

Photographer

Introduction

As a Photographer you will take photos for a variety of uses. For example, you might photograph a news story, an operation or a wedding. You will use your skills to produce an image that records a moment in time.

Work Activities

There are many different types of Photographer, including:

- **portrait** - taking photographs of people, from new-born babies to adults, for a variety of reasons
- **property** - photographing people's property, so that they can advertise it in shop windows, brochures and on websites
- **medical** - produce photographs for patient care, medical education and medical research
- **wedding** - taking photographs that capture that very special day for the happy couple
- **fashion** - taking photos of clothes and related accessories, which are used to encourage people to buy them
- **press** - taking pictures for publication by local, regional and national newspapers, magazines, websites and news agencies. Some Photographers specialise in a particular area of press photography, such as sports, music, business or commercial.



Whatever type of Photographer you are, you will use your skills and knowledge to produce an image that records a moment in time.

The work you carry out can vary greatly depending on the area that you specialise in. Something that all professional photographers have in common though, is the technical equipment that you use. This could include:

- digital cameras
- computer imaging software
- specialist lighting equipment

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

You might travel locally, nationally and even (particularly for fashion photographers) overseas. This may involve spending periods of time away from home.

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

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Photographer, you will need:

- a creative mind
- knowledge of photography techniques
- the ability to use a wide range of cameras and lenses
- to keep up to date with changing technology
- the ability to work to deadlines
- an eye for detail, shape, colour and form
- good communication skills
- knowledge of computer imaging software and digital technology
- good organisational skills

Different areas of photography require different qualities and skills, for example:

- Medical Photographers need an interest in science and medicine
- Fashion Photographers need an awareness of fashion trends
- Press Photographers need to be aware of what makes a newsworthy picture

Self-employed or freelance Photographers will need business and marketing skills.

A driving licence is useful.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate:

- Starting: £19,000 - £21,500
- With experience: £24,000 - £28,000
- Senior Photographers earn £30,500

You might be paid an hourly rate. This can range from £8-£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. You may work regular office hours, usually over a 37 hour week, Monday to Friday. Or you could work irregular hours, which may include early starts, late finishes and work at weekends and on public holidays. If you are freelance then you can choose your own working hours.

Where could I work?

Photographers can find employment in many different areas, including:

- advertising
- newspaper journalism
- photography studios
- online photography

Opportunities for Photographers occur with employers in towns and cities throughout the UK.

Self-employment

While some companies and organisations offer permanent employment, most Photographers are self-employed and work on a contract or freelance basis.

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 Find a Job, 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 you 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, HNCs, HNDs or degrees in photography. Many online photography courses are also available.

Some people get on to degree courses from a foundation course.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details.

Some people enter this career from an Advanced Level Apprenticeship. You may be able to take a NVQ as part of your apprenticeship.

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

Training

If you would like some more training, Jessops have an academy that you can join. It has lots of different courses that you can take part in throughout the UK. For example, its level 1 qualification in photography is designed for people who have no experience in this industry. The course has a mixture of practical and theory aspects and lasts around six hours.

However, it is recommended that you bring your own camera, memory cards and batteries on the day. This is to ensure that you get the most out of your own camera.

The academy also runs events, workshops and experiences, which can really make you stand out from the crowd!

Other courses could be available in your area.

Work Experience

This is an extremely competitive field. Relevant skills and/or qualifications are usually preferred. Some people start out as employed or freelance Assistants.

You will need a portfolio of photographic work to enter courses and employment.

Qualifications

To start an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C/4 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 where some courses may ask for a passes in art and in photography
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above where you'll usually need English and maths

Alternatives to A levels include:

- BTEC level 3 qualifications

- an Advanced Level Apprenticeship
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma

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

To enter a relevant HNC, HND or foundation degree, you will usually need:

- 1/2 A levels where a pass in art could be useful
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above where passes in English, maths and art may be required

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/or qualifications are usually preferred. Some people start out as employed or freelance assistants.

You will need a portfolio of photographic work to enter courses and employment.

Courses

Photography can be studied full-time or part-time, 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, by distance learning.

Statistics

- 55% of those in occupations such as 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
- **ScreenSkills**
Skills for the creative industries
Email: info@creativeskillset.org
Website: www.creativeskillset.org
- **Creative Choices**
Publisher: Creative & Cultural Skills
Email: info@creative-choices.co.uk
Website: www.creative-choices.co.uk
- **Creative & Cultural Skills**
Skills for craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts
Email: london@ccskills.org.uk
Website: ccskills.org.uk
- **Institute of Medical Illustrators (IMI)**
Address: 12 Coldbath Square, London EC1R 5HL
Tel: 020 7837 2846
Email: info@imi.org.uk
Website: www.imi.org.uk
- **Design and Art Direction (D&AD)**
Address: Britannia House, 68-80 Hanbury Street, London E1 5JL
Tel: 020 7840 1111
Email: contact@dandad.org
Website: www.dandad.org
- **National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)**
Email: info@nctj.com
Website: www.nctj.com
- **The National Union of Journalists (NUJ)**
Tel: 020 78433700
Email: info@nuj.org.uk
Website: www.nuj.org.uk/work/careers/
- **Chartered Institute of Journalists (CIJ)**
Tel: 020 7252 1187
Email: memberservices@cioj.co.uk
Website: www.cioj.co.uk

- **Newspaper Society (NS)**
Email: ns@newspapersoc.org.uk
Website: www.newspapersoc.org.uk
- **Scottish Newspaper Society (SNS)**
Scottish enquiries
Website: www.scotns.org.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/
- **Jessops Academy**
Website: www.jessops.com/courses/academy

Related Careers

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