

# PROSPECTS

Job profile

## Graphic designer

**As a graphic designer you'll need to listen to clients and understand their needs before making design decisions**

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A graphic designer works on a variety of products and activities, such as websites, advertising, books, magazines, posters, computer games, product packaging, exhibitions and displays, corporate communications and corporate identity, i.e. giving organisations a visual brand.

You'll work to a brief agreed with the client, creative director or account manager, and will develop appropriate creative ideas and concepts for the client's objectives.

The work demands creative flair, up-to-date knowledge of industry software and a professional approach to time, costs and deadlines.

## Responsibilities

Your typical responsibilities as a graphic designer include:

- meeting clients or account managers to discuss the business objectives and requirements of the job
- estimating the time required to complete a job and providing quotes for clients
- developing design briefs that suit the client's purpose
- thinking creatively to produce new ideas and concepts and developing interactive design
- using innovation to redefine a design brief within time and cost constraints
- presenting finalised ideas and concepts to clients or account managers
- working with a range of media, including computer-aided design (CAD), and keeping up to date with emerging technologies
- proofreading to produce accurate and high-quality work
- demonstrating illustrative skills with rough sketches and working on layouts ready for print
- commissioning illustrators and photographers
- working as part of a team with printers, copywriters, photographers, stylists, illustrators, other designers, account executives, web developers and marketing specialists.

## Salary

- Starting salaries for junior graphic designers can be in the region of £15,000 to £19,000. Once you've gained some experience, this can rise to £27,000.
- At a middle level, you can expect to earn £25,000 to £35,000.
- Salaries for senior graphic designers or creative leads range from £35,000 to £55,000. A creative director can make £60,000+ a year.
- If you work as a freelancer, you can earn anything between £200 and £400 a day with experience. You'll be able to charge more once you have an impressive track record and recommendations.

Salaries vary widely depending on the sector of employment, location and your experience and reputation. The best paid jobs are usually in London and other large cities. In-house design teams tend to offer higher salaries than in design agencies.

Income figures are intended as a guide only.

## Working hours

Working hours are typically 37 hours a week, usually with some flexibility around start and finish times. You'll likely have to work extra hours when deadlines are approaching, including working into the early hours to get a job finished.

Part-time work opportunities do exist, but may be hard to find. You'll need several years' experience and established professional contacts

to go self-employed.

## What to expect

- It's likely you'll be based in a shared studio as some jobs involve working in teams, although you may also work alone on occasions. If you're a freelancer you could share offices, rent studio space or work from home.
- Design work often involves sitting and working at a computer for long periods of time.
- Job satisfaction comes from creating high-quality artwork and building a solid reputation.
- Jobs are available in major cities and towns, with advertising agencies predominantly based in London, the South East, Manchester and Leeds. There's also a demand for British graphic designers internationally with opportunities in Europe, Japan, Australia and the USA, but it's advisable to gain at least one year of work in the UK before seeking work abroad.
- Although work is mostly studio-based, travel within the working day to meet clients may be required. Working away from home, however, is rare.

## Qualifications

Relevant subjects for graphic design work include those that involve visual arts. In particular, a degree or HND in the following subjects may increase your chances:

- 3D design
- communication design
- film/television
- fine art
- graphic design
- illustration
- photography
- visual art.

Any design-based course will give you a good grounding and knowledge of design, art history and printing techniques.

Some roles don't require a degree or HND, as job offers may be based on the standard of portfolio work and not on educational qualifications. However, progress without formal training is extremely difficult, and the vast majority of graphic designers have higher qualifications.

A pre-entry postgraduate qualification isn't needed, but pre-entry experience is essential.

## Skills

Apart from technical and drawing skills, you will need to show:

- passion and enthusiasm for design, with a creative flair
- a flexible approach when working in a team
- excellent communication skills to interpret and negotiate briefs with clients
- good presentation skills and the confidence to explain and sell ideas to clients and colleagues
- time management skills and the ability to cope with several projects at a time
- accuracy and attention to detail when finalising designs
- being open to feedback and willing to make changes to your designs
- effective networking skills to build contacts.

## Work experience

Internship or placement experience is extremely useful, especially if you have a reference who can recommend you and provide evidence of what you've done. The most valuable work experience comes from involvement in a live project, along with building a portfolio of your work.

Having your portfolio assessed while at university can be helpful as it will give you the chance to talk confidently about your work, which you'll need to do at job interviews. A student assessment scheme is offered by the International Society of Typographic Designers (ISTD) (<http://www.istd.org.uk/>). Any experience that allows you to practice your presentation skills will also be invaluable.

# Employers

The majority of vacancies are found in agencies specialising in advertising design, including identity and event branding or corporate communication.

Other employers include publishers, design groups, magazines, multimedia companies, local government, computer games companies, educational establishments, television and the packaging industry.

Look for job vacancies at:

- CampaignJobs (<https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/jobs>)
- Creativepool (<http://creativepool.com/>)
- Creative Review (<http://www.creativereview.co.uk/>)
- Design Jobs Board (<http://www.designjobsboard.com/>)
- Design Week Jobs (<http://jobs.designweek.co.uk/>)

As well as looking on agency websites, it can be beneficial to register with a specialist design recruitment agency, such as Gabriele (<http://www.gabrieleskelton.com/>).

It's common to make speculative applications, either for internship positions or junior designer roles. Recruitment agency Represent has compiled The Ideal Candidate (<http://idealcandidate.represent.uk.com/home>), where some of the leading studios share what they're looking for and what you can do to make sure you stand out.

Other tips for making speculative approaches include:

- matching your portfolio to the design agency - research the agency and select relevant, appropriate pieces
- create an effective website and business card
- make sure any images you send are clear, not pixelated and that the PDF is no bigger than 8 to 10MB
- address your email to a named person.

Get more tips on how to find a job (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/how-to-find-a-job>), create a successful CV and cover letter (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters>), and prepare for interviews (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips>).

## Professional development

Most learning is on the job, except for formal training in industry-specific software. As a graphic designer, you'll need to be skilled in using a variety of packages such as InDesign, QuarkXPress, Illustrator, Acrobat and Dreamweaver.

Some employers will fund training courses for you, but it's common for freelance and self-employed designers to pay for themselves. It's likely you'll learn new skills to meet the demands of a particular project. Relevant courses are available from creative organisations such as D&AD (<http://www.dandad.org/>). You'll learn throughout your career as you keep up to date with advancements in graphic technology.

Membership of professional bodies can enhance your knowledge by providing access to useful resources, advice and training. Relevant organisations include the Chartered Society of Designers (CSD) (<https://www.csd.org.uk/>) and ISTD.

You may choose to work towards chartership with the CSD. To achieve chartered designer status you need to prove you're operating professionally and that you meet required competences. The process involves a professional portfolio and review. Find out more at CSD: Chartership (<https://www.csd.org.uk/chartership/>).

## Career prospects

Progression from junior graphic designer is possible within two to three years, with the first few jobs acting as stepping stones. At this stage, developing a reputation, networking and making contacts are important.

Successful designers may be in a position to apply for a senior designer post after three to five years. In large design partnerships, it may be possible to achieve promotion from designer to management positions, such as studio manager or creative director.

In general, career development depends on frequent job movement to widen your experience and develop your portfolio. You'll have to think strategically about career moves and consider the development opportunities within each role.

It's possible to become self-employed within five to ten years of your first job, if you've built up a good reputation. Gaining chartered status with the CSD can help with career progression as it shows you're working at a specific professional level.

Written by AGCAS editors

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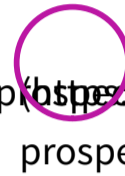
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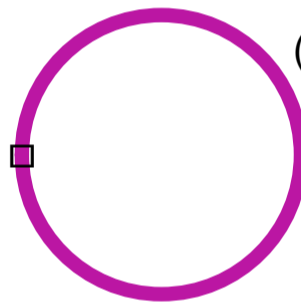


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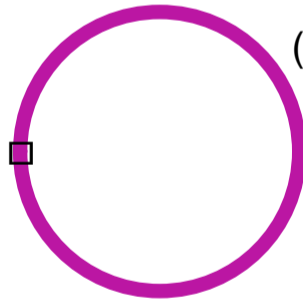
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