

Industrial/Commercial Photographer

Introduction

Industrial/commercial photographers take photos for industrial and/or commercial purposes. These may include close-up photos of machinery, time-lapse photography of industrial processes and photos for company publications and training materials.

Also known as

- Commercial Photographer
- Photographer, Industrial/Commercial



Work Activities

Photographers who work in industry or commerce carry out a wide range of photography. They may be employed in one of the following areas:

- Manufacturing.
- Research and development.
- Architecture and construction.
- Business.
- Education.

Their work differs according to the type of organisation they work for.

Industrial photographers may take photos of machinery and industrial processes.

Commercial photographers may take photos for use in publicity. Some photography departments in organisations often provide services to outside firms. This can extend the range of photographers' work.

Freelance photographers may be involved in similar kinds of work, but usually concentrate on the commercial aspects of the work, such as marketing goods or services. Some photographers specialise in areas such as aerial photography or architecture.

The photographer's technical expertise needs to cover lighting, equipment and other sophisticated techniques. Such techniques may include electronic imaging and computer-aided manipulation of photographs, which is popular for marketing purposes.

Once a photo has been taken, photographers use computer-imaging software to check image quality as well as retouch and edit the photos.

Industrial/commercial photographers usually need a driving licence because they often travel to various locations. They travel locally, nationally and even overseas. Photographers working on location may have to work in unusual conditions, such as on an oil rig.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

As an industrial/commercial photographer, you need:

- To be creative, but also technically minded.
- To be very accurate in your work.
- Good communication and organisational skills.

- Knowledge of photography techniques.
- The ability to use a wide range of cameras and lenses.
- An eye for detail, shape, colour and form.
- The ability to work to deadlines.
- To keep up to date with changing technology.
- Knowledge of computer imaging software and digital technology.

Self-employed or freelance industrial/commercial photographers will need business and marketing skills.

A driving licence is useful.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

Pay rates for industrial/commercial photographers vary depending on the sector of photography they work in, and whether they are employed or self-employed.

The pay rates given below are approximate.

Industrial/commercial photographers earn in the range of £16,000 - £19,000 a year, rising to around £24,500 - £32,000, with experience. Higher salaries can be awarded to more experienced photographers.

Industrial/commercial photographers may be paid an hourly rate. This can range from £7 to £15 per hour.

Bonuses may be awarded on top of a salary.

Incidents of unpaid work are high amongst photographers.

Hours of work

Working hours can vary. Some industrial/commercial photographers work regular office hours, usually over a 37-hour week, Monday to Friday. Others work irregular hours, which may include early starts, late finishes, and work at weekends and on public holidays.

What's happening in this work area?

Competition for photography posts is strong, as there are often more applicants than vacancies.

There is strong competition for freelance work.

Where could I work?

Employers include local and national government departments, universities, museums and firms in commerce and industry.

Opportunities for industrial/commercial photographers occur in towns and cities throughout the UK. However, opportunities are greater in London and the South East, where many media agencies are based.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for photographers to work on a self-employed, freelance basis, employed on short contracts.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in photography, advertising and design trade magazines and on websites such as the Association of Photographers (AOP).

Vacancies are also advertised on all the major job boards, on Universal Jobmatch, and at Jobcentre Plus.

It's a good idea to build up a network of relevant contacts, as not all photography jobs are advertised. Making speculative job applications to potential employers can be useful.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

The best way for a potential photographer to learn about the industry is by becoming either a full-time or freelance photographic assistant, although there is a lot of competition for these posts.

Alternatively, you can enter the industry by doing a course in photography. Full-time and part-time courses are available, leading to foundation degrees, HNDs or degrees in photography.

Some people get on to degree courses via a Foundation course.

Some people enter this career via an Advanced Level Apprenticeship.

The British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP) - the official qualifying body for professional photography - can provide information on training courses and membership.

Training

Training is on-the-job.

The Association of Photographers (AOP) also offers training and networking opportunities.

City & Guilds also offers qualifications in photography.

Progression

Photographers may be able to move to larger organisations or work overseas.

Many photographers become self-employed.

Qualifications

You don't always need qualifications to enter photography. However, some employers prefer you to have them.

To start an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

For entry to a relevant degree course, the usual requirement is:

- 2/3 A levels. Some courses may ask for passes in Art and in photography.
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C or above. You'll usually need English and Maths.

Alternatives to A levels include:

- 1/2 A levels. A pass in Art could be useful.
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C or above. Passes in English, Maths and Art may be required.

Alternatives to A levels include:

- A BTEC level 3 National Diploma in Art and Design.
- An Advanced Level Apprenticeship.
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma

For the International Baccalaureate Diploma, many courses will ask that you have Art at Higher level.

Many other qualifications are also accepted so check prospectuses for more details.

The usual entry requirements for a relevant Foundation course are:

- 1/2 A levels. You'll need an A level in Art or in an art-based subject.
- GCSEs at grade C or above in 4/5 subjects. Some courses ask that you have a pass in English.

For all relevant courses, having a portfolio of your photographic work will be very useful.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A-level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Skills/experience

This is an extremely competitive field. Relevant skills and a professional portfolio are usually required. Some photographers start their working careers as a photographic assistant.

Courses

Photography can be studied on a full- or part-time basis, or it can develop from a hobby. It is useful to update your skills by taking short courses in photographic techniques and methods such as those offered by City & Guilds.

If you don't have the qualifications needed to enter your chosen degree or HND course, a college or university Access course (eg, Access to Art and Design) could be the way in. No formal qualifications are usually required, but you should check individual course details.

They can lead to relevant degree/HND courses.

A full list of relevant qualifications is available on the Skillset website.

Intermediate Level Apprenticeships and Advanced Level Apprenticeships may be available in your area.

Universities and colleges of higher education (HE) will usually consider applications from candidates who don't meet their usual entry requirements, especially those with relevant experience. You should check the admissions policy of individual universities and HE colleges.

Distance learning

Relevant courses at various levels in photography are offered by a large number of centres, including the Open University, by distance learning.

Statistics

- 55% of those in occupations such as industrial/commercial photographer are self-employed.
- 22% work part-time.
- 5% have flexible hours.
- 20% of employees work on a temporary basis.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)

Tel: 0800 015 0400
Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
Website: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

- **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 9178000
Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
Website: www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships
- **City & Guilds**
Address: 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD
Tel: 020 7294 2468
Email: learnersupport@cityandguilds.com
Website: www.cityandguilds.com
- **Open University (OU)**
Tel: 0845 3006090
Website: www.open.ac.uk
- **Association of Photographers (AOP)**
Address: 21 Downham Road, London N1 5AA
Tel: 020 7739 6669
Email: info@aophoto.co.uk
Website: www.the-aop.org
- **Royal Photographic Society**
Address: Fenton House, 122 Wells Road, Bath BA2 3AH
Tel: 01225 325733
Email: reception@rps.org
Website: www.rps.org
- **British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP)**
Address: The Coach House, The Firs, High Street, Whitchurch, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 4SJ
Tel: 01296 642020
Email: info@bipp.com
Website: www.bipp.com
- **British Journal of Photography**
Publisher: Incisive Media
Email: support@apptitudemedia.co.uk
Website: www.bjp-online.com
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/

Related Careers

- Photographic Processing Assistant
- Digital Imaging Technician
- Fashion Photographer
- General Practice Photographer
- Medical Photographer
- Press Photographer
- Scientific Photographer
- Photographer