



ACTOR

JOB DESCRIPTION

Actors portray a character through a combination of speech, movement, and body language. They work mainly in theater, film, TV, and radio; they can also appear in corporate videos and advertisements, and record voice-overs. Usually they interpret the words of a playwright or screenwriter, working from a script under the instruction of a director, but sometimes they can improvise on a theme.



SALARY

Actor in regional theater ★★★★★
Famous screen or TV actor ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Intense competition for roles • Diverse opportunities, ranging from theater to theme parks, and from TV to teaching • An expanding industry

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Drama • Film • Arts and literature • Languages • History • Poetry • Music • Dance • Mime • Theater • Sports and fitness



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS Although a degree in drama, or training at a stage school or drama college, is not required, it may help you break into the industry.



LIFESTYLE Actors work irregular hours. In film and TV, days can be long and involve a lot of waiting. They may work far from home on location or on tour.



LOCATION Actors work in theaters, TV, film, commercial studios, and even in open-air locations, such as parks, gardens, and forests, around the world.



THE REALITIES Actors need to audition for roles, and rejection can be tough. There is little job security, and most actors spend a lot of time looking for work.

RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **MUSICIAN** *see pp. 38–39*
- ▶ **DANCER** *see pp. 40–41*
- ▶ **DRAMA THERAPIST** Uses drama and theatrical techniques, such as vocal expression, role play, and improvisation, to help people through traumatic experiences or emotional, physical, or behavioral problems. They work closely with teachers, social workers, and psychologists, as well as hospital and prison staff.
- ▶ **SCREENWRITER** Creates ideas and writes scripts for films or television shows. Screenwriters may also adapt existing works, such as novels or plays, for the screen.

In William Shakespeare's time, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, there were no female actors. Men played all the female roles.

CAREER PATHS

An actor's career can be unpredictable. Training and talent may help you land good and well-paid roles, but you also need luck and perseverance to be spotted and to be selected at auditions. Finding a respected agent to represent you may help you get noticed.

AMATEUR ACTOR Joining an amateur drama group, or appearing in student films or stage productions, can help you get noticed as a young, aspiring actor.



GRADUATE You can study for an academic degree in drama or theater studies at college or choose a course focused on acting at a drama school.



ACTOR You may need to join a professional body or an actor's union to be considered for some acting roles. You may need to learn new skills throughout your career, such as stage fighting and perfecting dialects, to win roles.



VOICE ACTOR Works on radio dramas, or provides voice-overs for commercials, animations, training materials, or audiobooks. They are hired for the quality of their voices.



FILM ACTOR Performs in front of cameras on movie sets, often repeating scenes several times in different "takes." Many actors start their careers in low-budget independent movies.



TV ACTOR Performs a role for a TV show, such as a soap opera or period drama. Some TV actors may also find work in corporate videos or in TV and online advertisements.



STAGE ACTOR Performs in front of audiences in a range of venues, from small, intimate studios to large open-air theaters, or even on the street.



STUNT PERFORMER Stands in for other actors on set when the film or TV script calls for a scene that is physically dangerous or that requires specialized skills.

SKILLS GUIDE



The ability to perform with confidence in front of an audience or camera.



Must be able to work closely with directors, producers, camera operators, and members of a cast.



Creativity to interpret a script and the director's instructions with a fresh perspective.



Stamina and fitness to rehearse over long periods and to deal with the physical demands of acting.



The ability to analyze scripts and memorize dialogue, directional cues, and choreography.