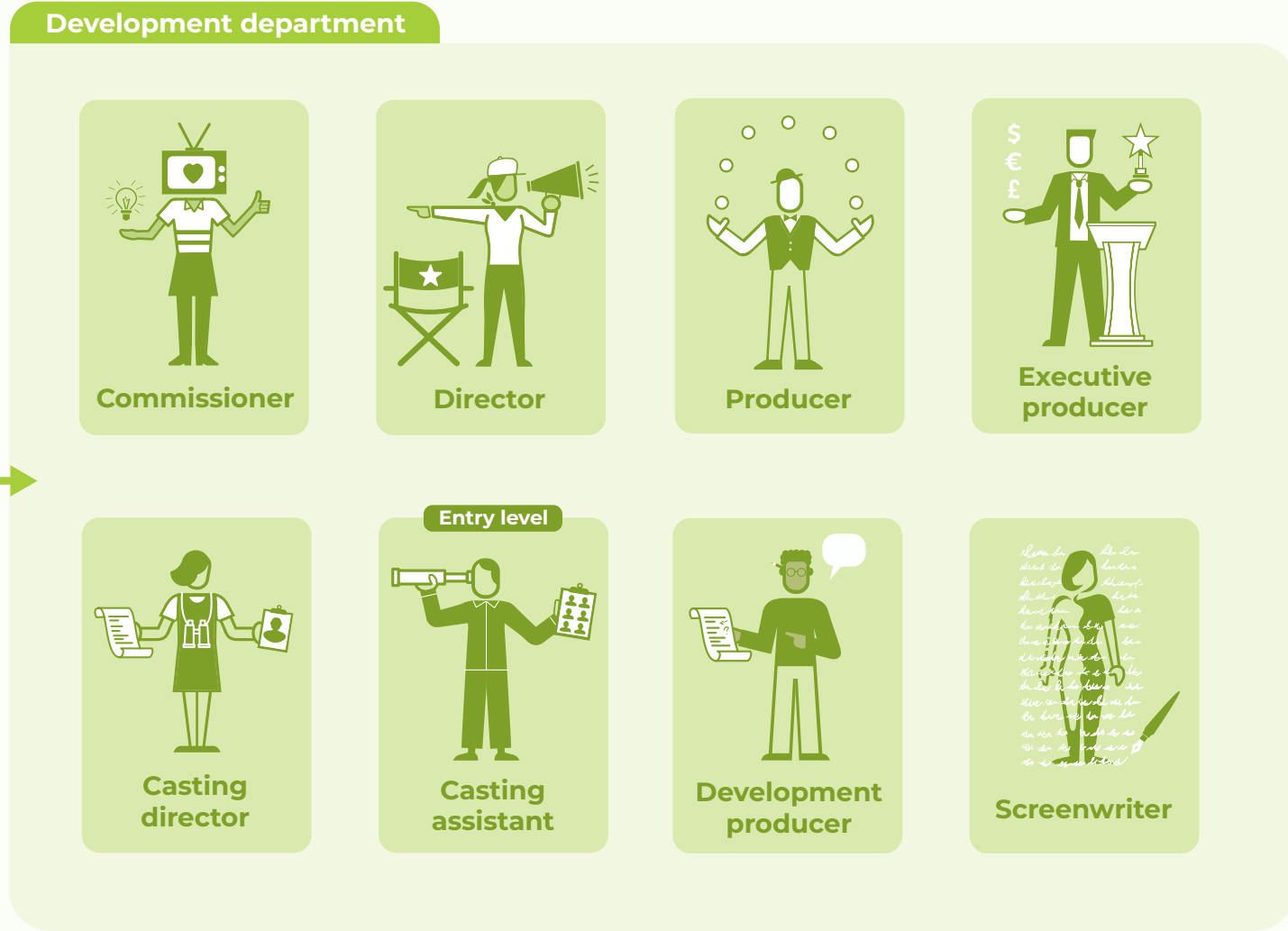
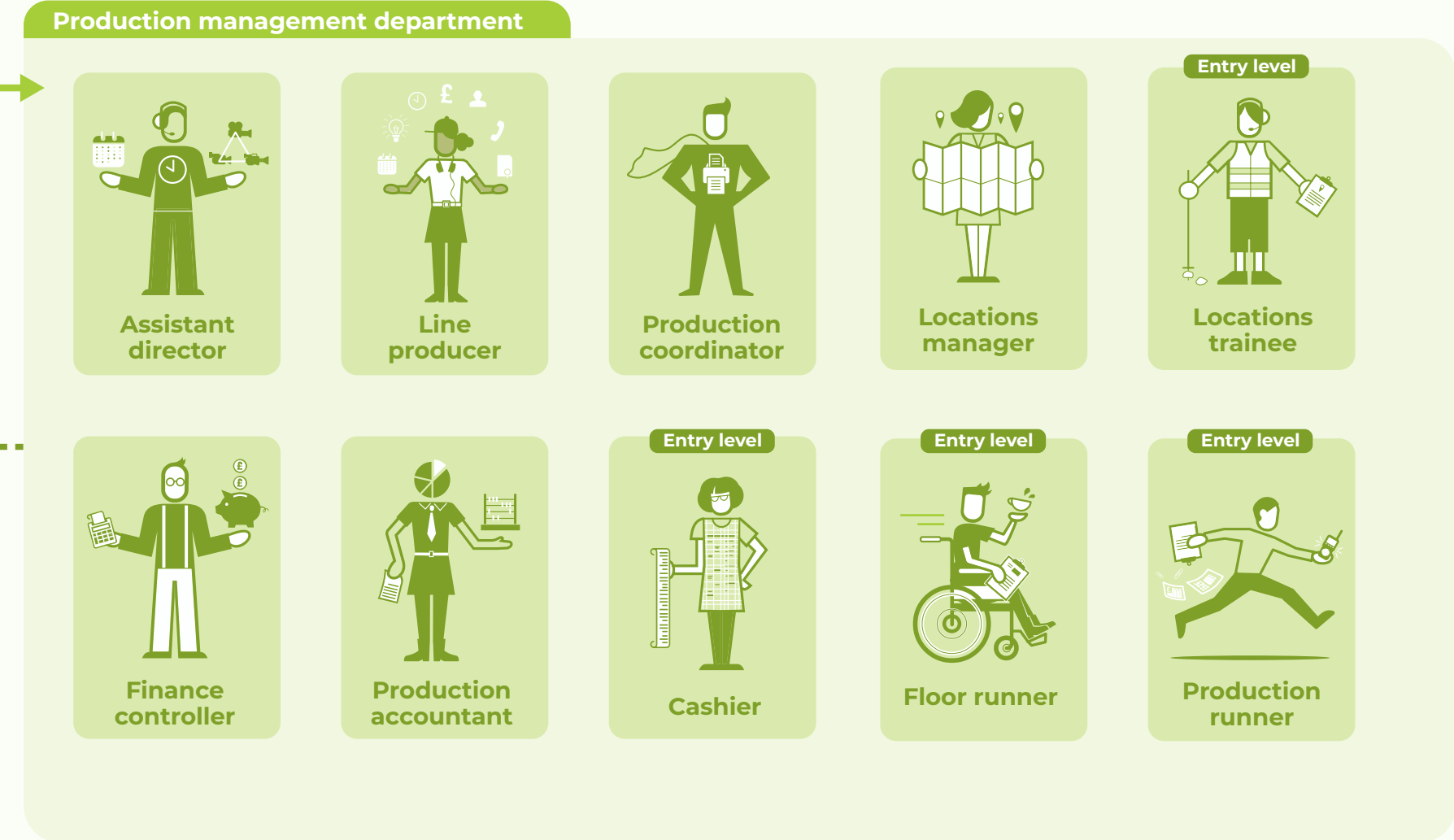


Go to our *Film and TV drama: idea to screen map* to see how different types of production are developed and made

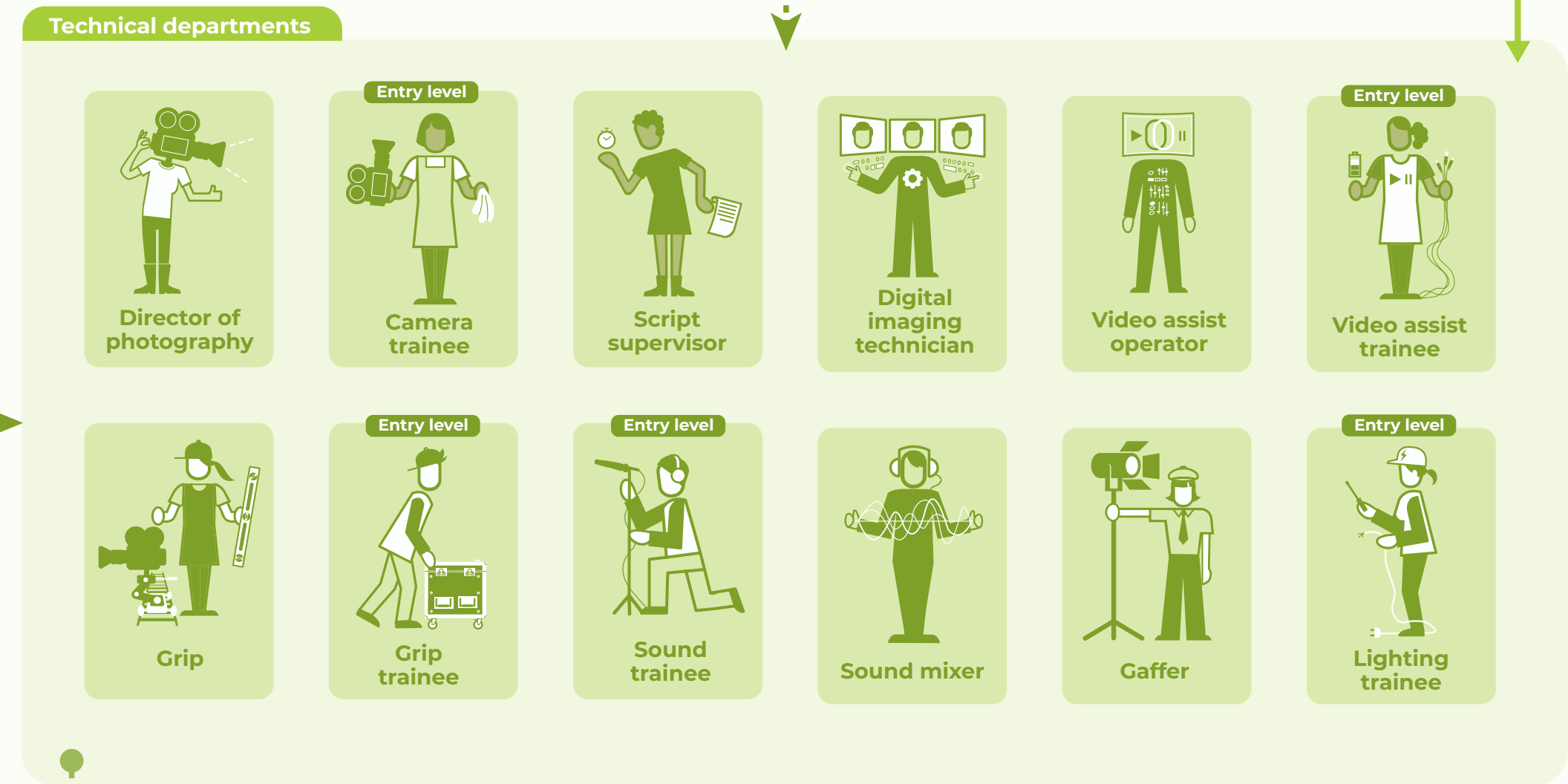
Develops the idea into a script and raises the money



Responsible for detailed production planning



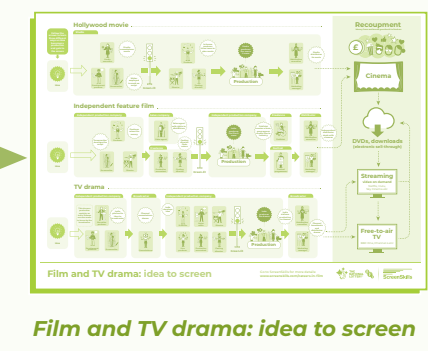
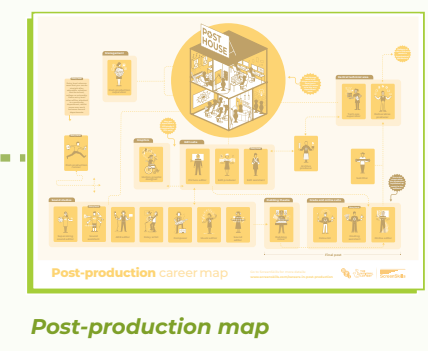
Frames the shots and captures the action



Chooses the look of the drama and builds the sets

Go to our *Post-production map* to find out how the drama is edited, shaped and polished into the final product

Go to our *Film and TV drama: idea to screen map* to learn how the finished drama is sold, marketed and screened



Film and TV Drama career map

Go to ScreenSkills for more details:
[screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama](https://www.screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama)



Film and TV drama: production

From the much-loved *James Bond* and *Harry Potter* films to great TV series like *Peaky Blinders* and *Bridgerton*, UK film and TV drama is famous around the world. It's big business too. Film and high-end TV (TV that costs more than £1m per broadcast hour to make) is a growing industry.

Despite a period of suspended production followed by a boom in the pandemic, and a drop in production due to the US strikes in 2023, production values in 2024 exceeded pre pandemic levels and the sector continues to grow.

The success of the sector is due partly to technology. The ability to stream dramas over the internet has had an enormous impact on the industry. Less than 20 years ago, films made for cinemas tended to be financed and distributed differently to those made for TV. Big-budget UK films were funded by US studios, TV dramas were funded by broadcasters, while smaller, independent films were financed by multiple sources. (See ScreenSkills career map *Film and TV drama: idea to screen* to understand this in detail. screenskills.com/starting-your-career/career-maps)

Today, the distinction between film and TV drama is less marked, as streaming giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime buy and produce both. It's now possible to watch a TV series all in one go, and films designed for the big screen can be viewed on laptops, tablets and phones. The popularity of streaming (nine out of ten people in the UK use streaming services) partly accounts for the rapid growth in the film and TV drama industry.

Who makes film and TV drama?

Many UK dramas are made by independent production companies or 'indies', which means a company that is not controlled by a TV broadcaster. *Ghosts*, for example, is broadcast on BBC One and made by Monumental Television. *The Phantom of the Opera* film was made by a collection of indies, including Baby Cow Films and Water & Power Productions. As well as films and high-end TV, there are other types of TV drama with smaller

that creates them.

Film and TV drama is an art form that brings together photography, writing, acting, music, costume, art and so much more. Working in film and TV drama can give you the opportunity to work with colleagues who have a wide range of skills. Organisers, accountants, writers, electricians, carpenters, artists, musicians and costume makers all come together on a drama and work towards the same goal. For some, there is no better feeling.

Working freelance

Most people who work in film and TV drama work on a freelance basis. This is because a drama tends to be made on a project-by-project basis (except for continuing dramas). A drama is made once it's 'greenlit', namely when all the business deals and funding arrangements have been put into place. The cast and crew are then recruited - and disbanded as soon as the drama has been made. Depending on your role and the length of the drama, you could be working on a production for just a few months and then find yourself looking for work again.

There can be great joy in working on a project-by-project basis in this way. Every job is different. You always meet new people. You have periods of intense work followed by times of freedom and rest, which suits some people well. You are unlikely to get bored.

If job security is very important to you, then freelance work is not to be recommended. But many people have long, rewarding and lucrative careers working in this way. ScreenSkills supports people learning how to freelance successfully. Go to screenskills.com/developing-your-career/freelance-toolkit to learn more.

Pay

Bectu, the media and entertainment union, publishes ratecards that state the recommended pay for specific roles. Check them out. The rates for starting out are weekly for a 55-hour week and in-line with the current minimum wage. But do bear in mind that these are freelance rates, so there is no sick pay and no pay

during the times you're not working.

If you manage to work your way up to the top, it's possible to end up being well paid.

Bectu recommends over £2,000 per 55-hour week for a location manager on a feature film or high-end TV drama, for example.

How to get in

There is no set route for entering the film and TV drama industry. The way in depends on your interests, circumstances and the role itself.

The first step is to watch as much film and TV drama as you can, and make sure you concentrate on the credits. This is where all the different roles and the people that do them are listed. Think critically. Use the online database IMDb for research. Identify the people whose work you admire.

Do some e-learning

ScreenSkills offers a range of free courses for people wanting to find their way into the screen industries. *From script to screen: an introduction to how scripted content gets made* is a great way to learn about film and TV drama production. There's also a course on *Getting into the screen industries* and a *Work well* series. Find e-learning on the ScreenSkills website and check out the entry-level training. (screenskills.com/online-learning)

Build a showreel or portfolio

Get as many practical skills as you can by volunteering in ways relevant to your chosen role. Help at live events and festivals if you are interested in locations. Work on a make-up concession stand if make-up's your thing. Work for hospital radio if you're interested in sound, and practise recording and editing wherever you can.

For craft and some technical roles, it's essential to build a portfolio. Keep working on your craft, whether it's making costume, creating graphic art or shooting films. Put your work together in a portfolio or showreel. Check out expert advice on how to do this at screenskills.com/starting-your-career/building-your-portfolio.

The vocational training route

Each year, ScreenSkills runs Trainee Finder, a year-long programme that's invaluable for finding a role within film and TV drama. Trainee Finder matches talented individuals with dramas. Throughout the year, trainees can apply for paid placements in their chosen department on UK productions, take industry masterclasses and find a mentor. Find out more at screenskills.com/training/trainee-finder.

For technical roles, it's worth trying to find work with kit hire companies such as Panavision, Provision and ARRI Rentals. You will learn a lot about the gear needed for different productions and have the opportunity to build up contacts. For the same reasons, if you want to work in costume, try to find work with a costume house. An aspiring casting assistant might want to work with a talent agency. It all helps.

The university route

It isn't necessary to have degree to enter the film and TV drama industries, but it's useful for some roles. If you want to be a production designer, you might want a degree in art or production design. A degree in sound engineering would be handy if you wanted to be a sound mixer. Go to the ScreenSkills website to check out ScreenSkills Select courses (screenskills.com/training/screenskills-select). ScreenSkills recognises courses with its ScreenSkills Select award where they have strong links with the film and TV industries as well as offering training in the relevant software and dedicated time to building a portfolio.

The apprenticeship route

Apprenticeships are jobs with training. They're a great opportunity to earn while you learn. There is a growing number of apprenticeships available within the TV industry, but they're not yet widespread. Take a look at the websites of broadcasters like the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 to see what's available. If you're looking for a craft role, such as hair and make-up or costume, or a technical role, like lighting trainee, it's well worth getting an apprenticeship in those roles outside film and TV. You will then have qualifications, experience and a portfolio or showreel that will stand you in good

stead when finding a job in drama.

The runner route

Many people start their careers in film and TV drama as runners. This helps them develop contacts and gives a good overview of how a production works. Write to production companies and ask how they recruit runners. Join Facebook groups such as People in TV: Runners. Look at the ScreenSkills job board. TV Watercooler gives advice from production companies on how they recruit runners. Some broadcasters advertise for runners on their websites. Check out the production runner profile on the ScreenSkills website - screenskills.com/job-profiles/roles/production-runner.

Network

Whatever route you choose, you are going to need to get to know people who work in film and TV drama. Networking is a skill and it can be daunting. ScreenSkills can help you get started. It offers events where people interested in careers in film and TV drama can meet people in the industry. Go to the Training, events and opportunities section of ScreenSkills' website (screenskills.com/training-and-opportunities) to find them.

You can network digitally too. Create a LinkedIn profile. See if there are Facebook pages or other social media groups for people making films or TV in your area. There might even be groups for runners and trainees. Join them. Create a ScreenSkills profile. Engage with production companies' social media accounts. Film offices like Wales Screen, Northern Ireland Screen and Screen Yorkshire have free crew databases. Sign up to them when you're ready to be taken on.

Enjoy

Working in film and TV drama isn't the easiest career to find your way into, but if you love it with a passion, you will get there. Persevere. Be prepared to start at the bottom and work your way up, and you'll be rewarded with work that is fulfilling, creative and fun.

Go to screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama and click on your chosen role for detailed career information.

Looking for further advice?

If you're interested in a career in film and TV drama check out these websites to find out more:

ScreenSkills, for information on careers screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama and ScreenSkills Select courses, screenskills.com/starting-your-career/screenskills-select

BBC, jobs and apprenticeships: careers.bbc.co.uk

Royal Television Society, bursaries, jobs and training schemes in the TV industry: rts.org.uk/education-and-training-pages/education-training

The Institution of Engineering and Technology, membership organisation with careers information in engineering: theiet.org/career

Studios and stage space, list of UK studios compiled by the BFI: britishfilmcommission.org.uk/plan-your-production/studios

Bectu, the media and entertainment union: bectu.org.uk

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Development

Commissioner
Decides which dramas get made for their TV channel. When they have commissioned a production company to make a drama, they give it money up front and keep track of the production's progress.

Director
Is in charge on set. Before filming, directors establish the style of the drama and work with the casting director to decide on the actors. On set, they are focused on getting the best photography and performance from the actors. After filming, they lead on the editing.

Producer
Makes sure the film gets made. Producers raise the funds and drive the business deals to produce the film. They appoint the director, line producer and other heads of department. They have overall responsibility for the practical, financial and creative aspects of making a film.

Executive producer
Is the leader of a whole TV drama. Executive producers acquire screenplays for development. They pitch ideas to the TV commissioners and deal with the legal, financial and marketing aspects of the TV series. On a film, the role is different: executive producers are often responsible for raising the money.

Casting director
Finds the stars to bring the film or TV drama to life. Casting directors understand the art of acting. They read scripts, meet the producers and directors, get a feel for the roles and find the actors.

Casting assistant
Offers general help with finding actors. They call agents to check actors' availability. They help with screen tests, operating the camera and doing general office duties.

Development producer
Finds scripts and gets them into good-enough shape to be commissioned by a TV channel or made into a feature film. Development producers read screen plays, make notes and pitch to commissioners.

Screenwriter
Writes and develops screenplays. Screenwriters either write from their

own ideas or are commissioned to write from someone else's.

Production management

Assistant director
Supports the director by planning filming schedules to ensure an efficient shoot. In pre-production, assistant directors analyse scripts to see what will be needed in terms of cast, locations and equipment. During filming, they manage the set, allowing the director to focus on the actors and framing the shots.

Line producer
Is responsible for all members of the crew and their contracts. Line producers hire the crew, allocate the money and make sure the filming is done safely, creatively, on budget and on time.

Production coordinator
Runs the production office. Production coordinators organise equipment, travel, accommodation and work permits and visas for cast and crew. They prepare essential paperwork like shooting schedules, call sheets, scripts and daily progress reports.

Locations manager
Finds the most suitable location for filming. After a location is approved by the director, locations managers negotiate the contract with owners. During filming, they manage all aspects of the location, from parking and catering to making sure noise levels don't get too high for filming.

Locations trainee - entry level
Assists with the day-to-day running of the site. Locations trainees might pick up litter, cordon off areas or set up green rooms. They help with paperwork and handle the department's petty cash.

Finance controller
Oversees the team that makes sure a production is completed within budget and that money is spent properly. Finance controllers are often employed by whoever is investing in the production, be it a studio, financier or broadcaster. They have a high level of authority.

Production accountant
Helps the producer prepare budgets and estimate costs. During filming, production accountants oversee all payments, manage payroll and provide daily or weekly cost reports

Cashier - entry level
Helps production accountants keep accurate financial records. Cashiers primarily deal with expense claims, but also handle petty cash, process data and do jobs like photocopying and tea-making.

Floor runner - entry level
Runs errands, conveys messages, provides food, makes drinks, drives and delivers kit and does other ad-hoc tasks. Floor runners are often responsible for transport to and from unit base to set.

Production runner - entry level
Does office jobs like copying and distributing call sheets, answering the phone, filing paperwork and entering data. Production runners manage a float and keep everyone stocked up with snacks and drinks.

Craft

Production designer
Responsible for the overall look of the production. Production designers imagine the screenplay visually, working with the director, costume, lighting, VFX and graphic design. They draw sketches showing mood, atmosphere, lighting, composition, colour and texture for the art director to develop. They draw up a budget.

Production buyer
Shops for the props. Production buyers work closely with set decorators to source anything that's needed for the action and look of a set.

Construction manager
Looks after the building of studios and sets. Construction managers interpret the drawings of the production designer and work out how to build them in a safe and environmentally-friendly way. They are responsible for hiring the carpenters, painters, riggers and plasterers. They are also responsible for ensuring all the materials are recycled as far as possible.

Costume designer
Designs, creates and hires the costumes for the cast. Costume designers draw mood boards of characters and then organise the sourcing of costumes. Once fittings are completed, costume designers are needed on set whenever there are new actors or new looks.

Costume trainee - entry level
Helps production accountants, order supplies, pack costumes and cut patterns. Costume trainees might carry out research for the costume designer, take photos of garments and note changes in the continuity book. During the shoot, they make sure the outfits are ready for the actors: ironing, cleaning and making simple alterations.

Set decorator
Creates the background scenery on a production. Set decorators work to the vision of the production designer and source what's needed for the walls, floors, vehicles and furniture. Before shooting starts, they dress the set and are responsible for taking it apart or 'striking' it once it is no longer needed.

Prop master
Runs the department that produces, stores and transports the props. Prop masters work out what props need to be made and then recruit carpenters, artists and prop makers to create them. When shooting is finished, they return or dispose of props.

Art department trainee - entry level
Does basic admin and fetches supplies. On smaller productions, art department trainees might have the opportunity take measurements or even help with the construction of scale models for sets. During filming, they're on hand to help with any last-minute requests.

Hair and make-up designer
Oversees the design and application of hair and make-up. Hair and make-up designers design the look, source the products and hire the team. They work with the camera department to see how hair and make-up looks under different lighting conditions, and keep records of any changes. On larger features and in the US, hair and make-up designers are two separate roles.

Hair and makeup trainee - entry level
Helps put together kit bags, keeps brushes clean and maintains continuity of characters during production by updating notes and taking photographs. Hair and make-up trainees might do basic hair and make-up for crowd scenes or minor characters, but mostly will learn by watching more experienced staff.

Technical

Director of photography (DoP)
Responsible for the photographic heart of a production. DoPs read the screenplay and work closely with the director to discuss the look and feel of a film. They then research how to create the look through lighting, framing and camera movement, and oversee all these areas. On smaller productions, they shoot as well.

Camera trainee - entry level
Starts with simple tasks like making tea and coffee and works up to using the clapperboard and changing camera batteries. Camera trainees may be involved with camera and lens tests, setting up equipment, marking actors' positions and keeping records.

Script supervisor
Makes sure scenes are filmed in a way that ensures post-production has what it needs to tell a coherent tale. In pre-production, script supervisors analyse the script, thinking about consistency for cast, actions, wardrobe and props. Once filming starts, they check that no dialogue is overlooked and the actions and actors' eye-lines match. They record what's been shot, detailing camera information and scene and slate numbers.

Digital imaging technician (DIT)
Helps the director of photography with shooting in digital as opposed to film, advising them on contrast, brightness and exposure. DITs also advise the camera crew on shots in progress and do quality control checks on the recorded material. They apply colour to the raw footage to give an idea of how it will look when colour is added in post-production.

Video assist operator (VAO)
Displays the filmed footage on video monitors so the director can see exactly what's been shot. VAOs use software for the recording and playback to simulate visual effects. They can also edit the scenes on set to check for continuity and timing.

Video assist trainee - entry level
Arrives at set early to help unload the vans, lay cables and set up the equipment. Video assist trainees help the VAO check the compatibility of the playback systems and test all the equipment. They make sure batteries are charged and that the footage is backed up on a drive.

Careers in Film and TV drama: production



For detailed careers information on each job role, go to screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama