

## Make-up artist

### Job Description

A make-up artist ensures that models, performers, presenters and others have suitable make-up and hairstyles before they appear in front of the cameras or an audience. This may be in a variety of settings, including film, television, theatre, live music and photographic shoots.

Make-up artists interpret the make-up requirements of clients to produce both a creative and technically accurate visual representation. This may involve very basic make-up for a TV presenter through to more complex period make-up or special effects. The work involves creating images and characters through the medium of make-up, hairstyles and prosthetics in accordance with a brief.

### Typical Work Activities

Depending on the nature of the job, make-up artists work alone, as assistants to a more senior colleague or as part of a make-up design team.

Typical work activities include:

- communicating with clients to clarify visual requirements;
- reading scripts to ascertain materials, look required, budget implications and identifying areas where research is required - this is known as production study;
- producing and sketching design ideas for hairstyles and make-up;
- ensuring continuity in hair and make-up and liaising with other members of the design team to ensure the overall look/effect is consistent and coherent;
- building a rapport with make-up subjects, which may include members of the public who are being interviewed for television as well as professional actors or presenters;
- demonstrating and implementing a practical understanding of lighting, the photographic process, colours and the impact of special effects/make-up processes on the skin, ensuring that appropriate action is taken to minimise or eradicate any unpleasant side effects from the use of specialist make-up/hairdressing techniques;
- taking detailed notes and photographs of work, maintaining an up-to-date portfolio of work;
- maintaining awareness of health and safety issues and legislation;
- casting facial and body moulds and sculpting latex foam - known as prosthetics;
- fitting/manipulating/applying wigs, hairpieces and prosthetics;
- maintaining wigs, hairpieces, prosthetics and other specialist materials and equipment;
- hairdressing;
- maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of available make-up and beauty products, sourcing, budgeting and ordering materials and equipment from specialist suppliers;
- time management - knowing how long a subject will take to be made-up;
- working quickly and accurately in time-pressured conditions.

### Work Conditions

- The rates of the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) ([www.pact.co.uk](http://www.pact.co.uk)) and the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematographic and Theatre Union (BECTU) ([www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk)) set the recommended industry minimum for film and television work. Latest rates are as follows: £184 per day for junior make-up/hair assistant and £279 for make-up designer prosthetics. These rates are for peak-time drama television production and high budget feature films. Rates are negotiable and individuals who are well regarded in the industry are in great demand and are paid well above the rates listed. Low-budget feature and off-peak TV productions pay less because of budget constrictions. Commercials may be very lucrative - in excess of £500 per day for experienced artists. Fashion and editorial work ranges from £250 to £2,000 per day. Top make-up artists designing for fashion shows regularly earn over £3,000 per day (salary data collected June 2008).
- Many make-up artists initially work for free or for a small fee on low-budget productions or editorial shoots, to build up a record of published work and gain experience.
- A typical working day includes long and unsocial hours. Shifts and weekend work are common. Working on a film or television project means a make-up artist is required to be on set before filming commences and to remain on set throughout filming in order to re-apply make-up. Advance fittings are required often. Working as part of a production team is integral to the role.
- The environment varies from indoor dressing rooms to hot studios to freezing-cold outdoor locations. The work is physically demanding and requires great concentration. Most make-up artists carry around their own equipment.
- The majority of make-up artists work on a self-employed/freelance basis. Freelancing is often an essential pre-requisite for the very limited number of permanent jobs. Professionals are contracted for projects, either directly or through an agent.
- Potential employers will be located mainly in cities, particularly those with strong regional independent TV companies. Most opportunities are in the London area.
- Travel within a working day, periodic relocation, absence from home at night and overseas work or travel are frequent. Make-up artists may travel overseas for film work on location.

### Entry Requirements

Although this area of work is open to all graduates, the following subjects may increase your chances:

- creative/performing arts;
- fine art/visual art;
- history of art;
- fashion and textile/costume design;
- photography/film/television;
- graphic design/illustration;
- drama/theatre studies.

Similarly, this area of work is open to all Diplomates. However, the following subjects may increase your chances:

- make-up artistry;
- hairdressing;
- fine art/visual art;
- fashion and textile/costume design;
- media studies;
- creative/performing arts;
- photography/film/television;
- drama/theatre studies.

Traditionally, academic qualifications are not as important as creative and practical skills. It is possible to become a make-up artist without a degree or HND. However, entrance generally is becoming formalised and candidates will often undertake a number of specialist HNDs in make-up artistry as a precursor to freelance industry experience/traineeships. The London College of Fashion ([www.fashion.arts.ac.uk](http://www.fashion.arts.ac.uk)) offers a two-year foundation degree in Specialist Make-up Design and a wide range of short courses, including evening courses. NVQs in relevant subjects are also acceptable, e.g. hairdressing, beauty therapy, media and theatrical make-up. A pre-entry postgraduate qualification is not needed.

Relevant experience is desirable, e.g. working backstage at amateur dramatic productions, working in a beauty or hair salon, work placements or relevant unpaid work. Job shadowing/work experience assisting a make-up artist gives insight, develops your portfolio, helps to build a network of contacts and demonstrates your commitment. Observation is one of the best ways to learn skills and techniques.

The job requires a broad-based background, including both theoretical interest, an understanding of period and current fashion, and excellent practical make-up and technical skills. Most people entering this field have taken a course in both make-up and hairdressing, as the job requires that you are multiskilled. An understanding of film and video production techniques, camera and lighting processes, styles of literature, performance and dramatisation may also be important.

Word of mouth, networking and speculative CVs are a common method of generating work. Many make-up artists use a photographic portfolio demonstrating the wide range of skills they offer. Competition is tough. Professionals are often employed on reputation and popularity. A good starting point is to think of the contacts made during study, particularly through any work experience placements. Good interpersonal and self-promotion skills are essential. Media directories help identify companies to target with a speculative CV or personal call. Professional journals are a good source of adverts as well as information on who and what is happening in the industry.

Skillset (Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries) ([www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org)) is particularly useful for identifying training courses, production companies and media groups. The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematographic and Theatre Union (BECTU) ([www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk)) provides useful information on industry developments and remuneration guidelines. Regional arts councils, such as Arts Council England ([www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)), Scottish Arts Council (SAC) ([www.sac.org.uk](http://www.sac.org.uk)), Arts Council of Wales ([www.artswales.org.uk](http://www.artswales.org.uk)) and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland ([www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)) are more general sites that provide useful links to media organisations and their websites.

It is illegal for employers to discriminate against candidates on the grounds of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or religious faith. For more information on equality and diversity in the job market see handling discrimination see Handling Discrimination ([www.prospects.ac.uk/links/discrimination](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/discrimination)).

### Training

Informal training is just as important as formal qualifications. Consequently, industry experience, whether paid/unpaid, is vital to professional development/ability to get work. Given the predominance of freelance work, training is often on the job, with individuals taking responsibility for their own continued professional development (CPD). Many make-up artists believe that their on-the-job training and experience is just as important as their professional training, if not more so.

Many artists and designers wish to enhance or consolidate existing skills in order to open up new areas of expertise or to produce better quality work within their own specialisation. Further study provides the opportunity to experiment, diversify or obtain the specialist knowledge required. There are limited training opportunities, mainly based in commercial schools, which are fee paying. Make-up artists may undertake short courses in areas they wish to specialise in, such as special effects.

Skillset (Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries) ([www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org)) provides information on training opportunities. Subsidies of up to 70% are available on selected make-up courses through the Skillset Freelance Training Fund. Further training decisions are usually based on the review of a work portfolio, technical skills gained and industry experience of tutors.

## Career Development

Career development usually means securing more temporary contracts and demanding higher rates of pay, dependent on experience, networking specialisation and popularity. Few permanent positions exist. There is no defined progression route and the freelance nature of the profession means that individuals may move between make-up assistant, make-up artist, chief make-up artist and designer roles, depending on their experience and confidence within a sector.

It is not uncommon to work as an artist in a specific work context and a designer in another, possibly smaller, work context. Consequently a make-up artist may charge different rates for different jobs.

Decisions as to the right time to request higher rates of pay and bid for project work in a more senior role are very much based on an individual's own sense of confidence and how much experience and expertise they feel they have to offer in the labour market.

Ambitious individuals aim towards make-up director, but many freelance artists who do not reach this position still enjoy an autonomous and lucrative career. A make-up artist may become a specialist in one aspect of the job, such as a wig or prosthetics specialist.

## Typical Employers

There are several industries that regularly employ make-up artists. Typical employers include:

- network and independent television;
- film, video and advertising/commercial companies;
- commercial and fashion photographers and, on a less regular basis, portrait photographers;
- the wedding industry, for bridal make-up;
- the fashion industry, for both haute couture fashion shows and retail outlet fashion shows;
- cosmetic companies and designer hairdressing salons, particularly for instore demonstrations or hairdressing competitions;
- large theatres, some of which may offer a limited number of permanent positions - other theatres contract freelance artists to run make-up workshops for performers prior to new productions;
- education institutions, who employ make-up artists as teachers on established/certificated make-up courses - other education institutions occasionally employ make-up artists to run make-up workshops for students as part of the practical performance element of their drama/theatrical studies;
- the medical profession, where a make-up artist may work with patients following injury or surgery.

However, as most make-up artists are self-employed, they normally bid for work on a project-by-project basis.

Some make-up artists advertise their services through business directories and/or networks, such as Mandy's International Film and TV Production Resources ([www.mandy.com](http://www.mandy.com)). A make-up artist may offer a service to individuals and wedding parties on a commercial basis.

## Sources of Vacancies

- The Stage ([www.thestage.co.uk/](http://www.thestage.co.uk/));
- Televisual ([www.televisual.com/](http://www.televisual.com/));
- Stage, Screen and Radio;
- BBC ([www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/));
- Broadcast Now ([www.broadcastnow.co.uk/](http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/));
- Shooting People ([shootingpeople.org/](http://shootingpeople.org/)).

Many people working in the media obtain work by advertising through media directories such as:

- Film Bang ([www.filmbang.com/](http://www.filmbang.com/));
- Production Base ([www.productionbase.co.uk/](http://www.productionbase.co.uk/));
- Mandy's International Film and TV Production Resources ([www.mandy.com/](http://www.mandy.com/));
- UK Screen ([www.ukscreen.com/](http://www.ukscreen.com/)).

Diary services and agencies are a popular method of linking with employers, but they often only include individuals with experience.

Make-up artists with a portfolio of experience may make speculative applications to production companies or approach make-up directors directly. For this, it may be helpful to produce a website to showcase examples of work.

## Related Occupations

- Costume designer
- Fashion clothing designer
- Fashion stylist
- Fine artist
- Jewellery designer
- Production designer, theatre/television/film
- Textile designer
- Wardrobe manager

### Information Sources

#### Bibliography

AGCAS and Graduate Prospects products are available from higher education careers services.

#### AGCAS Publications

[Media Sector](#), AGCAS Sector Briefing  
[Creative Arts Sector](#), AGCAS Sector Briefing  
[Fashion and Textile Sector](#), AGCAS Sector Briefing  
[Handling Discrimination](#), AGCAS Information Booklet  
[Options with Fashion](#), AGCAS Options Series  
[Options with Fine Art](#), AGCAS Options Series  
[Options with Performing Arts \(Dance/Drama\)](#), AGCAS Options Series

#### Other Publications

*The British Theatre Directory*, [Richmond House Publishing](#), 2007  
*The Complete Make Up Artist: Working in Film, Fashion, Television and Theatre*, Northwestern University Press, 2002  
*The Creative Handbook*, Centaur Media plc, Annual  
*Getting into Films and TV*, [How To Books Ltd](#), 2007  
*The Knowledge*, Hollis Publishing Ltd, Annual in June  
*PACT Directory of Independent Producers*, Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT), Annual (Jan)  
*Screen International*, EMAP Communications, weekly  
*The Stage*, The Stage Newspaper Ltd, Weekly - Thurs  
*Stage, Screen and Radio*, [Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematographic and Theatre Union \(BECTU\)](#), 10 per annum  
*Television*, Centaur Media plc, Monthly  
*The White Book*, Ocean Media Group, Annual

#### Websites

4RFV: *The Film and Television Production Directory for Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales and NI*, [www.4rfv.co.uk](http://www.4rfv.co.uk)  
Arts Council England, [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)  
Arts Council of Northern Ireland, [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)  
Arts Council of Wales, [www.artswales.org.uk](http://www.artswales.org.uk)  
BBC, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)  
Broadcast Now, [www.broadcastnow.co.uk](http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk)  
Fashion Monitor, [www.fashionmonitor.co.uk/](http://www.fashionmonitor.co.uk/)  
Film Bang, [www.filmbang.com](http://www.filmbang.com)  
Make Up Magazine, [www.makeupmag.com](http://www.makeupmag.com)  
Mandy's International Film and TV Production Resources, [www.mandy.com](http://www.mandy.com)  
The National Association of Screen Make-up Artists and Hairdressers, [nasmah.co.uk](http://nasmah.co.uk)  
Production Base, [www.productionbase.co.uk](http://www.productionbase.co.uk)  
Scottish Arts Council (SAC), [www.sac.org.uk](http://www.sac.org.uk)  
Shooting People, [shootingpeople.org/](http://shootingpeople.org/)  
UK Screen, [www.ukscreen.com](http://www.ukscreen.com)

#### Addresses

*Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematographic and Theatre Union (BECTU)*, 373-377 Clapham Road, London SW9 9BT  
Tel: 020 7346 0900 URL: [www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk)  
*FT2 - Film & Television Freelance Training*, Third Floor, 18 - 20 Southwark Street, London SE1 1TJ Tel: 020 7407 0344  
URL: [www.ft2.org.uk](http://www.ft2.org.uk)  
*Greasepaint*, 143 Northfield Avenue, Ealing, London W13 9QT Tel: 020 8840 6000 URL: [www.greasepaint.co.uk](http://www.greasepaint.co.uk)  
*London College of Fashion*, 20 John Prince's Street, London W1G 0BJ Tel: 020 7514 7400 URL:  
[www.fashion.arts.ac.uk](http://www.fashion.arts.ac.uk)  
*The Make-up Centre*, Delmar Academy, Building D, Second Floor, Ealing Green, London W5 5EP Tel: 020 8579 9511  
URL: [www.delamaracademy.co.uk](http://www.delamaracademy.co.uk)  
*Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT)*, 3rd Floor Fitzrovia House, 153-157 Cleveland Street, London  
W1T 6QW Tel: 0207 380 8230 URL: [www.pact.co.uk](http://www.pact.co.uk)  
*School of Make-up*, Revelations House, Royal Oak Yard, off Little Underbank, Stockport, Manchester SK1 1JZ  
Tel: 0161 476 5009 URL: [www.schoolofmakeup.co.uk](http://www.schoolofmakeup.co.uk)  
*Scottish Screen*, 249 West George Street, Glasgow G2 4QE Tel: 0845 300 7300 URL: [www.scottishscreen.com](http://www.scottishscreen.com)  
*Skillset (Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries)*, Focus Point, 21 Caledonian Road, London N1 9GB  
Tel: 020 7713 9800 URL: [www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org)