

Q&A



FROM

ENGLISH LITERATURE

TO...

PLANNING INTERN AT AN ADVERTISING AGENCY

Ewan Patel's love of English Literature led him to a role at multinational advertising and creative agency Saatchi & Saatchi.

So, what do you do all day?

A planner's job is to come up with ideas and strategies for adverts that we think will work for our clients. So day to day, we might be researching and working with our data teams to understand more about a business, their industry and their customers. Or we might be finalising an idea by talking to our creative teams so they can produce the advert itself. All the time, we're keeping a few questions in the back of our minds; for example, who do we want to advertise to? What do we want to say to them? And how can we best get our message across to them?

What key skills are invaluable to your role?

Communication is a really important skill in advertising. For example, as planners, we need to be able to turn our ideas into 'briefs' for our creative teams: these are documents where we need to be precise and clear in as few words as possible, so that they can use the briefs to create some amazing adverts.

For me, communicating with others around me in the planning department has been so important as well. Often, someone will have had the same problem I'm facing, and a quick chat with someone experienced is 10 times more useful than an hour spent researching in front of my laptop!

Why did you choose to study English?

I studied English because I love reading! It's a subject where you really get to choose what interests you (even with a prescribed reading list); personally, I always enjoyed getting down into the detail, finding clues in the language and the style to help me unpick characters' motivations and emotions.

I loved writing creatively, so English gave me a great chance to practise that skill as well as put it to use in essays. It took me a while to realise it's always possible both to align to an exam mark scheme and to bring some of your own flair and finesse to your writing.

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How is English A level useful in your work?

Being able to read and write quickly and fluently is always useful, whether I'm writing a brief, building a set of slides, or simply sending an email to a colleague. In particular, studying English helped me learn how to articulate my opinions clearly and quickly under pressure. Turning an idea that lives only in your head into words is such a useful but difficult skill, and English A level really helped me improve.

What further qualifications would you need for your role?

There are no exact requirements to work as a planner in advertising. You don't need a degree in marketing, though it can help. But I would say going to university and studying something that helps you improve and hone your written communication and idea-generation skills would be a good start.

I studied English at university, but anything like politics, history, philosophy, maybe even economics, would be useful. And though it's not a qualification, you need to be interested in the people and things around you – join clubs, meet as many new people as you can. The knowledge you can gain from them doesn't tend to come from a degree, but is just as useful.

What qualities help you thrive in your current role?

Stay curious, be interested in what's around you, and always be observant. The 'right answer' will never just fall into your lap; you have to go hunting for it, and be willing to understand that a good insight can come from anywhere.

