



# ILLUSTRATOR

## JOB DESCRIPTION

Illustrators are commercial artists who produce paintings and drawings to accompany text in books, magazines, brochures, and advertisements. They usually specialize in a particular area, such as producing drawings for children's books, cartoons for newspapers, or technical illustrations for manuals. While some illustrators still use a pen or brush, many work on computers with special graphics software.



### SALARY

Illustrator ★★☆☆☆

### INDUSTRY PROFILE

Majority of illustrators work as freelancers • Volume and type of work subject to changing trends in media industries • Bulk of jobs available in print and online media

## CAREER PATHS

There is no formal career path into this creative industry. You need to assemble a collection of your best work into a portfolio and present this to prospective clients. Your success depends not only on your artistic and technical skills, but also on your ability to promote and market yourself.

**ASSISTANT** You can gain useful experience and make potential industry contacts by working as a design assistant or technical artist within a media or publishing company.

**GRADUATE** An undergraduate degree in illustration, fine art, or graphic design offers employers proof of your skills. However, potential clients will judge your ability on the quality of your portfolio and its suitability for their needs.



**CARTOONIST** Uses their acute sense of humor and observational skills to draw cartoons or devise graphic stories. Their work may be used in newspapers, books, or magazines, or by advertisers to promote products.



**ILLUSTRATOR** Developing one of several artistic styles, you can find work through personal contacts or sign on with agents who promote your work and take a commission on any jobs they find for you.



## SKILLS GUIDE



A strong proficiency in computer applications and graphic design software.



Effective communication skills for dealing with clients, agencies, and potential employers.



A high level of creativity and talent to produce eye-catching work and generate new ideas.



Good commercial awareness for negotiating fees with clients and working in a competitive market.



Flexibility to take on different kinds of work when opportunities in a particular area become scarce.



The ability to follow a client's brief and accurately produce complex technical illustrations.



**BOOK OR MAGAZINE ILLUSTRATOR** Draws images that accompany articles in magazines, or which illustrate and enliven text in books.



**MEDICAL OR TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATOR** Produces images of medical conditions and procedures that help people understand complex information in textbooks, instruction manuals, or sales brochures.

## RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **GRAPHIC DESIGNER** *see pp. 22–23*
- ▶ **GAME DEVELOPER** *see pp. 130–131*
- ▶ **ANIMATOR** Draws multiple images by hand, or uses software, to animate a character or object on screen. An animator may produce work for cartoon films, commercials, computer games, websites, and other media.
- ▶ **ART DIRECTOR** Leads and directs a team responsible for the design of visual concepts and images in creative industries, such as advertising, publishing, film and TV, or web design.
- ▶ **STORYBOARD ARTIST** Draws sequences of illustrations that show the key points in a story, which are then used as a basis for filming.

## AT A GLANCE



**YOUR INTERESTS** Art • Drawing and painting • Graphic design • English • Sciences • Mathematics



**ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS** Illustrators need good training and a strong portfolio of creative work, or a degree in art, illustration, or graphics.



**LIFESTYLE** Freelance illustrators can set their own working hours; those employed by companies work regular office hours.



**LOCATION** Although illustrators can work at home or in a studio, they may need to visit a client's office to discuss briefs and promote their work.



**THE REALITIES** Paid commissions may be sporadic for freelance illustrators, so many have a second job to maintain a regular income.