

# Skillsets needed for the Film Industry

## SKILLSET

Baton Exchange, July 2025



Below is a fictional yet realistic dialogue about career paths in the film industry. It's to provide a well-rounded understanding of the types of occupations involved and foundational skillsets needed in filmmaking—from creative to technical to business roles. To learn more about the skills needed for a specific occupation within the industry, do an informational interview of someone in the occupation. It can be very insightful- and helps you to build a connection with someone in the industry!

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**Title:** Exploring Careers in Filmmaking – An Informational Interview

**Interviewer:** Jordan Carter, Recent College Graduate

**Interviewee:** Marcus Delaney, Independent Film Producer and Creative Director at Horizon Light Films

Jordan: Thank you for meeting with me, Mr. Delaney. I'm passionate about film, but I feel overwhelmed by how many directions I could go. Could you help me understand the different types of jobs in the film industry?

Marcus: Happy to help, Jordan. You're right—filmmaking is a big world, and there's much more to it than directors and actors. Whether you're creative, technical, managerial, or even business-minded, there's likely a role for you.

Jordan: That's great to hear. Could we go through the major categories?

Marcus: Absolutely. Most film occupations fall into one of five broad areas: development, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution/marketing. Each stage involves specific roles, so let's walk through them step-by-step.

## **1. Development Phase**

Marcus: This is where ideas are born and shaped into scripts and project proposals.

Jordan: So, writing?

Marcus: Yes, screenwriters are key. They write the scripts that everything else is built around. But there are also roles like story editors, script readers, and development executives—people who evaluate scripts and help refine them for producers or studios.

Jordan: That sounds very literary.

Marcus: It is. If you're a storyteller at heart and enjoy structure, dialogue, and character development, this is a great place to start.

## **2. Pre-Production Phase**

Marcus: Once a script is greenlit, pre-production begins. This is all about planning: budgeting, casting, scouting locations, hiring crew, designing sets and costumes.

Jordan: What kind of jobs are there?

Marcus: Tons. There's the producer, who oversees the project. Then you have casting directors, production managers, location scouts, costume designers, set designers, and art directors. A key role is the assistant director (AD), who organizes the shooting schedule and keeps things on track.

Jordan: So producers aren't just funders?

Marcus: Correct. Good producers are logistical masterminds who balance budgets, talent, schedules, and vision.

## **3. Production Phase**

Marcus: This is the shoot itself—where the magic happens on set.

Jordan: What roles are active during filming?

Marcus: Well, you've got your director, who guides the creative vision, and the cinematographer or director of photography (DP), who handles the camera and lighting look. Then you have camera operators, gaffers (lighting), grips (rigging), sound mixers, boom operators, script supervisors, and more.

Jordan: That's a huge team.

Marcus: It really is. And there are entry-level roles like production assistants (PAs), who do a little of everything and learn a lot in the process. It's often the first step onto a set.

## 4. Post-Production Phase

Jordan: What happens after the shoot?

Marcus: Editors take over. A film editor pieces together all the footage to shape the story. Then you have sound designers, colorists, composers, and visual effects (VFX) artists.

Jordan: That sounds technical. Do you need special software skills?

Marcus: Yes—tools like Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premiere, DaVinci Resolve, and Pro Tools are industry standards. If you're precise, detail-oriented, and have a good sense of rhythm and emotion, post-production might suit you.

## 5. Marketing & Distribution

Marcus: Finally, once the film is finished, it needs to reach an audience. This stage is about strategy.

Jordan: Like getting it into theaters?

Marcus: Or festivals, streaming platforms, or international sales. Roles here include distribution managers, marketing strategists, publicists, social media managers, and film festival coordinators. They craft trailers, manage press, and create buzz.

Jordan: So a communications background could be useful?

Marcus: Definitely. Especially if you're great with branding, audience targeting, or media outreach.

## Cross-Functional and Specialized Roles

Jordan: Are there roles that cross over or don't fit neatly in one category?

Marcus: Absolutely. Think of roles like:

Production Designer – They oversee the film's entire visual world (sets, props, colors, etc.).

Composer – Crafts the musical score that shapes mood and tone.

Line Producer – Manages the day-to-day budget and crew logistics.

Unit Publicist – Handles press on set and prepares marketing material.

Script Supervisor – Tracks continuity during shooting.

Some people also specialize in stunt coordination, makeup and prosthetics, or special effects (SFX)—all crucial, especially in action or fantasy films.

## Career Paths and Entry Points

Jordan: For someone just starting out, where's the best place to begin?

Marcus: Depends on your skills. Writers might submit short scripts or enter screenwriting contests. If you want to direct, start with short films—even on your phone. If you like sets, try to become a production assistant (PA) on a shoot. You learn everything from the ground up.

Jordan: Do internships help?

Marcus: Absolutely. Studios, agencies, post houses, even indie film sets—anything that gets you in the room matters. Build a portfolio, say yes to learning, and make relationships.

## **Freelance vs. Studio Work**

Jordan: Are most film jobs freelance?

Marcus: Many are. Crews are often hired per project. But there are studio-based roles too—especially in post-production houses, animation studios, or production companies.

Jordan: So flexibility is important?

Marcus: Very. The industry rewards those who are adaptable, passionate, and persistent. It's tough but rewarding.

## **Trends in the Film Industry**

Jordan: What are some trends new professionals should watch?

Marcus: Streaming has changed everything—there's more content than ever. Also, international markets are huge. And new tech like virtual production (think *The Mandalorian*) and AI tools are starting to reshape workflows.

Jordan: Should I learn about those now?

Marcus: Yes. Stay curious. Learn editing software, follow indie filmmakers, explore platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, and read IndieWire or No Film School. Knowledge is power.

## **Final Advice**

Jordan: This has been incredibly helpful. Do you have any last advice?

Marcus: Start making things—even short, imperfect videos. Build a reel. Connect with others. Take on small gigs. Don't wait for permission. Film is a collaborative art, and there's no one path. Be humble, work hard, and never stop learning.

Jordan: Thank you so much, Mr. Delaney.

Marcus: My pleasure, Jordan. The film world needs new voices—maybe yours will be one of them.

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## Ask Your Mentor

1. Which of the above phases have you worked? In what roles? What was the context?
2. Which did you like? Not like?
3. In which skillsets have you developed competency?
4. Are there any roles missing in the above phases?
5. Do you agree with the trends mentioned? Why or why not? What trends do you see that may not be mentioned?
6. What advice would you echo or add?
7. Any recommendations on who to talk to learn more about the above?

## Reflect & Respond/Self-Rate

Rate your interest level in the above phases and cross-functional/specialized roles.

Why did you rate yourself that way? Which do you think might be the best fit with who you are?

	1	2	3	4	5
Development Phase					
Pre-Production Phase					
Production Phase					
Post-Production Phase					
Marketing & Distribution					
Cross-Functional and Specialized Roles					

## Go Do. Action step.

1. Ask God, "What are your thoughts on all of this? What phase or role should I consider checking out?"
  2. Trust & obey. What might God be asking you to do? What would it look like to trust Him with that as you obey?
  3. Action Step. Which phase or role will you learn more about over the next month?
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## Sources & Resources

Photo credit: captainvector

Ask your mentor for suggestions for below..

Video:

Article:

Book:

Organization: