understand a bit more about it and recognise it when it sneaks in, it could become much easier to ignore those pesky intrusive thoughts.

What is imposter syndrome?

Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you haven't really earned your success. You might believe your good results came down to luck, perfect timing, or people being too kind. Deep down, you worry that someone will eventually "find you out".

The idea was first described in 1978 by two psychologists, Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, who called it the impostor phenomenon. While it's recognised as a psychological term, don't panic, it isn't a medical condition. It's a pattern of thinking and something you can absolutely change.

It can show up in lots of different ways. You might:

- brush off compliments or feel awkward when someone praises your work
- put off starting a task because you're scared it won't be good enough
- work far harder than you need to, so nobody spots a "weakness"
- compare yourself to others and always come out last

It's also more common than you might think, including among celebrities, successful professionals, and geniuses. Don't believe us? Albert Einstein, Tom Hanks, Michelle Obama, David Bowie, Serena Williams, Natalie Portman, Sheryl Sandberg former COO of Facebook, and Howard Schultz CEO of Starbucks are just a few people who have confessed to struggling with imposter syndrome.

Why do we experience it?

There's no single cause because we all respond to situations differently, but there are a few examples that could make it more likely to appear.

New situations, like starting at a new school, joining a club, or beginning a job all mean lots of unfamiliar things at once. When everything feels new, it's easy to confuse "I'm still learning" with "I'm not good enough".

Comparing yourself to others. You see every flaw or messy step of your own work, but you usually only see other people's finished results, and you probably look at it far less critically. A classmate's essay might look effortless, but what you didn't see were the three drafts they wrote first.

Having very high standards is great, but if you expect everything to be perfect all the time (especially first time), then anything less can feel like failure – even when it's actually really good.

If you're the first in your family to try something, or from a different background from most people in the room, anything that makes you feel different might feel like extra pressure to prove you belong.

Imposter feelings often appear when you step outside your comfort zone, so think of that as a positive itself - it's a sign that you're challenging yourself and growing.

Practical tips to manage imposter syndrome

Name the feeling

When the doubting voice starts up, try saying to yourself, "this is imposter syndrome talking." It sounds simple, but labelling a thought helps you see it as a feeling rather than a fact.

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Look at the evidence
Thoughts and feelings can be convincing, but they aren't always accurate. Keep a list of things you've done well like good marks, kind feedback from a teacher, a problem you solved, a skill you've learnt. Things like that can be easy to forget, but when you start doubting yourself, read it back. It's much harder to argue with a written record than with a vague worry.

Talk to someone you trust
Imposter syndrome thrives on silence. Tell a friend, family member, teacher or coach how you're feeling, not only will they be able to give you a much needed pep talk; you'll probably find they've felt the same way at some point. Hearing that can take a lot of the pressure off.

Remember that learning means not knowing yet
Be kind to yourself, nobody expects you to know everything straight away. Asking questions, saying "I don't know", or making mistakes doesn't make you a fraud, it's how everyone gets better. The most experienced people at any school or workplace were once beginners too.

Aim for progress, not perfection
Instead of expecting perfection from yourself, look for improvements instead - no matter how small. Measuring yourself against your past self and previous efforts is fairer, and far more useful, than measuring yourself against everyone else.

Practise accepting compliments
Next time someone praises your work, resist the urge to say "it was nothing" and say thank you instead. It might feel uncomfortable at first, but it gets easier with practice.

Find out more
Imposter syndrome could make you doubt yourself, but it doesn't get the final say. The more you notice it, question it, and talk about it, the smaller it becomes. Start today by writing down three things you've done well this week.
Want more tips on looking after your mind and building your confidence? Explore our Human Skills resources for practical advice to boost existing skills or build new ones, or head to the Study Tips page for methods that could help with making the improvements you're looking for.

Jobs & Careers, Work Experience

Careers in the pharmaceutical industry: where to start

Every time you take a painkiller for a headache or roll up your sleeve for a vaccine, you're seeing the end result of years of work. Behind each medicine is a long chain of people. Some discovered it, some tested it, others made it, checked it and made sure it reached you safely. That chain is the pharmaceutical

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industry, and it has careers and pathways for more people than you might think. If you enjoy science, solving problems, or helping others, it could be worth a closer look.

How big is the pharmaceutical industry?

The pharmaceutical industry is one of the largest in the world generating around US$1.6 trillion a year (2024) and projected to reach $2.4 trillion by 2029. Growing populations and new types of treatment are a big part of the reason.

So what does that mean for you? A growing industry usually needs more skilled people to work in labs, factories, offices, and pharmacies. Lots of these roles build on science and maths, so sticking with those subjects at school is a simple way to keep these doors open.

Roles you could explore

Pharmaceutical careers go well beyond the research lab. Here are some of the roles on offer, with an example of how people often get there. Pathways vary between countries, so treat these as a rough guide rather than a fixed route.

Research scientist

Research scientists in pharma look for new medicines and better ways to treat illness. They design experiments, study how diseases work, and test how possible treatments might behave. Studying chemistry and biology at school, then a degree in pharmacology, biochemistry or chemistry is one common pathway. Many go on to a master's or PhD before landing a research role.

Laboratory technician

Lab technicians keep research and testing running smoothly. They prepare samples, run tests, look after equipment, and record results with great care. Some start with a vocational qualification in laboratory skills, or an apprenticeship or traineeship. Others complete a science degree first.

Clinical research associate

Before a new medicine can be approved, it's tested on volunteers in clinical trials. Clinical research associates make sure these trials are run safely, fairly, and by the rules. You might be expected to have a degree in life sciences or nursing, followed by a first job as a clinical trial assistant. With experience, you can step up into the associate role.

Manufacturing technician

Once a medicine is approved, it has to be made - often millions of times over, with every tablet exactly the same. Manufacturing technicians set up, run, and monitor the equipment that does this. Usually a vocational course, apprenticeship or traineeship in manufacturing or science, are the entry into these roles, and you'll receive plenty of training on the job.

Quality control analyst

Quality control analysts test samples from every batch to check they meet strict safety standards. Nothing leaves the factory until they're satisfied. You'd probably need a vocational qualification in

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laboratory science, then start in an entry-level role in a quality control lab, or you could do a science degree and maybe fast track your progress.

Regulatory affairs specialist
Every country has rules about which medicines can be sold. Regulatory affairs specialists work with the company's and government to gather the evidence and prepare the documents that government regulators need. It suits people who enjoy both science and detail. A science degree, then a graduate role or further study in regulatory affairs is a standard route into this job.

Pharmacist
Most pharmacists work in local pharmacies or hospitals. Some work in industry, helping with medicine safety or development. You'll need a pharmacy degree, followed by a period of supervised practice, as well as registration with your country's pharmacy regulator.

Biostatistician
Clinical trials produce huge amounts of data. Biostatisticians work out what that data actually says, such as whether a new medicine really works better than an existing one. If this sounds like an interesting career for you, then you'll need maths at school, then probably a degree in either maths, statistics, or data science.

How to find work experience
Not sure if this industry is for you? Work experience is a great way to find out. Even a short placement shows you what a normal day looks like, and give you the opportunity to chat with people doing the jobs.
Start at your local pharmacy, you'll see how medicines reach patients and how pharmacists use science every day. Ask in person or email the pharmacist in charge.
Check company websites for pharmaceutical and biotech companies, they might already run work experience placements, school programs, or open days. Look for "careers" or "early careers" pages. Places can be limited, so apply early. If nothing stands out, you can always send over your resume and a cover letter explaining what you'd like.
Hospital pharmacies, hospital labs and medical research institutes sometimes offer placements, tours or job shadowing for students. What you can do might be limited, but even shadowing professionals for a day or two could help you work out if it's something you'd like to pursue. Your school careers adviser may already have contacts.
Look for virtual work experience, some companies offer free online programs where you complete tasks based on real projects. Others might just have videos about the roles people play or their equipment in use. These are handy if there isn't a pharmaceutical company near you.
Join science programs and go to events. University summer schools, STEM clubs, science competitions, and open days could all help you build skills and meet people already working in the field.
Do you know someone who works in a lab, pharmacy, or hospital? Ask if they'd spare 20 minutes to talk about their job, then write up some questions and make sure you book in a time with them.
Wherever you go, bring questions. What does a typical day involve? What do you enjoy most? What would you study if you were starting again? The answers will tell you more than any job advert.

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Pharma jobs and skills of the future

Worried about what AI could mean for the future of Pharma jobs? Predictions are it won't mean fewer jobs, they'll just look a little different and new roles will pop up all the time. AI drug discovery scientists who use machine learning to help find promising compounds, bioinformatics engineers that turn huge genetic datasets into useful insights, and digital trial managers run clinical trials using wearable devices and remote monitoring are just a few examples. Meanwhile, regulatory AI specialists check that AI-driven decisions meet safety rules, and cell and gene therapy technicians work hands-on with personalised treatments.

And alongside technical training, a few broader skills will help you stand out. **Data literacy** means being able to read, question, and act on data, even if you're not a data scientist. **Digital collaboration** is about working well with people you may never meet in person, using shared online tools. **Cross-disciplinary thinking** means joining the dots between biology, technology and patient care.

You'll also need to keep up as rules change with new technology, and to use good judgement, such as knowing when to question what a computer tells you rather than simply accepting it. You can start building these skills now by working with data in maths and science, getting involved in group projects, and asking "how do we know this?" when you come across a new fact.

Ready to take the first step?

The pharmaceutical industry needs people with all kinds of skills and qualifications. You don't need to have it all figured out yet. Keep going with your science and maths subjects, stay curious, and look for chances to see the work up close.

A good place to start is our Jobs and Careers page where you can read about lots of different jobs, industries, and pathways - to find the one that best suits you.

Job Spotlights

How to become a Data Analyst

Data Analysts collect and interpret data to help farmers and food businesses make informed, evidence-based decisions, spotting patterns that aren't obvious from raw numbers alone. They use tools like spreadsheets, databases, and dashboards to uncover trends in areas such as crop yields, supply chains, or consumer habits, then translate their findings into insights others can act on.

If you're curious, enjoy working with numbers, and like explaining complex ideas simply, this career could suit you well.

What skills do I need as a Data Analyst?

- Curious & analytical
- Strong with numbers
- Clear communicator
- Detail-oriented mindset
- Tech-savvy

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- Confident problem-solver
- Patient & methodical
- Confident presenter

What do Data Analysts do?

Before you can analyse anything, you're gathering and cleaning data from different sources, such as sensors, sales records, or surveys. This means checking for errors, filling gaps, and making sure the data is structured properly before deeper analysis begins. You'll also update dashboards or reports so the latest figures are ready for whoever needs them.

Through the day, you're analysing data to spot trends and patterns, building models, and working across spreadsheets, databases, or analytics tools. You'll interpret what the numbers actually mean for the business, whether that's a shift in crop yields, a bottleneck in the supply chain, or a change in consumer habits, and turn that into insight decision-makers can use. Clear, accurate work matters here, since decisions often rest on your interpretation of the data.

Periodically, you'll present findings to teams or management, explaining technical results in plain terms. You might collaborate with other specialists, like agronomists or marketing teams, to interpret data relevant to their work. Many Data Analysts specialise in a particular type of data over time, such as yield data, sales figures, or sensor data.

What kind of lifestyle could I expect?

Data Analysts work across food production, agribusiness, retail, and logistics companies, as well as food manufacturers looking to understand their operations more closely. Some work in-house within a single business, while others work for consulting firms that provide data services to multiple food and agriculture clients. Most of the work happens at a desk, using computers and specialist software rather than being out on-site, though you might occasionally visit a farm, warehouse, or production facility to understand how the data you're working with is actually collected.

Hours generally follow a standard working week, giving this role more predictable rhythms than many other food-related careers. That said, busy periods around reporting deadlines, end-of-season reviews, or major decisions can bring a temporary increase in workload and focus. Many roles also offer a reasonable degree of flexibility, including the option to work from home for at least part of the week.

The work is mentally demanding rather than physically strenuous, and travel usually isn't a significant part of the role, aside from occasional meetings with clients or colleagues at other sites. Salaries in this field tend to be above average, reflecting the technical skills involved, and the industry outlook is strong as food businesses increasingly rely on data to guide decisions and improve efficiency across their operations.

How to become a Data Analyst

- **Build a foundation in maths**: Focus on subjects like maths, statistics, and information technology at school, which give you the numerical and technical grounding this role relies on heavily, and consider computer science if it's offered.

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- **Study a relevant degree**: Complete a degree in data science, statistics, computer science, or business, ideally including subjects that build practical data analysis and visualisation skills you can apply straight away in a workplace.
- **Build practical skills independently**: Practise using tools like spreadsheets, databases, and data visualisation software through free online courses or personal projects, since employers value practical ability alongside formal qualifications and study. Working with a real dataset, even a small one, teaches you more than theory alone.
- **Gain entry-level experience**: Look for graduate programs or entry-level analyst roles, ideally within food, agriculture, or a related industry, to start applying your skills to real business problems and decisions that matter.

From here, you could move into senior analyst or data science roles, specialise in a particular type of data or industry, or move into strategic or leadership positions shaping how a business uses data.

What can I do right now?

If you're in high school and interested in working as a Data Analyst, here are some practical steps:

- Focus on maths and information technology subjects to build the analytical foundation this role relies on.
- Try free online courses or tutorials in spreadsheets, basic coding, or data visualisation tools to start building practical skills.
- Practise analysing a dataset you're genuinely interested in, like sports statistics or your own spending, to get comfortable finding patterns in numbers.

Find out more about alternative careers on our Job Spotlights page.

Study Tips

Should you listen to music while you study?

Researchers have spent a lot of time comparing how people perform with and without music playing in the background. The results aren't identical from study to study, but they do point to a few clear patterns that can help you decide what works best for you.

How music affects your concentration

When you study, your brain holds information in mind while it works with it, such as remembering the start of a sentence while you read the end of it. This is known as working memory, and it can only handle so much at once. Anything else your brain needs to process, including background sound, takes up some of that space.

Sounds with words in them are the most likely to compete for that space. Your brain tends to process speech and lyrics even when you're trying to ignore them, which can interfere with the words you're reading or writing. Sudden changes in sound, such as a new song starting, can also draw your attention away for a moment.

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Music can affect your energy and mood as well. A small amount of stimulation can help you stay alert during a repetitive task, while too much can make it harder to concentrate.
These effects are usually small, and most studies have looked at short tasks completed by university students. As a result, the best choice depends on the task, the music, and your surroundings.

How the task makes a difference
Some study tasks are more sensitive to background music than others.

Reading and researching
Reading is the task most affected by background sound. Research has found that noise, speech, and music can all have a small but consistent negative effect on reading. Instrumental music can also lower reading comprehension when it's both fast and loud.
If you're reading sources for an assignment or working through a textbook chapter, a quiet room or soft, slow music makes it easier to take in what you're reading.

Memorising and exam revision
Memorising information, such as definitions, formulas, or quotes, tends to be affected in a similar way. Learning things in a set order, like the steps in a process or a quote you need to know word for word, is especially easy to disrupt, because changing sounds interfere with the way your brain repeats a sequence. For exam revision, it helps to plan your quietest study time around the material you need to remember exactly.

Maths and problem-solving
The research on maths is less clear. Some studies have found only small effects on arithmetic, while others found that music made complex, demanding tasks harder.
For example, you might find music has little effect while you practise question types you already know well. Working through new or difficult problems needs your full attention, though, so silence is usually the better choice.

Simple, repetitive tasks
Some parts of studying don't require much thinking. Examples include:

- Formatting a reference list
- Colour-coding your notes
- Sorting handouts into folders

For tasks like these, music is less likely to get in the way. One study found that some types of music improved performance on a simple, repetitive task, and music may help keep your energy up when a task feels slow.

Choosing what to listen to

Lyrics vs instrumental music

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Whether music has lyrics is one of the clearest factors in the research. One study found that students scored lower on a reading test while listening to music with lyrics, regardless of whether they liked the songs. Instrumental music led to a smaller drop, and silence produced the best results.
Another study found that instrumental music neither helped nor harmed performance compared with silence. However, many of the students involved felt the instrumental music had helped them, even though their results didn't show it. How music feels while you're studying isn't always a reliable sign of how much you're learning, so it's useful to check your results as well, such as how much you can remember afterwards.

Music vs other background noise

Studying at home isn't always quiet. Siblings, a TV in the next room, or people talking nearby can all add noise you can't control.
Background conversation is one of the most distracting sounds for reading. In a study of secondary school students, noise like people talking and laughing affected performance more than music did. If your study space is noisy and you can't move somewhere quieter, instrumental music through headphones may be a better option than the conversations around you.

Deciding what works for you

There's no single rule that applies to every study session, but a few patterns can help you choose.
Remember:

- Reading, writing & memorising usually work best in silence or with soft instrumental music
- New or difficult problems need your full attention
- Simple, repetitive tasks are less affected by music
- Songs with lyrics are best kept for simple tasks
- Instrumental music may be easier to study with than background conversation

If you're not sure whether music is helping, try the same type of task with and without it and compare how much you get done.
If you want to find out more about building good study habits, we have plenty of other resources in our study section.

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