



## FIRST STEPS

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There is no “right” way to negotiate a pathway into the motion picture industry. One of the best things to do is make the most of your personal network, including the networks of friends and family – most people working in the industry today have a story about how they met someone who provided an introduction and after that, they didn’t look back. So start asking around!

Getting a project from idea to screen has three components: development (story development, screenplay, financing), production (physical filming) and post-production (editing, visual effects, sound and music). Your interests and career choice will determine which area you will work in – only a few jobs carry through from development to post-production. Most of the work available in BC is in physical production and VFX.

Of the myriad of ways to enter the industry, many of them dependent on your skill set, experience and what you want for a career. Consider these personal elements and start researching to find out what you can do initially, what you need to learn and who you can speak with in order to begin making your way.

It’s a process that requires persistence, diligence and passion, but so does working in the industry, so think of it as training for your career and start asking around!

While not directly involved in hiring for productions, Creative BC can offer some suggestions for getting started. You can find a comprehensive overview of training opportunities, work experience and networking suggestions on our website.

## WHERE TO GET YOUR TRAINING

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When you’ve determined what you’re interested in, find out as much as you can about the department/position, including the skills and experience required. Union websites can be useful at this stage if they post departmental requirements for membership as you can use those to determine what you need to learn.

An accredited school will help you discover your talents and acquaint you with important skills and requirements for your chosen career. For information on the career path of your choice and what program might be appropriate, contact the relevant institutions. We recommend researching your options before committing to a program to ensure it’s a good fit and you get what you need out of the experience.

## GETTING EXPERIENCE AND NETWORKING

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There’s no way around it: the motion picture industry is a huge network. Make the most of yours to generate connections and contacts – personal networks are key and can easily be widened with a little effort and courage. Growing your network can help you get some experience and getting experience will most certainly grow your network. Take every opportunity to attend industry events, forums and workshops. If you can’t afford the fees, volunteering is a great way to be involved and meet people. Contact film festivals, associations or film schools to learn about opportunities to meet people or acquire skills through volunteering.

## FINDING WORK

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Most entry-level work in the industry is with production. Even if you don’t have film experience yet, any work experience that shows you have stamina, a good attitude, good people skills, a zest for life and enthusiasm for learning on the job will help. Collect some good character and work references for your resume. If you have a car, mention that – you’ll be working strange and long hours in far-flung places and having your own transportation is an important bonus.

Be thorough. Look for possible opportunities in commercials, corporate videos, digital content, music videos, short films and student films. Volunteer work is invaluable as it can help build your resume and create introductions that may lead to paid work in the future. But be clear about what you’re agreeing to and who you’re working with.

The world of commercials isn’t unionized and initially might be easier to get work in – there are a handful of companies producing commercials in the lower mainland, most are listed on the [CPAWC website](#).

Investigate working at a rental house that supplies the department that you’re interested in, to learn more and expand your network.

Entry-level work in production on larger big budget shows is generally as a production assistant (PA) in the locations department or the production office. BCPAX (BC Production Assistant Exchange) is a network of support and connection between PAs and employers. They also connect working PAs with the department PAs would like to join. Check out the Directors Guild of Canada, BC Chapter website for good entry level information about working as a PA in the form of a PA manual and survival guides.

Being an extra/background performer can also be a good introduction to working on set, too.

## READY TO JOIN THE UNION?

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Union membership for crew working in production isn't the first step in a career in motion picture production, nor do they guarantee work. Applicants are encouraged to research what it takes to succeed in the area that they are interested in, talk to people who work in the industry and take introductory courses. What unions do provide is the opportunity to work on signatory productions, representation by a bargaining agent and benefits, amongst other things. Membership requirements vary with each union but in general, after filling out an application, working a certain number of days in the desired position on signatory productions then qualifies you to join a union's permittee program. Generally, applicants must also have successfully completed a Motion Picture Industry Orientation course (set-etiquette) and a Motion Picture Safety Awareness course at a minimum, which we recommend completing before working on set in any capacity. The unions in BC are:

- [Directors Guild of Canada – BC District Council](#)
- [Association of Canadian Film Craftspeople: ACFC West Local 2020](#)
- [The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees: IATSE Local 891 – BC and Yukon](#)
- [International Cinematographers Guild, IATSE Local 669](#)
- [Teamsters 155](#)
- [UBCP/ACTRA – Union of BC Performers](#)



## [www.creativebc.com](http://www.creativebc.com) “Education + Careers”

**Some words from us to take along with you for your first days on set** – there's a lot to understand in the world of motion picture production so stay positive, alert and humble, be patient and curious, listen carefully and ask questions if you don't understand how or why you're doing something. There's no such thing as a stupid question when you're starting out. Locations PA's are often the ambassadors of the film industry in the greater community, as they usually are a first point of contact for the public, however everyone who works in film on location are essential ambassadors in all of the communities we work in. Get to know as much as you can about your role and both the process and impact of production in order to be a positive representative for both production and crew!

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SO YOU  
WANT TO  
BE IN THE  
FILM BIZ?!