

# Case Study: Film and Television Props Designer - Dexter

## What do you do?

I provide the props for film and television productions. I have a lot of carpentry and electrical experience. This means I can build some of the special props that may be needed for fantasy or futuristic scripts. The production company saves money by not having these things custom built at four or five times my cost.



## What is your background?

My job is a combination of my hobbies and interests and my film background. I spent my youth taking apart and rebuilding all of my parents' electronic equipment.

I also like to collect strange objects, and these often prove to be helpful in making props. My educational background includes film and media production, but I have found all my training and education to be useful.

## What characteristics do you need to be successful in your job?

You must be organised and ready to tailor the props to the actors. You should also think creatively and have the imagination to adapt props when necessary.

## What other jobs could you do using the skills from this job?

It's a very specialised profession, but if you develop a skill such as carpentry, and combine it with artistic skills, you can find other work. It's possible to become a buyer of rare objects.

## What changes will there be in the future?

There'll be more demand as the entertainment industry grows. Where there used to be just a few TV stations, satellite and cable offer many more, and cinemas commonly have eight or more screens. More productions means more crews will be needed.

The job will be similar, but the content will change as films reflect a different reality. For example, science fiction has developed a lot of different, computerised looks. Some specialities, such as scene design, painting and landscapes, will be replaced by computers, but physical props will always be needed for actors.

## Are there many opportunities to enter this career?

The field has grown enormously, with the development of new media such as home videos, interactive games and CD technology. There'll always be a need for our skills.

## What do you like about your job?

I enjoy being part of the creative process of making a film. You might be one of a hundred people working on a film set, but what you do is equally as important as what everyone else does. There's a real sense of teamwork.

You might find yourself working really hard for six to eight weeks and then you can take as much time off as you feel you need.

One other thing that I like is that the better you become at the job, the further you can go in this industry (which is very vast). You can move as quickly as you want.

## What do you dislike about your job?

There isn't much that I don't like. However, I don't enjoy having to clean up after each take.

## What advice would you give to someone interested in your career?

My best advice would be to watch a lot of films. And if you ever see something fantastic and it makes you wonder how they did it, just take the time and work it out - find out or ask someone.

### A day in the life

8:00 am - 8:30 am

Loading props for the day's travel.

8:30 am - 10:00 am

Preparing props at the office (eg, guns for an action film, champagne bottles for a wedding scene).

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

On-set; preparing props for each shot and cleaning up and putting away used props.

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Lunch.

Dealing with a crisis on-set: an actor is a vegetarian and won't eat meat in his hamburger. I have to cook a vegetable burger that looks like meat.

3:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Finishing shooting and cleaning up remaining props.