

Becoming A Graphic Designer: A Guide to Careers in Design

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How Many Graphic Designers Are There?

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, there are 557,000 designers in the United States, which includes architects and interior designers. But in a report by Strategies for Management, Inc. of the total number of designers in the United States, 160,000 are graphic designers.

What Do They Earn?

According to the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), annual salaries range from \$16,000 for a junior designer to \$32,000-\$60,500 for an art director to \$124,000 and upwards for a creative director. Instructors Note: Students obtaining first positions in western New York have received salaries ranging from \$22,000 to \$32,000.

Job Divisions

Graphic Designers are employed in virtually all kinds of businesses, industries, and institutions.

In House Departments:

Art Department
Art and Design Department
Art Services Department
Design Department
Design Services Department
Creative Group
Graphics Group

Proprietary or Independent Design Firms:

Advertising Agency
Graphic Design Studio
Architectural Design
Design Firm
Interior Design Studio
Scenic Art Agency
Freelancers

Job Titles

The titles given to specific jobs and tasks throughout the design field vary according to the hierarchy of the specific company, institution, or firm—for example, an art director for one company may be a design director at another.

Managerial Level:

Creative Director
Design Director
Corporate Art Director
Creative Services Manager
Design Manager

Creative or Design Level:

Senior Designer
Designer
Senior Art Director
Art Director
Graphics Editor

Support Level:

Junior Designer
Assistant Designer
Deputy Art Director
Associate Art Director
Assistant Art Director
Production Artist
Art Associate

Entry Level:

Assistant Designer
Junior Designer
Intern

Design Specialties

Many graphic designers perform a broad range of tasks, switching media as clients and jobs demand. Therefore, it is prudent at the outset of a career to learn about and practice all the disciplines that strike your interest and fancy as well as those that are growth areas for employment. Although it is not necessary to be an expert in everything it is useful to be fluent in as many forms as possible, at least while you are looking for a possible career niche.

Design Specialties:

Editorial Designers: The people who give a publication its aura, image, and format

Corporate Identity Designers: The people who give a company a consistent design scheme.

Book Designers: The people who package and sell books.

Music Package Designers: The people who design album and CD packages.

Information Designers (aka Information Architects): The people who employ type and graphics to clarify and concretize mostly nonvisual information, such as facts and figures.

Advertising Designers: The people who are part of the teams that contribute the biggest amounts of mass communication.

Environmental Graphic Designers: The people who design and create signs.

New Media Designers: The people who design web-sites and CD-ROM interfaces.

Motion Designers: The people who design title sequence for film or television or the graphics used on the evening news.

Type Designers: The people who create alphabets

Graphic Designer: All of the above and none of the above