



# JOB of the Week



**Job name: Illustrator**

**Job description:** Illustrators are commissioned to create still drawings and images to communicate a story, message or idea, which are then used in advertisements, books, magazines, packaging, greeting cards and newspapers.

As an illustrator, you'll work to commercial briefs to inform, persuade or entertain a client's intended audience, adjusting the mood and style of images accordingly

## Tasks you will undertake in the job:

As an illustrator, you'll need to:

- liaise with clients, editors and authors in order to understand and interpret their business needs
- gain knowledge of appropriate styles
- negotiate pricing and deadlines
- analyse a brief's specification and the text to be illustrated, as well as research sources
- think imaginatively and creatively to produce new ideas
- create images and designs by using the traditional hand skills of drawing and painting, alongside other techniques, to meet design briefs
- use computer-aided design (CAD) packages to scan images and change size, colours and other elements
- provide roughs for approval
- redefine a brief through further consultation with the client to include new ideas or text as appropriate
- run your business, when working freelance
- speculatively approach potential commissioners to seek new sources of work

**Qualifications you will need for this job:** Although this area of work is open to all graduates, the following subjects may increase your chances: fashion; fine art; graphic design and illustration; printmaking; visual art.

Entry without a degree, HND or foundation degree is possible. While you don't need a pre-entry postgraduate qualification, a postgraduate diploma or MA in graphic design or illustration may be advantageous - especially if you're interested in teaching. Search for postgraduate courses in illustration. Qualifications and subject of study are far less important than a talent for illustration, promotional skills and the ideas contained in your portfolio.

## Skills required for this job (core competencies):

Communication	Resilience	Organisation	Teamwork
Problem Solving	Initiative	Creativity	Digital literacy

**Sectors in which Illustrators would normally work:** Work is predominantly freelance and most illustrators are self-employed. Areas of work include: advertising - posters, storyboards, press; publishing - books; corporate work - brochures, catalogues; editorial - magazines, newspapers and comics; fashion - forecasting; merchandising - greetings cards, calendars, t-shirts and ceramics; multimedia - TV, film, computer games, websites, apps and animation. Specialist areas include scientific, technical and medical illustration. In these fields, illustrations showing new products, processes or techniques are created for text and reference books.

**Applying for work:** In order to embark on a career as an illustrator, you need: the ability to market your skills; professionalism; imagination; knowledge of computer-aided design (CAD) techniques and printing processes, including computer graphics; research skills. The ability to produce work in multimedia format is also important.  
**Getting commissions:** In order to secure commissions, you'll need to promote your work to art directors, publishing editors and design studio managers.



**Salary:** Most illustrators work on a freelance basis, so salary figures are hard to estimate. Prices vary greatly depending on the client. You can find illustration and cartoon rates for magazines, newspapers, book covers and PR material at Freelance Fees Guide. If you're a member of the Association of Illustrators (AOI), you can access a pricing calculator in addition to a wealth of information on pricing basics, how to calculate a fee and negotiating pricing. Starting salaries for illustrators are in the region of £18,000 to £20,000. In London, starting salaries are higher - around £23,000.

**Working hours:** To establish and maintain your reputation, you must keep to deadlines. This may mean working long hours, weekends and/or evenings to deliver a brief.

**What to expect:** Design studios occasionally employ illustrators on a permanent basis, but the majority of illustrators are freelance, working from home or a small studio and negotiating sales via an agent or directly with clients.

- Some illustrators soon discover a market for their talents and so receive many commissions, while others may have many rejections before securing work. Your workload could fluctuate, from no commissions to too many.
- Pay may be low and irregular, according to the state of the market. Earnings during the first years may be patchy and many illustrators take on additional part-time jobs.
- Jobs are available in most areas but proximity to a city is an advantage, especially for illustrators without an agent.
- There will sometimes be travel within a working day to meet clients, but absence from home at night and overseas work or travel are uncommon.

**What to expect:** Most illustrators work as self-employed freelance artists, although areas such as trend forecasting (fashion) and computer games companies offer a limited number of opportunities for full-time employment. Advertising agencies and design consultancies can provide lucrative work. Corporate communications remains a viable market for illustration, although it's a competitive area and some firms will use in-house design solutions to keep costs low, rather than turning to freelancers.  
Another significant market is the children's book industry, which can be especially lucrative and satisfying if you have a talent for writing as well as illustrating. For exclusive interviews with industry professionals see [childrensillustrators.com](http://childrensillustrators.com). Other markets include: animated commercials, animated television shows and short films; billboards; film posters; fine art posters; government information services (including health and education); greetings cards and packaging.

**Look for opportunities at:** a-n - The Artists Information Company; Creative Opportunities; Creativepool  
Creative Review; D&AD; Mad Writers' and Artists' Yearbook

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