

## Actor

Actors use speech, movement and body language to play the part of a character or interpret a script for a theatre, film, TV or radio performance.

### The Work

You could be:

- portraying characters created by a playwright, screenwriter or author, guided by a director
- doing background reading and research for your role
- using your own past experience as well as your training to interpret the writer's words and bring the character to life
- working as part of a team with the director and your fellow actors to achieve the best interpretation of the script
- spending a lot of your time learning lines and rehearsing
- performing for a live audience or recorded programme for TV, film, radio or theatre
- providing voice-overs for commercials, documentaries, audio books and animated or foreign language films
- continuously looking for your next job by preparing for and attending auditions and casting sessions
- adapting your performance to the differing technical demands of film, TV, radio and theatre work.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the competition for the job.

Most actors are self-employed. Equity sets annual minimum rates for actors in both theatre and film, TV and radio. Rates vary depending on whether it is a rehearsal or performance and whether it is for film, TV, radio or theatre.

For example, the minimum weekly rate agreed between ITC (Independent Theatre Company Ltd) and Equity for a performance is £601.00. These rates are valid from 2025 to 2026. You can find details of all the current Equity rates under the 'Rates and Agreements' section of their website.

Actors working for a touring company may also get a lodgings allowance. You pay a reduced Equity subscription when you are not in work.

### Conditions

Many people believe this is a glamorous and well-paid job. This may be the case for a few actors at the top of their

profession, but it is certainly not true of the majority and many have to do other jobs.

- The work is mainly indoors, in theatres or in studios, but can sometimes be outside, on location or in street theatre.
- In the theatre, or in a long running TV or radio series, you may perform the same role for weeks or months.
- You may have to wear uncomfortable costumes, heavy make-up and wigs for long periods.
- In film and TV, you may have to spend long periods between scenes waiting for lights, props and sets to be arranged.
- When working on a production, you often have to spend long periods away from home or abroad.
- You may have to work irregular and very long hours, from early morning to late at night.

## Getting In

- Although there are no formal entry requirements, most actors have been to drama or stage school.
- There are courses at various levels: NC or NQ (SCQF Level 4-6), HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) and degree (SCQF Level 9-10) in subjects such as acting and performance, drama, performing arts, and theatre studies.
- Entry qualifications to these courses vary depending on level, from a few subjects at National 4 or 5 or equivalent, to 3 or more Highers. There is usually also an audition and an interview.
- It helps if you have some experience in amateur drama.
- You need to be a member of [Equity](#) for most jobs.
- Many actors sign up with an agent to help them find work. The agent takes a percentage of the job fee.

## What Does It Take

You should have:

- talent
- confidence
- a clear speaking voice and the ability to learn different accents
- imagination and creativity
- stamina
- a good memory for learning lines quickly
- the ability to express a wide range of emotions
- the ability to be punctual and reliable
- good communication and listening skills.

You also need:

- the ability to carefully observe others, their accents, physical gestures and expressions
- adaptability to take on different roles and cope with the technical demands of different performance styles
- the ability to network with people in the industry and make contacts
- resilience, to take criticism and rejection.

## Training

- Actors develop their skills on the job.
- You may need to learn skills like dancing or horse riding for a particular part or learn to perform fight scenes without harming yourself or others.
- You may choose to train in a related area, such as directing, scriptwriting or teaching.

## Getting On

- Actors work in live shows, as in the theatre, or in recorded productions, such as television programmes or adverts.
- Film and TV tend to be better paid, but many actors find theatre more satisfying and rewarding.
- To be really successful you need not just talent but a lot of luck.
- Some actors do get regular well-paid work, but others need to supplement their income with other jobs.
- A 'character' role on a regular television or radio series can provide longer-term security.
- Some actors become directors and some go into teaching.

## More Information

The Scottish Youth Theatre offers an exciting and varied programme of classes, projects and performances throughout the year and throughout Scotland for young people aged between 14-25. Visit the [Scottish Youth Theatre](#) website for more information.

Take a look at [The Stage](#) online magazine for information on jobs and auditions. You can even download a Jobs and Auditions app for your iPhone. [The Mandy](#) is also a job platform for the performing arts.

## Contacts

### Creative Scotland

Email: [enquiries@creativescotland.com](mailto:enquiries@creativescotland.com)

Website: [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com)

Website (2): [opportunities.creativescotland.com](http://opportunities.creativescotland.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland](https://www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland)

### Scottish Youth Theatre

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Email: [enquiries@scottishyouththeatre.org](mailto:enquiries@scottishyouththeatre.org)

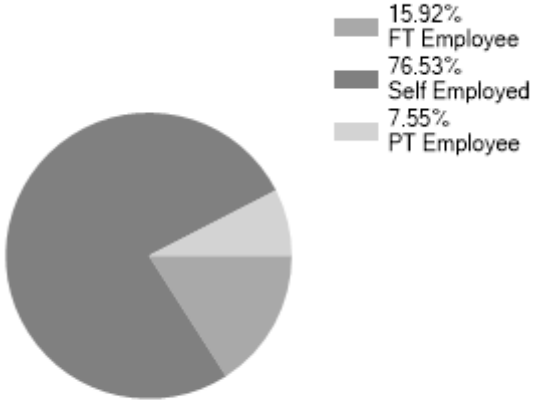
Website: [www.scottishyouththeatre.org](http://www.scottishyouththeatre.org)

X: @ScottishYT

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/scottishyouththeatre](https://www.facebook.com/scottishyouththeatre)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

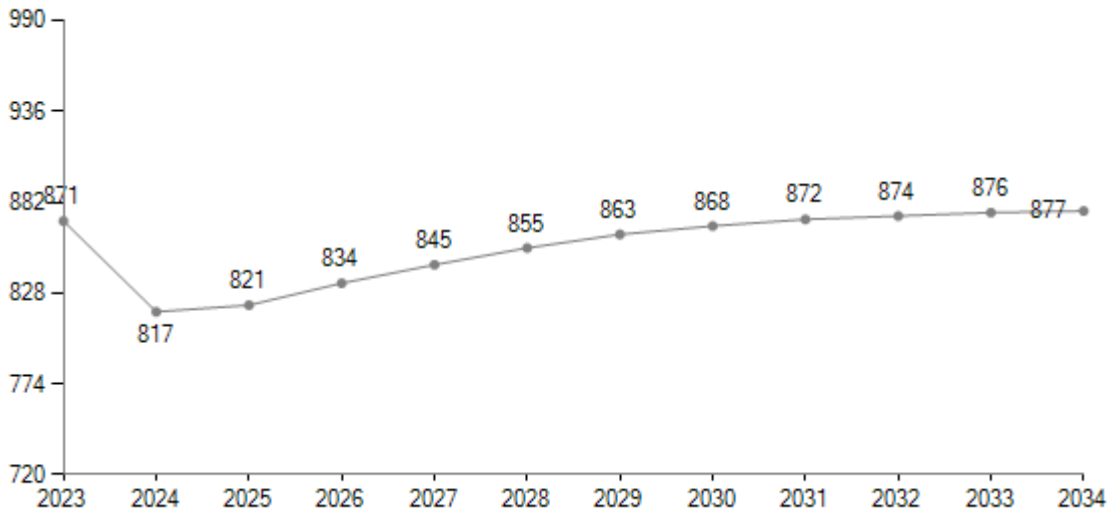


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)