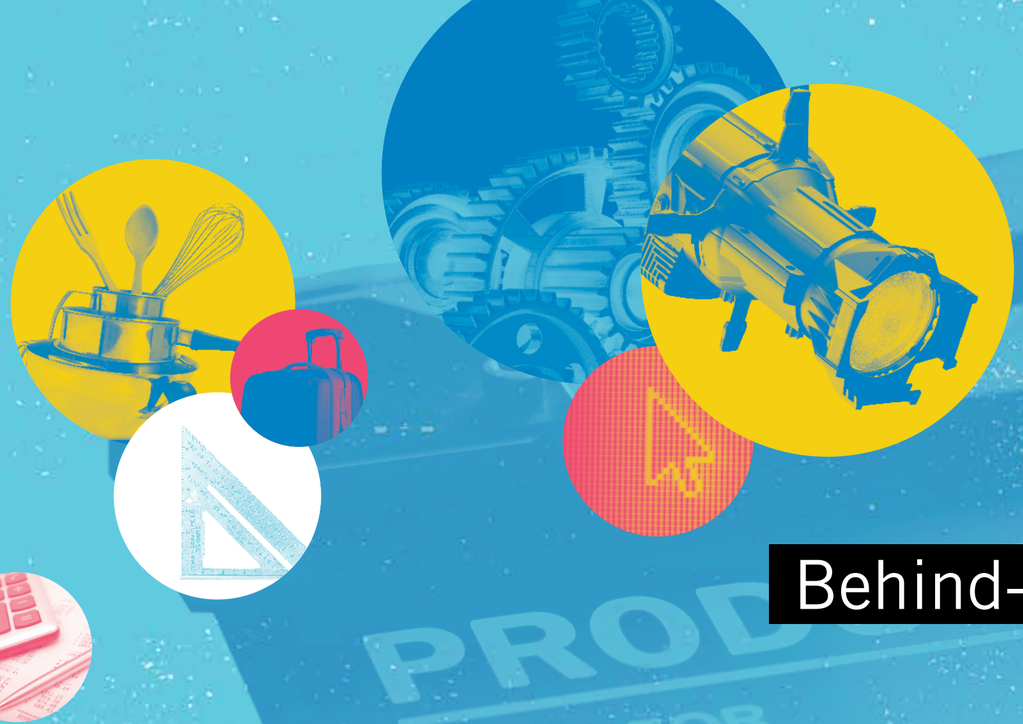
Where Would I Go to School to Prepare for a Career in Film & TV Behind-the-scenes?



Department of Education

Career Exploration Guide

Film & TV Behind-the-Scenes Career Pathway

Film & TV Career Cluster

For more information about NYC Career and Technical Education, visit: **www.cte.nyc**

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What is behind-the-scenes?

New York City is a worldwide magnet for film and TV production, and the industry is an important part of the city's image and economy. Think of all the movies and TV shows made and set in New York City. Remember how many times you have walked by a movie or TV show while it was being filmed on New York City streets. Many people move to New York City specifically to work in film and television.

There are multiple careers in film and television, both on-screen and off-screen.

Where do behind-the-scenes people work?

The top industries for behind-the-scenes work are television, radio, motion picture, and sound recording studios. Some of the top advertising employers are NBC, CBS, Disney, Fox News Network, Altice USA, MTV, HBO, Univision, and ABC. There are also many large and small production companies. People who work behind-the-scenes might work on set and on location. They might work in a studio, a media lab, or in an edit suite.

While some jobs, such as those in broadcast news, happen day-in and day-out, much of this industry is project-based. There are three stages to every project: pre-production, production, and post-production.

Pre-production is where all the planning takes place before the camera rolls. It includes the script, creating a storyboard, and casting. All of the locations, props, costumes, and special and visual effects are identified. All arrangements are made for filming. Sets are built, the crew is hired, financial arrangements are put in place, and a start date for filming is set.

Production happens when the financing is in place and the movie or TV show is filmed. It includes actors, lights, cameras, sound, props, and following the schedule. Everything happens in a relatively short period of time.

Post-production is what happens after all the footage has been captured. It involves all types of editing, adding graphics, music, color, and special effects. The post-production phase usually takes longer than the actual shooting of the film or TV show.

What does the future look like for behind-the-scenes jobs?

In NYC, independent films, TV, documentaries, and broadcast news are in high demand and very competitive. While there are always jobs available, a lot of people want these jobs so it is competitive to get one. Also, this industry is definitely part of the "gig" economy. Most of the work is freelance, which means that people work day-to-day and project to project. People who work in the industry always have to be on the lookout for the next opportunity.

Although this can change over time, industry experts say that right now demand seems to be greatest for editors.

Working in this field

Being successful in this field means having a combination of different types of skills.

Baseline skills:

- Media literacy
- Listening skills
- Knowing how to tell your story
- Writing skills, especially how to write professionally
- Public speaking skills

Technical skills: Learn the tools of the trade.

- Production
- Audio Fundamentals
- Camera Fundamentals
- Lighting Fundamentals
- Post-Production (Editing)
- Adobe After Effects: Photoshop and/or Premiere
- Avid Media Composer
- DaVinci Resolve (color correction and finishing software)
- Final Cut Pro X
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Premiere Pro
- Pro Tools (audio editing)
- Nuke

Get an internship. While you are still in school, get an internship in order to gain practical experience. Internships are great opportunities to gain new technical skills and learn software used in the industry. You can also work together with others on real-world projects.

Film & TV Behind-the-scenes Career Pathways

What are the career paths?

The main point of entry is the Production Assistant (PA) position. Almost everyone in the industry starts out as a PA. After working for six months to a year to gain experience and connections, PAs can move up into different types of positions. Although a bachelor's degree is not necessarily required to be a PA, most PAs have bachelor's degrees.

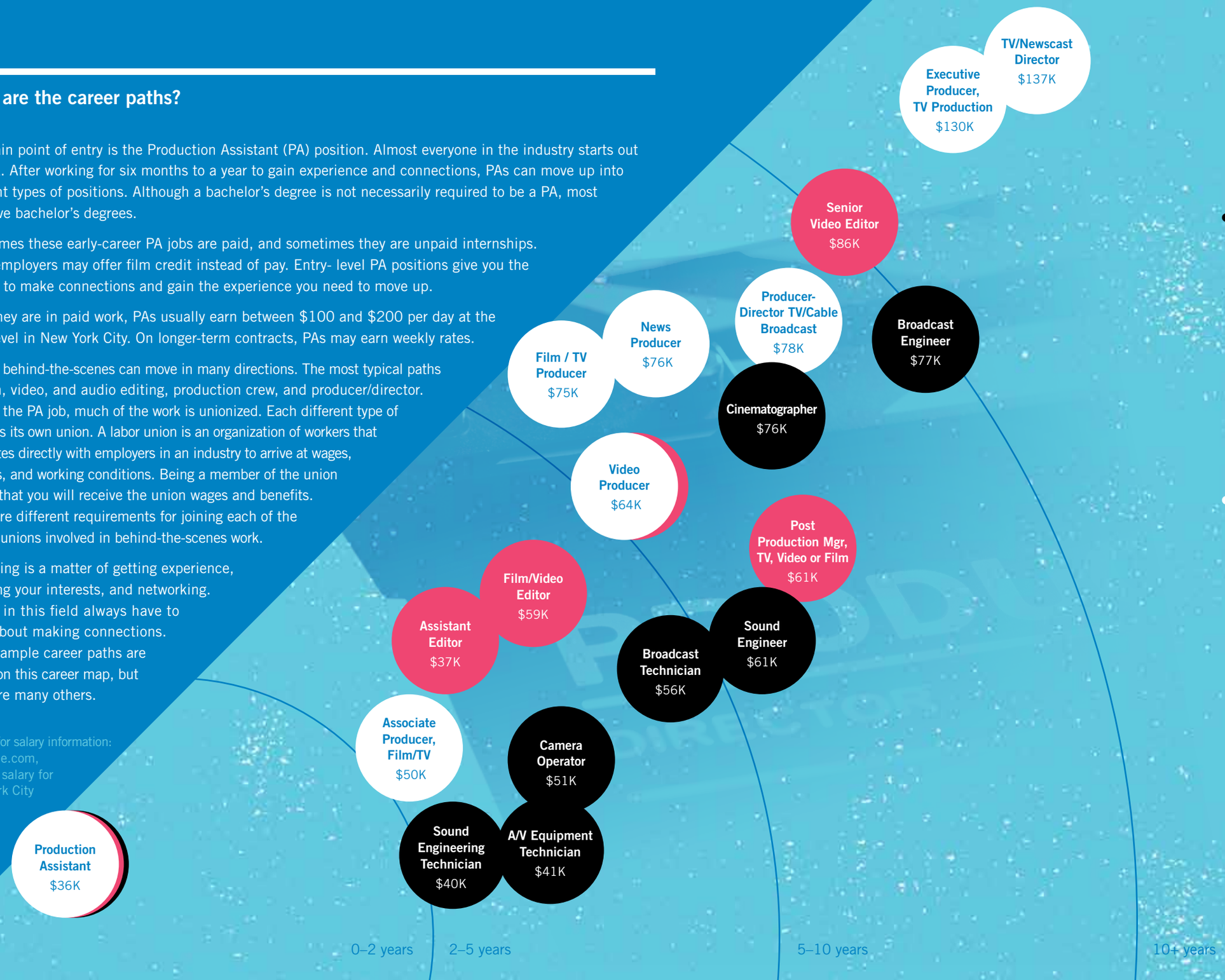
Sometimes these early-career PA jobs are paid, and sometimes they are unpaid internships. Some employers may offer film credit instead of pay. Entry- level PA positions give you the chance to make connections and gain the experience you need to move up.

Once they are in paid work, PAs usually earn between $100 and $200 per day at the entry level in New York City. On longer-term contracts, PAs may earn weekly rates.

Careers behind-the-scenes can move in many directions. The most typical paths are film, video, and audio editing, production crew, and producer/director. Beyond the PA job, much of the work is unionized. Each different type of work has its own union. A labor union is an organization of workers that negotiates directly with employers in an industry to arrive at wages, benefits, and working conditions. Being a member of the union means that you will receive the union wages and benefits. There are different requirements for joining each of the various unions involved in behind-the-scenes work.

Advancing is a matter of getting experience, following your interests, and networking. People in this field always have to think about making connections. Some sample career paths are shown on this career map, but there are many others.

Source for salary information: PayScale.com, Median salary for New York City



Film, Video, Audio Editing

Film and video editors, also called picture editors, cut and rearrange moving picture or videotape footage. Audio editors work on sound. Editors may add music, dialogue, graphics, animation, or sound. They may work on visual effects and color correction as part of the picture finishing process or in post-production. Generally they use software designed for the particular type of editing. Although some editing takes place during production, most of it happens in post-production. People working in this career area may start as assistant editors. They can progress to editor, senior editor, post-production coordinator and manager, and beyond. While not strictly required, most editors have bachelor's degrees.

Production Crew

The production crew includes camera, audio, and lighting. They work primarily during the production phase. Camera operators operate all types of video and movie cameras. They frame, focus, and zoom, using lenses, film, filters, and camera settings to achieve the effects that directors want. Lighting technicians and engineers understand how light is used to tell a visual story. Audio or sound technicians or engineers use equipment and machines to record, synchronize, mix, or reproduce music, voices, or sound effects. Many people stay in production crew jobs for their entire careers. They may move into more specialized or responsible positions. Sometimes production crew members become editors, directors, or producers.

Producer / Director

Producers and directors create movies, television shows, commercials and other performing arts productions. Producers make the business and financial decisions. They raise money and hire the director and crew. They make sure that the production is completed on time, and they are ultimately responsible for the final product. Directors are responsible for the creative decisions of a production. They select cast members and direct the work of the cast and crew. Directors work with cinematographers, screenwriters, editors, and other crew members. Although the film and TV industries are becoming more like each other, the structures of the two parts of the industry are different. In TV production, the writer/producer tends to be the driver. In film production, it is the executive producer and the director. Producers and directors usually have a bachelor's degree. In TV and film, they might start out as assistants or in other types of jobs. As a producer's or director's reputation grows, he or she may work on larger, more expensive projects.

How do I get my foot in the door?

Most Production Assistant (PA) jobs are not advertised. Although some may be advertised online, most positions are filled through networks, word-of-mouth, and reputation.

It is not strictly necessary to have a bachelor's degree to land a PA job. There are several programs in film, video and media production in NYC high schools. For instance, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations runs a Production Assistant training program that is highly competitive to get into.

However, most PAs land their first job after having internships while they are in college earning their bachelor's degrees. These degrees are usually in film, TV, communications, or media arts. Several CUNY colleges offer these types of bachelor's degrees.

Interns who make a positive impression get jobs when they finish school, so it is important to work hard and learn the technical skills for the type of work you are interested in. It is also important to be flexible and willing to do different tasks.

Websites that have ads for PA positions and other technical film and TV jobs include:

- Mandy.com
- newyork.craigslist.org
  Jobs → tv/film/video
  Gigs → crew
- nycfilmcrew.com
- entertainmentcareers.net
- media-match.com
- staffmeup.com
- LinkedIn.com

Would I like to work behind-the-scenes?

An internship with a film or TV production company is a good opportunity to inform your decision whether this type of career is of interest. This will help you experience what goes on behind-the-scenes so that you can make a good decision for yourself.

People who enjoy working behind-the-scenes are:

- Flexible
- Self-Disciplined
- Punctual
- Like going beyond what's asked
- Able to work under pressure and meet deadlines
- Motivated/Passionate about the work
- Persistent

People in these jobs usually work all types of hours in all locations.

New York City High Schools

BRONX	
Academy for Language and Technology	Media Communications
Fordham HS for the Arts	Technical Theatre
Longwood Preparatory Academy	Digital Communication & Media / Multimedia
BROOKLYN	
Brooklyn Life Academy HS for Film and Music	Film & Video Production
Brooklyn Navy Yard STEAM Center	Film & Media Technology
Brooklyn School for Music & Theatre	Technical Theatre
Brooklyn Technical HS	Media
Midwood HS	Media Production
WH Maxwell CTE HS	Communication Media
MANHATTAN	
Art and Design HS	Film & Video Production
LaGuardia HS for Music, Art & Performing	Technical Theatre
QUEENS	
Academy for Career in TV & Film	Film & Video Production
Bayside HS	Digital Art / Digital Communication
Information Technology HS	Film & Video Production
STATEN ISLAND	
Curtis HS	Media Studies
New Dorp HS	Digital Communication
Ralph McKee CTE HS	Digital Communication & Media / Multimedia

City University of New York

	PERFORMING ARTS PRODUCTION	FILM / MEDIA PRODUCTION	COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY / DESIGN
BRONX			
Bronx Community College		Associate Degree	
Lehman College	Bachelor's Degree		
BROOKLYN			
Brooklyn College	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate degree	Credit-bearing certificate, Bachelor's Degree, Graduate degree	
Kingsborough Community College			
Medgar Evers College			
New York City College of Technology			Bachelor's Degree
MANHATTAN			
Baruch College			Non-credit-bearing certificate
Borough of Manhattan Community College		Associate Degree	
Hunter College	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate degree	Bachelor's Degree	
The City College of New York	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate degree	
QUEENS			
La Guardia Community College	Associate Degree		
Queens College	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	
Queensborough Community College	Associate Degree	Associate Degree	
York College			Bachelor's Degree
STATEN ISLAND			
College of Staten Island	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate degree	

- Non-credit-bearing certificate
- Credit-bearing certificate
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate degree