

Designer

Introduction

As a Designer you will make sure that things we use or need look good and are useful. You'll work in areas such as textiles, fashion, graphic design, product design or interior design.

Work Activities

As a Designer you will make sure that things we need or use look good and are useful. This covers a wide range of items, such as televisions, furniture, clothes, food wrappers and magazines.



There are a number of different design areas. These can be grouped in the following way:

- graphic design (using illustration, print and photography to get across a message)
- fashion and textile design (clothing, jewellery, shoes, carpets)
- product design (furniture, domestic appliances, cars, ceramics)
- interior design (homes, offices, exhibitions)

In each of these areas, you might work in industry, designing things for mass production, or on small-scale projects in workshops, either on your own or with just a few other people.

Whichever area you work in, you will go through similar stages in your work. You are first given a brief, which is a set of instructions for the project you are working on. You may then need to do some research. You must fully understand:

- who you are designing for
- what the customer wants
- how the customer will use the product
- which other products are on the market
- which are the best materials to use
- how much it will cost to make
- how easy it will be to produce

When you have all the information you need, you can then produce a series of drawings and rough sketches to show to the client. You'll usually use computer-aided design (CAD) in your work.

If these initial designs are approved, you will create a finished design and sometimes a working model or prototype. If you are working in industry, these will be passed on to production staff who use them to make the finished product. As a Designer working on small-scale projects you will often have to make the finished item yourself.

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 Designer, you'll need:

- creative and artistic skills
- to work well on your own and with others
- good communication, presentation and negotiation skills
- knowledge of design-related software
- good organisation and planning skills

- to work to deadlines and budgets
- to keep up to date with new design developments
- problem-solving skills

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £24,000 - £25,000
- With experience: £26,500 - £31,000
- Senior Designers earn £33,000 - £35,500

Hours of work

You will usually work 39 hours a week, Monday to Friday. Working hours for self-employed designers may be irregular, depending on how much work you have. However, late finishes and weekend work may be required from time to time, especially as deadlines approach.

Where could I work?

As a Designer you could work for:

- manufacturing companies involved in large-scale production
- firms involved in engineering and construction
- design consultancies

Opportunities for Designers occur in towns, cities and rural areas throughout the UK.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for freelance Designers in consultancy and fixed-term contract work. You can obtain this work through specialist recruitment agencies.

As a self-employed Designer you might work from home, or from studios or workshops, which you might share with other Designers.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in design industry magazines/journals, 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 design jobs are advertised. Making speculative job applications can also be effective.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

A common route into this career is from a foundation course in art and design followed by a degree, HND or foundation degree in a design-based subject. There are many different design courses. Some are broad-ranging and others focus on a specialised area, such as furniture design or interior design.

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

An Advanced Level Apprenticeship is also a great place to start. Take a look at our information article

'Apprenticeships - how do I apply' for more details.

Training

Once in employment, it may be possible to work towards qualifications in design.

Progression

Some Designers work their way up from starting out as a Design Assistant.

Some Designers move into senior roles or become Creative Directors.

Work Experience

Skills gained as an Assistant in a design studio or workshop, or in a design consultancy are valued.

Experience in related fields such as advertising or marketing is also useful. Commercial awareness and an understanding of the industry you wish to work in is an advantage.

To enter the work or relevant courses, you normally need to have a portfolio of work demonstrating your creative ability.

Qualifications

To get onto an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, including English and maths, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

The usual entry requirements for a relevant Foundation course are:

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

Alternatives to A levels include:

- a BTEC level 3 qualification in art and design or graphic design
- City & Guilds level 2 qualification in art & design 2D and 3D techniques
- a Design Advanced Level Apprenticeship
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma

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

To enter any course in art and design, you'll need a portfolio of your work.

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

Skills gained as an assistant in a design studio or workshop, or in a design consultancy are valued.

Experience in related fields such as advertising or marketing is also useful. Commercial awareness and an understanding of the industry you wish to work in is an advantage.

To enter the work or relevant courses, you normally need to have a portfolio of work demonstrating your creative ability.

Courses

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.

It's also possible to do a part-time Foundation course in Art and Design, which leads to a degree or HND course. Higher National Certificate (HNC) courses are also available part-time, often in the evenings and/or in the daytime.

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

Distance learning

Relevant courses in art and design subjects, at various levels, are offered by a large number of centres, by distance learning.

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
- **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
- **Chartered Society of Designers (CSD)**
Email: info@csd.org.uk
Website: www.csd.org.uk
- **Getting into Art & Design Courses**
Author: James Burnett Publisher: Trotman
Website: trotman.co.uk/our-books/getting-into-art-and-design-courses/
- **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

- **craft&design**
Address: PO Box 5, Drifffield, East Yorkshire, YO25 8JD
Tel: 01377 255213
Website: www.craftanddesign.net
- **Crafts Council**
Address: 44a Pentonville Road, Islington, London N1 9BY
Tel: 020 7806 2500
Email: reception@craftscouncil.org.uk
Website: www.craftscouncil.org.uk
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/
- **Wales Arts International (Welsh Enquiries)**
Address: Bute Place, Cardiff, UK, CF10 5AL
Tel: 029 2044 1320
Email: info@wai.org.uk
Website: www.wai.org.uk
- **Hiive**
Hiive is the online professional network for creative people.
Website: app.hiive.co.uk/

Related Careers

- Medical Illustrator
- Design Assistant
- Fashion Designer
- Graphic Designer
- Artworker
- Metal Engraver
- Visual Merchandiser
- Commercial Illustrator
- Signmaker
- Ceramics Designer
- Footwear Designer
- Furniture Designer
- Product Designer
- Vehicle Designer
- Interior Designer
- Jewellery Designer
- Packaging Designer
- Textile Designer
- Costume Designer
- Theatre Designer
- Musical Instrument Technician
- Picture Researcher
- Technical/Scientific Illustrator
- Model Maker
- Picture Framer
- Illustrator
- Artist
- CGI Artist
- VFX Artist
- Nostalgist