

# ECOLOGIST

*Knowing  
and sharing  
spaceship earth.*



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**E**cologists ask scientific questions about the relationships between organisms and their environment. This includes life in remote, unpopulated locations as well as areas where people live. Ecologists teach in college classrooms and laboratories, in nature education centers, in museums, and in public lecture halls. Their work becomes more and more important as our environmental problems increase. Some advise workers in government and private agencies, communicate with a wide variety of groups, and interact with many people.

Ecologists work in universities, governmental agencies, consulting firms, research laboratories, museums, nature centers, and private industries, including those that produce energy, timber, and fish. University ecologists teach and conduct research. They can usually choose their own research topics, including everything from fieldwork and population modeling to molecular genetics. Government and industry ecologists study ways to protect and manage our natural resources. Consultants often monitor the environment and prepare environmental impact statements. Museum and nature center ecologists interpret ecological knowledge for visitors.

To be an ecologist, you should be an intensely curious person who appreciates plants, animals, and the environment. You should feel concern for the deterioration of our world. Ecologists with bachelor's degrees often find positions as technicians. For most other jobs, you need an advanced college degree. Government, industries, and museums usually hire ecologists with doctoral degrees.

In high school, take as much science as you can. Be sure to take **biology, chemistry, and physics**. Take **mathematics** every year, and learn to work with computers. Gain practical experience as a volunteer in a nature center, a university research laboratory, or a conservation agency.



Photos: National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Whitney Copeland

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