

Working in the media



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'The media' is a broad term covering newspapers, magazines, publishing, radio, TV broadcasting, film production and interactive media companies. Its glamorous image means that competition to get started in a career in media is tough. Many people are graduates, although entry is possible with lower-level qualifications.

Britain's media industry is huge, and covers a wide range of jobs. In some areas, it's usual for people to be self-employed freelancers.

As working in the media is such a popular career choice, the more training and relevant experience you can get, the better. There is a demand for people who have both creative and technical skills.

This leaflet briefly outlines the main employment areas - links to more detailed information on specific careers can be found in the Related Leaflets section.

Media career areas

Journalism

Journalists work for the local press, the national press, news agencies, the vast range of weekly and monthly periodicals, online news sites, radio and TV. Many new entrants start as trainee journalists with local media, work on trade magazines or provide online content, where they can develop their basic skills under less pressure than with the national media.

Radio

For every presenter on the radio, there are hundreds of people working behind the scenes - including station managers, reporters, editors, producers and broadcast assistants - many of whom do not get a mention on air! There are very few starter positions for people without experience, so (as with many other media careers) determination, persistence and a range of useful skills is needed in order to get a job.

Design

Design is communicating by visual means, through print, drawings, photographs or combinations of all three. Media work can include book illustration, advertising and packaging, technical illustration and website design.

Photography

As well as opportunities for press photographers and photojournalists, high-quality photography is needed for advertising, magazine features and publicity. Photographers generally specialise in one particular field. There are relevant courses at various levels that will help you develop your skills before you look for a job.

Film and TV

There is a wide range of jobs in film and TV production, in both technical and production areas - from producers, directors, sound and lighting technicians and camera operators, to post-production roles. However, because it's a popular industry, getting started is very difficult. As well as film and TV production companies, it may also be possible to find work with companies

producing video for a wide range of uses besides entertainment - for business training, teaching, and for publicity, advertising and public relations.

Publishing

Book and e-book publishers may produce educational, technical or scientific books; others specialise in either fiction or nonfiction. There are also opportunities with magazine and online publishers. Editorial skills, commercial judgement and marketing skills are vital for this sector. At the editorial level, publishing is normally a career for graduates.

Advertising

Advertising is a tough and highly competitive industry. Advertising firms need people to manage accounts, designers and photographers to supply the artwork, and copywriters to provide the words. Scriptwriters and production crews work on TV, radio and cinema adverts. Media planners and buyers make sure that, once made, an advert is seen by its target audience as many times as possible!

Social media

Social media is a specific area of media that allows users to create, share and interact with content online. Whilst the majority of social media users are using it for personal reasons, there are paid roles related to social media marketing and advertising. Products, services, organisations and events can all benefit from using social media to spread messaging and awareness, so jobs in this area are widespread for those with the relevant skills and experiences.

Animation

Animators work in various branches of the media, from films to websites or computer games. Animations are film sequences or videos containing moving drawn or modelled images; nowadays, they are often produced by using specialist computer software packages. Most animators hold higher education qualifications in animation, art and design or computing.

Special and visual effects

Special effects (SFX) happen live in front of a camera during production; they can involve modelmaking and animatronics/robotics. Visual effects (VFX) are computer-generated images (CGI) and other images superimposed on film post-production. SFX and VFX jobs are found in films, TV, advertising and computer games. There are opportunities for people with qualifications at all levels, although some entrants are graduates.

Entry and training

It's not easy to generalise about suitable education and training routes into an area of work where there is so much variety. Although many roles in the industry don't actually require a degree, applicants for entry-level roles are often graduates. However, the development of more Apprenticeships across the industry (see below) means that alternative entry routes are opening up.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can provide structured training with an employer. Some examples of entry-level Apprenticeships at level 3 are those for publishing assistants, content creators, junior advertising creatives, production assistants and camera prep technicians. There are also Higher and Degree Apprenticeships for those aiming to work in more senior, creative and/or technical roles in areas such as broadcasting, media production, animation, VFX and

journalism.

In careers where short-term contracts are the norm (such as in film and TV), you may be able to take a Flexi-Job Apprenticeship whereby you are recruited and employed by an agency but undertake placements with different organisations.

For information on Apprenticeships, see the ScreenSkills website given under Further Information, or view:

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

www.careerswales.gov.wales

Courses

There are **college courses** in specialist subjects such as journalism and graphic design. There are also more general media studies, digital media and related courses, leading to qualifications such as GCSEs and AS/A levels, BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First, Level 1/Level 2 Tech Awards and Level 3 National qualifications, and OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National and Level 2 and 3 Cambridge Technical qualifications. These courses will give you an overview of the industry (and possibly an insight into more specific areas of work) but may or may not directly help you get a relevant job.

In England, from September 2024, some schools and colleges will be offering the **T level** in media, broadcast and production. This has occupational specialisms in, for example, content creation and production, and for creative media technicians.

There are **higher education courses** (foundation degrees, HNDs and degrees) in media studies, specialist areas of media and related subjects. Some people who work in the industry hold degrees in other subjects, but have undertaken a media-related **postgraduate** course or training.

When researching the wide range of media courses available, look carefully at what each offers; courses with similar titles can vary considerably in their content and emphasis. Investigate:

- the balance of practical work and theory
- whether the course has a particular vocational slant
- what links there are with employers
- whether there are work experience opportunities
- what former students have done after the course.

ScreenSkills operates a course endorsement scheme known as **ScreenSkills Select**; a number of further education, undergraduate and postgraduate courses relating to film and TV production, radio, animation and visual effects etc have been endorsed. You can search for these at: www.screenskills.com/education-training/screenskills-select.

Getting experience

Besides any qualifications you gain, you will need to offer practical evidence of your interest in, and commitment to, the area of work at which you are aiming. So try to gain relevant **work experience**; for example, some companies offer **internships**, and **virtual experience** is sometimes available where workplace opportunities are limited. Get involved in **school/college or community publications/radio** etc, or create your own content if possible.

Where possible, build a **portfolio of your own work**, such as writing or photography, or

a **showreel**, eg video clips, and develop relevant technical skills. Doing a few small **freelance contracts** can be a way of gaining experience and making some money, although freelancing tends to be more suited to those with a number of years' experience. It may also be possible to make an income from blogging or vlogging, for instance, through advertising revenue and/or brand partnerships.

Certain employers, more often larger ones (e.g. ITV and the BBC), sometimes offer various **trainee schemes** and **Apprenticeships**. However, it may be possible to find a basic-level job and **work your way up**, gaining qualifications and demonstrating your talent.

ScreenSkills operates **Trainee Finder** for those keen to get experience in the industry. If you have less than 12 months' paid work experience in film, children's TV or high-end TV, and are not currently in full-time education, you can apply to be contacted by employers looking for the right trainees. If successful, as well as a paid placement, you agree a training plan, will be in a good position to network and will receive training in certain topics. For details, view: www.screenskills.com/education-training/trainee-finder.

Creative Access - see www.creativeaccess.org.uk - is a scheme that provides paid internships and other support in the creative industries (including TV, film, radio, publishing and journalism) for talented young people from under-represented communities.

N.B. Be aware that some employers seek to exploit interns who are keen to gain experience in the media. However, the law has been tightened up on this and whether or not you should be paid depends on your employment status; for information, view: www.gov.uk/employment-rights-for-interns.

Further Information

ScreenSkills - the skills body for the screen-based industries. For career profiles and information on entry routes, training, careers events, bursaries, mentoring etc, view: www.screenskills.com

Discover! Creative Careers - to explore creative careers, including in film and TV, radio and photography, and to find out about workshops, events, work experience etc, view: <http://discovercreative.careers>

National Saturday Club - offers young people aged 13-16 opportunities to study film and media on Saturdays at local colleges, universities or museums. Find out whether a Club is operating in your area at: <https://saturday-club.org/national-saturday-club/>

Related Leaflets

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O 01 Advertising

O 07 Public relations

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