



# CAMERA OPERATOR

## JOB DESCRIPTION

The role of a camera operator involves recording moving images for films, TV shows, music videos, or commercials using digital video and film cameras. As a camera operator, you use both technical and creative skills to follow a script, visualize and frame shots under instructions from a director, and work closely with performers and other members of the crew during the shoot.



### SALARY

Camera assistant ★★★★★  
Experienced operator ★★★★★

### INDUSTRY PROFILE

Freelance work common • Full-time employment opportunities with large broadcasting companies • A number of jobs available in corporate and training video production

## AT A GLANCE



**YOUR INTERESTS** Photography and videography • Cinema, film, and video • Art • Electronics • Design technology • Media • Travel



**ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS** A degree is useful, but practical knowledge of videography and work experience in the industry can be enough to get you a job.



**LIFESTYLE** Long hours and tight deadlines are common. Operators may also have to travel to distant or extreme locations, such as deserts or war zones.



**LOCATION** Depending on the job, camera operators may work primarily in a studio or on location. They may need to spend extended periods away from home.



**THE REALITIES** Competition for jobs is intense, and many camera operators are self-employed, moving from one contract to another.

## CAREER PATHS

Many camera operators get their foothold in the industry by working as production assistants (“runners”). Your progress will depend on your talent and commitment, as well as on the way in which you develop a network of contacts in the industry.

**ASSISTANT** With some technical knowledge of film-making, you may become a camera assistant. Your job is to assemble the cameras, and keep shots in focus. With experience you can become a camera operator.



**GRADUATE** You can study for a degree in photography, film and TV production, cinematography, or media studies, but technical ability and experience count for more than academic study.



## ▼ RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **SOUND ENGINEER** *see pp. 50–51*
- ▶ **GRIP** Works with camera operators in the film and video industries. Grips are responsible for mounting camera equipment onto fixed or moving supports, such as cranes, and setting up lighting rigs safely. They also order and prepare equipment, and transport it to a film location.
- ▶ **LIGHTING ENGINEER** Sets up and operates all of the lighting equipment for video, film, TV, and theater productions. Lighting engineers visit locations to assess requirements for lighting and special effects.



**CAMERA OPERATOR** You usually specialize in one area of work. This could be covering news stories for TV, making corporate videos, or recording sports events or concerts. With experience, it is possible to advance into more creative roles.



### **DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Works with the director of the film or TV show to establish its visual style. The job involves determining how a scene should be lit, deciding which lenses and equipment should be used, and instructing camera and lighting crews.



**IMAGE TECHNOLOGIST** Develops new equipment and techniques that push the boundaries of what is possible to record on film or digital media. Imaging companies may recruit camera operators with expertise in the technical side of film-making to fill this role.

## SKILLS GUIDE



Good interpersonal skills to work with performers, directors, and production staff.



Innovation and creativity to get the best possible shots during filming.



Problem-solving skills to fix any technical issues at a film shoot without affecting the schedule.



Physical strength and endurance to stand for extended periods of time, or to lift or move equipment.



Manual dexterity and good hand-eye coordination to get the best results from film equipment.