Camera

- Camera supervisor
- Camera operator
- Jib operator
- Grip
- Camera assistant
- Autocue operator
- Digital imaging technician
- Data wrangler

Lighting

- Lighting director
- Gaffer
- Lighting console operator
- Spark

Art

- Production designer
- Art director
- Production buyer
- Art department assistant

Costume

- Costume designer
- Costume supervisor

Sound

- Sound supervisor
- Sound recordist
- Grams operator

Records sound, mixes audio, creates sound effects

Designs the lighting, installs electrical equipment

Creates the look, designs and builds the sets and props

Responsible for the style of presenters and contributors

Hair and make-up

- Hair and make-up designer
- Hair and make-up artist

Styles the hair and make-up of those on screen

Entry level

- Sound assistant
- Runner
- Kit room assistant
- Art department runner
- Costume assistant
- Hair and make-up assistant

Follow the arrows to learn routes to roles in TV

Craft and technical career map

Go to ScreenSkills for more details:
www.screenskills.com/careers-in-tv

BFI · THE NATIONAL LOTTERY · ScreenSkills

What is unscripted television?

The term 'unscripted' really means 'without actors'. In truth, every TV programme has a narrative and a script. It's perhaps easiest to think of unscripted TV as non-fiction television. It can be on any subject, from natural history, religion and music to dating, interior design and learning a skill. It's programmed on primetime TV, daytime TV and children's TV, as well as streaming platforms like Netflix and YouTube.

Unscripted TV genres

Entertainment

Fast-paced, visually exciting, heavily-produced and formatted programmes designed to entertain. Entertainment programmes are usually hosted by a known presenter. When they're recorded in a purpose-built studio, they are sometimes referred to as 'shiny floor' because the vinyl floors reflect the studio lights. This genre includes game shows, festival coverage, panel shows, live music events, quiz shows, talent elimination formats and talk shows.

Examples: *The X Factor, The Money Drop, Saturday Night Takeaway*

Factual

Television that documents actual events and real people. Some programmes are presented by known TV personalities, journalists or professional experts. This is a very broad category, ranging from current affairs like *Panorama* to cookery programmes like *Ainsley's Caribbean Kitchen* and to children's TV shows like *Nina and the Neurons*. It also covers documentaries, docudrama, observational and fixed rig documentary and survivalist.

Examples: *Planet Earth II, Stacey Dooley Investigates, Gogglebox*

Factual entertainment

Television that documents real events and people but with a stronger entertainment element than serious factual programmes. Often hosted by TV personalities, factual entertainment programmes include magazine shows, reality, dating and makeover formats, celebrity or expert-led experience like travelogues or learning a skill.

Examples: *Love Island, MasterChef, This Morning*

News

Presented by a trained journalist, who usually writes their own scripts. News from around the world is packaged into short bulletins throughout the day, with longer programmes at lunchtime and in the evening. Programmes are made up of live reports 'in the field', interviews with experts and pre-recorded reports.

Examples: *Channel 4 News, BBC News at Ten, Good Morning Britain*

Sport

Often technically complex (especially if broadcast live) coverage of sporting events, or analysis programmes discussing the sports action. Sport is heavy on action replays, graphics and unscripted chat.

Examples: *Match of the Day, The Big Fight Live, Cricket on 5*

The UK's unscripted TV industry

The UK's unscripted TV programmes are renowned all over the world. ITV's *Britain's Got Talent* has spin-offs in 68 counties and has been named the world's most successful reality TV format ever. *Dancing with Stars*, based on the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing*, can now been seen in 42 different territories, while *Blue Planet II* has been sold to more than 30 countries.

Streaming companies like Netflix and Amazon Prime now commission their own unscripted programmes. They have bases in the UK for their teams, following the success of acquired shows like *Queer Eye* (Netflix) and *The Grand Tour* (Amazon Prime). Unscripted programming is big business and offers the prospect of exciting and stimulating careers.

Why choose a career in unscripted television?

Careers in TV offer real 'money can't buy' experiences. You could be making-up the next superstar, filming dolphins under water or being responsible for the sound during a live transmission of a global sporting event. You can travel and get access to places many don't see. Few jobs are ever the same.

In craft and technical roles, the core skills in unscripted TV are similar to those needed in film and TV drama and it's possible to transfer your skills between the two types of programme. However, there are significant ways in which the different work environments require skills and interests that are different from each other. On a documentary, for example, it's important for a camera operator to respond quickly to a situation in which anything might happen, whereas on a feature film, every shot is planned. There are similar differences in hair and make-up, costume and the other crafts. It's therefore a good idea to think carefully about what your preference is - unscripted TV or scripted. Start making your contacts and build your career in the type of programming you like the best.

Employment prospects

If you want to work in craft or technical roles in TV, it's more likely you will be working on a freelance basis than be staff. Most TV shows are made by production companies on a project basis. A team is put together to make a programme - and then disbanded once the programme, or series of programmes, is complete. Depending on your role, you could work on one production for just a few days, weeks or months. You may find yourself working on more than one project at a time.

Permanent staff roles tend to be attached to facilities like studios, equipment hire or technical service companies rather than production companies. If you work for a production company, it's sensible to keep flexible, short-term work wherever you can get it, to tide you over during your gaps between contracts.

The joy of working on a project basis is that every job is different. Jobs can also involve a lot of travelling and meeting new people. Many people have long, rewarding and well-paid careers working in this way.

Routes in

It's not essential to go to university or film school to enter the unscripted TV industry, but you do need to develop your craft. Get skills-based qualifications and then on-the-job experience.

The vocational training route

Some equipment companies offer entry level jobs in the hire of audio equipment, cameras, outside broadcast facilities, lighting and staging. There are also roles available with service companies that make and hire costumes, props and sets. Competition for these roles is fierce – but they are worth going for. And take a look at the work experience opportunities offered by some broadcasters and production companies, although these often aren't specifically in craft and technical roles. Check out their websites and social media accounts.

The apprenticeship route

An apprenticeship is a job combined with training, so it's a great opportunity to earn as you learn. Broadcasters, such as the BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5, ITV and Sky offer apprenticeships. Check their websites to see if they are offering them in your chosen role. You might find one as an outside broadcasting engineer or a props technician. If you aren't successful, or there aren't any where you live, it might be worth taking an apprenticeship in a related industry. There are apprenticeships in hair and make-up, costume and wardrobe, electrical installation and many more. Learn your craft and then move into TV at a later point. For details of the apprenticeships relevant to your chosen role, go to **screenskills.com/careers-in-TV** and click on the relevant icon.

The university route

It isn't necessary to go to university to get into craft and technical roles. However, if you want a degree, take a look at ScreenSkills' Select list of recommended courses at screenskills.com/courses and find one in unscripted TV. We recognise courses where they have strong links to industry, so these courses should be useful in helping you make contacts and get your first job.

The entry level job route

Getting an entry level job is a great way to get to know the industry, build contacts and make your way up to your chosen role. Every new entrant will start in an entry level role, including graduates. Common first job tasks include delivery driving and maintenance of specialist kit, taking reference photographs and notes, running errands and checking supplies. There may also be opportunities to work with a senior professional, like a camera supervisor or sound recordist, who will train you on the job as you assist them.

Getting jobs

Finding work in the TV industry is all about networking. To get an entry level role, you need to get in touch with senior industry professionals and ask if you can work with them. There are various ways of doing that. A good way is to meet them through attending industry events. Visit **ScreenSkills.com/events** to see if there is anything in your area. Read the trade press. Find out what's shooting. Watch the credits at the end of unscripted TV programmes. Find the names of the people that you would like to work with and connect with them through social media. Many regions have Facebook groups that industry professionals use when they need to crew up in the area. Find them and join them. Do some skills training. Update your social platforms and let people know when you are available for hire.

Pay

Pay is usually negotiated on daily or weekly rates, depending on the role and production. Senior executives are usually permanently employed staff and salaries are often £65k and up. Entry level pay can start with the UK minimum wage. It's a good idea to check out the rate cards published by Bectu, the media and entertainment union **(bectu.org.uk)** to gage what is reasonable in your role.

Hours of Work

Working in unscripted TV involves early starts and late finishes. Days are usually scheduled for eight, ten or 12 hours, but there can be travel on top too. It's rarely a Monday to Friday job, or even a five-day week job, so expect to work weekends regularly. On the plus side, you can have days off in the middle of the week. If you need workplace stability and set hours, this is probably not the industry for you.

Networking

TV relies on personal introductions and recommendations. Increase your connections by going to industry events. **ScreenSkills.com/events** is a good place to start. Do some skills training. Create your own content. Update your social platforms and let people know when you are available to hire.

Inclusivity

The television industry is committed to building an inclusive and culturally diverse workforce, welcoming talent regardless of age, disability, ethnic or socioeconomic background, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

What next?

To see our career map about roles in editorial and production, go to **ScreenSkills.com/resources**

Details of the routes into each job role can be found at **ScreenSkill.com/careers-in-TV**

There is information about freelancing, networking and building a portfolio at **ScreenSkills.com/careers**

Looking for further advice?

If you're interested in a career in unscripted TV, check out these websites to find out more:

ScreenSkills, for information on careers and courses: **screenskills.com/careers-in-TV**

Bafta Guru, career advice for games, film and television: **Bafta guru.bafta.org**

BBC Academy, training and development for the BBC and wider industry: **bbc.co.uk/academy**

Royal Television Society, bursaries, jobs and training schemes in the TV industry: **rts.org.uk/education-training**

Bectu, the media and entertainment union: **bectu.org.uk**

Produced by ScreenSkills

Supported by National Lottery funds awarded to ScreenSkills from the British Film Institute to deliver its Future Film Skills programme

With thanks to Anya Francis, executive producer; Nick Harris, multi-camera studio director; Chris Kershaw, producer director; Steven Hulbert, camera supervisor; Greg Holt, camera operator; Mel Wiffen, Autocue operator; Alison Lewis, production executive, Blakeway North; Gurdip Mahal, lighting director; Dr Neil Hillman, sound designer; Dominic Tolfts, production designer; David O'Brien, costume designer; Lyn Evans Bushnell, hair and make-up designer; Gavin Binder, hire manager, Media Dog

Second edition (2020) written and produced by Jo Ind

First edition (2018) written and produced by Jude Winstanley

Design by Dave Gray (iamdavegray.com)

Based on an original concept by Ian Murphy and Allan Burrell (www.compositingcoach.com) commissioned by Yen Yau from Into Film

Content © 2020 ScreenSkills. All rights reserved.

Camera

Camera supervisor
Is the most senior role in the camera department. Working closely with the director, camera supervisors attend site visits and use their expert knowledge of cameras and lighting to assess the technical issues of a shoot.

Camera supervisors mostly work on multi-camera, outside broadcast and studio-based programmes. On single camera programmes like documentaries, the head of department is the **lighting camera operator**. Lighting camera operators work alone, or with an assistant, and usually own their own equipment. Sometimes they are known as **directors of photography**, usually when they contribute more to the artistry of the shots.

Camera operator
Operates a variety of different cameras in the studio and on location. Camera operators carry out complex technical tasks, all the time listening to the director. They also suggest shots. On single camera shoots, the camera operator is often responsible for the lighting and sometimes the sound.

Jib operator
Operates cameras attached to a long arm – a jib - fixed to a wheeled platform, called a dolly. They swing the jib arm to move the camera, offering moving shots while adjusting the pan, focus, tilt and zoom. They work closely with a jib assistant who moves the jib base around the studio floor.

Grip
Is responsible for building and maintaining the equipment that supports the cameras, whether that be a tripod or a 100ft crane. While directors think of the artistry of the shots, grips work out how to position cameras, so they move smoothly to achieve the effect. They closely work with the director, camera supervisor and jib operator.

Camera assistant
Works with camera operators or supervisors to help in any way from setting up the equipment rigs to making tea. When camera assistants work on location, they make sure the batteries are charged and have any camera accessories ready for the camera operator. They help de-rig, load and store equipment after each shoot.

Autocue operator
Formats the programme script to work on a device attached to a camera, enabling the presenter to read it with the illusion they are speaking from memory or without prompting. Autocue operators operate a computer linked to the prompter during a recording, making changes and controlling the speed at which the words scroll. This role is sometimes known as **teleprompter**.

Digital imaging technician
Works on set with the camera department to ensure the action is captured in the best format and the post-production team gets the rushes in the way it needs. Digital imaging technicians (DITs) set up the cameras and checks for issues that could cause problems in the edit. They are especially useful to TV directors not yet familiar with digital photography. On some productions DITs do the role of the data wrangler too.

Data wrangler
Handles the rushes, ensuring they get safely from the camera to the edit facility. Data wranglers transfer and backup digital rushes from multiple drives. They check the data on the files and label them. As footage is passed from the shoot to the edit, they log who has received what. Data wranglers work in a similar role to DITs but are less experienced.

Lighting

Lighting director
Designs the lighting, usually for multi-camera productions. In pre-production, lighting designers prepare a lighting plan (plot) with information about the light position, type and colour, as well as the staff required and the schedule. They may also program and design media for LED screens and moving lights.

Gaffer
Works with the lighting director to position lighting according to the plot. Senior electricians are responsible for safety, monitoring electricity usage and identifying if additional power resources are required. On large productions with lots of lights and LED video projection, they manage the team. They combine creative thinking with an interest in engineering. Senior electricians are also known as **gaffers**.

Lighting console operator
Operate all lights on a set. This involves setting up the console or dimmer desk, programming and wiring. They balance the picture and programme the lights to maintain the "look" set by the lighting director. During the recording or broadcast, they follow instructions and interpret ideas according to the plans and cues.

Spark
Installs the lights and makes sure all electrical aspects of a set work. Sparks work with the lighting director to position the lighting and create the desired effects. They monitor power supply systems and ensure they are safe. Sparks work on smaller single-camera programmes, while senior electricians work with teams on multi-camera shoots. Sparks are also known as **electricians**.

Sound

Sound supervisor
Is the senior sound person on large, multi-camera programmes with complex elements. During pre-production sound supervisors attend site meetings with the director. They understand the production requirements, advise on potential audio issues, recruit the team and liaise with other departments. They are experts at choosing microphones, mixing audio signals and operating mixing desks and recording devices. During recording or transmission, they may work from a specially equipped vehicle, often with a sound engineer or sound assistants.

Sound recordist
Captures the sound required for the TV programme, including dialogue and background noise. Sound recordists may work within a studio. On single-camera style programmes they may work alone. They own the majority of their equipment, or they hire it from specialist kit or rental companies.

Grams operator
Plays music or sound effects during recording or broadcast, usually on entertainment or sports programmes. Grams operators prepare the sound files for use. They follow the script and director's instructions on when to play them in, working with specialised software and kit. Grams operators are also known as **deputy sound supervisors**.

Art

Production designer
Designs the sets in which programmes are made, including talent shows, quizzes and awards ceremonies. Production designers consider what content needs to be made within their set, how to style and dress it. They work with the director, producer, lighting director, floor manager, camera and sound supervisors to ensure the set meets their technical requirements. They make sure it's accessible, safe and within budget.

Art director
Manages the art department. In studios art directors help turn the production designer's vision into a reality, through recruiting a team and creating the set. They may also plan special effects like fake snow, pyrotechnics and gunge. On shows filmed on location, they manage the dressing and styling of an area (indoors or outdoors) in which to film. Often, they design props themselves and oversee their build.

Production buyer
Shops for the items required for the production design. Production buyers know the specialist suppliers. Working to a brief, they are expert researchers and negotiators and spend a lot of time shopping. They record all items used in a production and make sure everything is returned, sold, scrapped or recycled after filming.

Art department assistant
Supports the team with whatever is required, including creating small props and set dressing. Art department assistants are creative, with an eye for detail. They're skilled in practical art skills, like drawing, painting and sculpture as well as digital art and computer-aided design.

Costume

Costume designer
Creates the costumes and styles the stars. Costume designers oversee the styling, buying, hiring or making of outfits. They manage the team that shop for garments, makes clothes, fits them and adjusts them. Costume designers have good relationships with fashion designers and clothing brands, who supply garments. Sometimes they work one-on-one with celebrities or presenters when they tend to be known as **fashion stylists** or **costume stylist**. The department can also be called wardrobe.

Costume supervisor
Coordinates the work of the costume department on bigger, multi-camera productions. Working to the costume designer's plans, costume supervisors work out what clothes and accessories need to be made, hired or bought. They ensure continuity of outfits on screen and supervise their cleaning and maintenance. They are also responsible for the staffing, budget and schedule.

Hair and make-up

Hair and make-up designer
Is responsible for the overall design, application, continuity and care of make-up and hair. During pre-production hair and make-up designers design the look, working out how hair and make-up will appear in the conditions of the show. They source products, prepare budgets, recruit staff and calculate call times. They usually work on the main presenters but oversee all other performers. Some celebrities trust a designer's skills so much that they are contracted for all the performer's work. Hair and make-up designers are also known as **make-up supervisors**.

Hair and make-up artist
Tests looks with performers, checking for allergies or sensitivities before filming begins. Hair and make-up artists help get the kit together during pre-production. During shooting they apply make-up and cut and style hair or wigs. They also take notes and photos for continuity.

Entry level roles

Sound assistant
Does jobs like unload the van on location, labelling the sound files or tidying the cables in a studio. With experience, sound assistants take on significant responsibility, becoming the eyes and ears of the sound supervisor. They are responsible for setting up sound equipment, public address systems and microphones. Sound assistants are called **sound floor operators** on entertainment programmes.

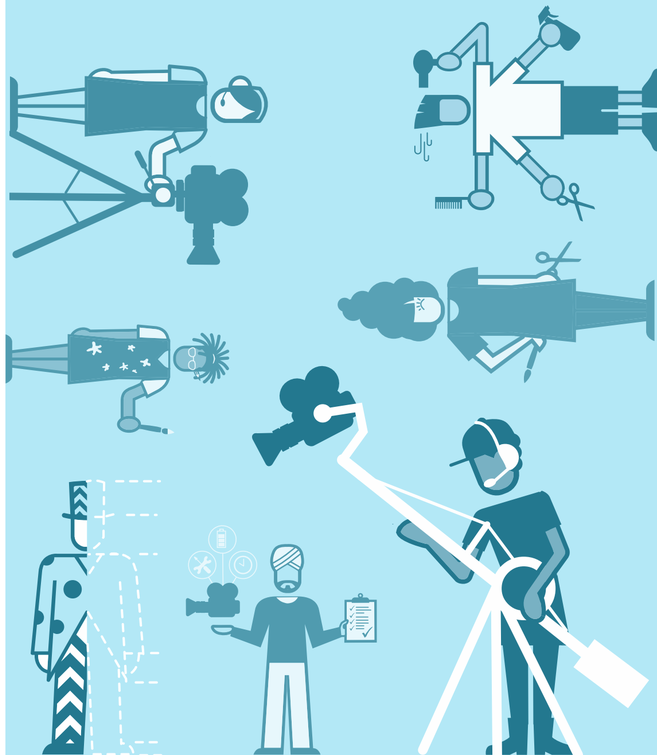
Runner
Assists everyone on the team, whether working in the office, on location, in a studio or driving crew and cast between them. On location, they might fetch tapes, cable and scripts and sort out kit bags. In a studio, they might look after cast and help on the studio floor. They might be called **studio runners** or **floor runners** and often go on to work in craft and technical positions.

Kit room assistant
Works for a broadcaster or an equipment rental company hiring out kit. Kit room assistants prepare camera, lighting and sound equipment. They check items in and out, action repairs, report damage and deliver and collect the kit from clients. Training is usually offered, which is useful for people wanting to go into camera, lighting, grip and sound roles. Kit room assistants usually go on to work in one of these departments.

Art department runner
Supports the art department with any tasks required. Art department runners run errands, collate receipts, help to make props and generally keep the department running smoothly. They have a can-do attitude, as well as being skilled in art and digital image manipulation. Being able to drive is essential.

Costume assistant
Maintains the clothes and accessories. Costume assistants wash, iron and steam clothes. They run errands, check the continuity of the costumes between shots, make notes and fix minor problems. After filming finishes, they prepare items for storage, return or re-sale. Assistants also have dressmaking and tailoring skills. This role is sometimes known as **stylist's assistant**.

Hair and make-up assistant
Helps the hair and make-up designers. Hair and make-up assistants set up and tidy workstations, prepare tools and products, update notes and reference photographs. Sometimes hair and make-up assistants finish looks for senior team members to approve. They usually have qualifications in hair and make-up before entering this role.

Careers in unscripted television

Craft and technical