



FILM INDUSTRY CRASH COURSE

GETTING YOUR START IN
THE INDUSTRY



FILM INDUSTRY JOBS EXPLAINED

The film industry relies on film crews with a wide array of skills in the field of film and video production.

3 Types of Film Production Jobs

When it comes to film production, jobs in the motion picture industry fall into three categories: preproduction, production, and postproduction.

Preproduction is the stage that occurs before actual filming. Preproduction involves finalizing the shooting script, selecting locations, figuring out the production budget, assembling the creative team, and casting actors. Learn more about preproduction in our complete guide here.

Production is the stage of actual filming. Actors perform on camera, camera crews capture the action, lighting crews illuminate the set, sound crews capture audio, and creative designers oversee costumes, makeup, props, and scenery. The director oversees the entire operation.

Postproduction occurs after filming is complete. The postproduction process involves editing footage, creating sound effects, composing an original score, sourcing existing songs, and cutting a trailer.

Pre-Production

The following are jobs that are central to the preproduction of films:

Screenwriter: Most movies begin with a script. A screenwriter produces that script, either from an original idea or by adapting an existing text. The screenwriting process often carries over into production when the director requests rewrites on set.

Executive producer: An executive producer sources and secures the financing for a film production, either through an independent financing company, through a studio, or by financing it themselves. Executive producers act as the liaison between the film's financiers and the producers who ultimately run production and oversee postproduction.

Director: A film director is involved in each of the three stages of filmmaking and shepherds the entire creative process. The director assembles the core production crew, creates a vision for the film, makes casting choices, directs actors, and oversees all departments, and gives notes on the edit in postproduction.

Casting director: A casting director helps the director assemble a cast of actors to perform in the movie.

Line producer: A line producer works in both preproduction and production. They are in charge of the physical execution of a film, from location scouting to keeping the production budget, to handling the logistics of daily catering for crew members. Their work begins long before filming starts.

Location manager: The location manager works beneath the line producer to secure filming locations and obtain necessary permits. On a big film, they may have multiple assistants and a dedicated location scout.

Production

In addition to the director, screenwriter, line producer, and executive producers whose work carries over from preproduction into the production process, there are many jobs on the film production team:

Production manager: The production manager works under the line producer and oversees all aspects of physical production.

Assistant production manager: The assistant production manager reports to the production manager and assists them with various tasks, particularly when a film has multiple production units working at once.

Production coordinator: The production coordinator works under the line producer and production manager to execute plans involving location rentals, equipment rentals, catering, and calling actors to set.

Assistant directors: The first assistant director (1st AD) and second assistant director (2nd AD) report to both the director and the production manager. Their job is to handle logistics and keep things running smoothly for the director.

Production designer: The production designer reports directly to the film's director and oversees all visual design elements of a film, from set design to costumes to hair and makeup to props.

Art director: The production designer's second-in-command is the art director, who interfaces with the various artisans producing a film's visual design. They oversee the art department.

Set designer: The movie set designer works under the production designer and creates a film's sets.

Set decorator: The set decorator furnishes the set created by the set designer. The set decorator oversees a swing crew that includes set dressers, a leadman (the head set dresser), and a greensman (in charge of living plant material).

Construction coordinator: The construction coordinator leads a set construction team of carpenters and painters who execute the vision of the set designer.

Prop-master: The prop-master is in charge of props. Like a set designer, they report to the production designer, who reports to the director.

Costume designer: The costume designer works closely with the director and production designer (and perhaps even the screenwriter) to create appropriate costumes for the actors.

Key makeup artist: The key makeup artist oversees all makeup for actors in the film, collaborating with the key hairstylist and reporting to the production designer.

Key hairstylist: Within the hair and makeup department, the key hair stylist oversees a team of stylists and works with the key makeup artist. They report to the production designer.

Director of photography: Also known as a cinematographer, the DP is in charge of all camerawork and commands a large crew.

Camera operator: A camera operator works under a DP and executes shots that the director and DP call for and frame. They work with the first assistant camera, the second assistant camera, and, if necessary, a steadicam operator.

Gaffer: A gaffer is the chief lighting technician of a film. They work very closely with the director of photography.

Best boy: The best boy is the lead assistant to the gaffer. A best boy typically specializes in logistics and electrical needs.

Key grip: The key grip oversees the grip department, which sets up lighting and electrical rigging on a film set, working in concert with cinematographers and gaffers. A dolly grip specializes in camera dollies and crane shots.

Electrician: Because traditional film lights require enormous amounts of electricity, major film sets keep an electrician on hand to deal with lighting loads.

Production sound mixer: The production sound mixer supervises the sound recording on set.

Boom operator: The boom operator is a technician who holds a large boom microphone above actors performing in a scene.

Stunt coordinator: The stunt coordinator works with the director to execute stunts safely and convincingly.

Special effects coordinator: The on-set special effects coordinator helps ensure that shots are set up in a way that allows special effects to be added in postproduction.

Production assistants: PAs may work in any department. These are entry level jobs and the most accessible roles to anyone still in film school or just embarking on a film career.

Post-Production

Postproduction roles come into play after the official film shoot has wrapped. They include:

Postproduction supervisor: The postproduction supervisor functions like a line producer or production coordinator for the myriad tasks that occur during postproduction.

Editor: A film editor or video editor takes many hours of raw footage and cuts and pastes it into a coherent film. Directors and film editors work closely with one another to produce the product that audiences see on the big screen.

Colorist: A colorist performs both color correction and color grading to give the film a professional, artistic veneer.

Visual effects producer: A VFX producer is in charge of adding postproduction visual effects and motion graphics. They oversee a team that includes a visual effects supervisor, a VFX editor, and a compositor.

Post-Production (cont.)

Sound designer: The sound designer adds sound effects and atmospheric sounds to a feature film's audio track.

Dialogue editor: The dialogue editor assembles all the dialogue captured on set and may also oversee the rerecording of certain lines.

Composer: The film composer is one of the very last people to work on a movie. They typically create an original score for a movie that has mostly been edited.

Music supervisor: The music supervisor clears the rights to pre-existing recordings that a director wants to include in a film. They may also be involved in creating temp music that serves as a placeholder until the composer records an original score.

Music editor: The music editor works for the composer to execute their vision by synching and editing the music. Along with the music supervisor, the music editor often assembles the temp music.

Sound editor: The sound editor combines the three sources of audio—dialogue, music, and sound effects—into one multi-channel audio track that accompanies the final film.