

Choreographer

A choreographer creates and puts together dance steps, movements and sequences set to music as routines for dancers, actors or musicians. The aim can be a specific one-off show for film, television or theatre, a new addition to the general repertoire of dance for professionals or amateurs to learn, or for a music video or live performance.

The Work

Choreographers usually specialise in one style of dance such as:

- classical ballet
- contemporary dance forms such as jazz, hip-hop, street or freestyle
- musical theatre
- ballroom and Latin American, for example salsa
- Highland or Scottish country (ceilidh) dancing
- cultural such as Irish, Indian, African or belly-dancing
- ice dancing
- disability dance.

You could be:

- working on a single production from the start, creating and developing the performance
- working on more than one show at a time
- helping to audition dancers
- meeting regularly with producers, musical and artistic directors and costume designers
- choosing the music to accompany the dance
- planning movements to fit the music, guided by the artistic and musical directors
- teaching the performers their moves and rehearsing them
- for some forms of dance, writing the steps and movements down, using a system such as Labanotation or Benesh movement notation
- working with other professionals to choreograph fight scenes or theatrical stunts.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. There is wide variation in the income of choreographers depending on:

- whether you are freelance or employed
- how established you are
- the size of the company or organisation you work for.

Earnings for choreographers can vary widely, depending on the type of contract and production you work on. Equity (the performers' union) negotiates minimum rates of pay for choreographers each year, both for the commercial and independent theatre. The Independent Theatre Council (ITC) website publishes 2025/26 minimum rates of pay as follows:

- Minimum fee (up to 2 weeks' rehearsal) - £2425.50
- Weekly fee - £601.00
- Daily rate - £195.30
- Sessional rate (maximum of 3 hours) - £126.00.

Conditions

- You work long irregular hours.
- You have to attend rehearsals by day and performances by night.
- You must keep up your fitness levels and stamina throughout your career.
- You work in theatres, film and TV studios, clubs, cruise ships, schools and community centres.
- You might have to travel, possibly abroad, and spend periods away from home.
- Work may be based around short contracts rather than a permanent job.

Getting In

- A background in dance (preferably as a performer) is more important than educational qualifications. Most choreographers start out as professional dancers or dance teachers.
- Several courses in dance performance include an option in choreography.
- There are courses in dance and performing arts (including dance) at different levels from NC (SCQF Levels 4-6) or NQ (SCQF Levels 4-6), up to HNC (SCQF Level 7) and HND (SCQF Level 8) and degree (SCQF Level 9-10).
- Not all courses need academic qualifications, although there is usually an audition.
- The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has a BA degree in Modern Ballet (in conjunction with Scottish Ballet). You require 5 subjects at National 5 and also have to undergo an audition. You can enter from 16 years of age.
- A number of Scottish colleges offer qualifications in contemporary dance performance, dance, dance artists and professional dance performance.
- Both Edinburgh College offers the BA Hons Dance and Drama (Dance) which is validated by Kingston University London. Entry is through a relevant HND and audition.
- There are also courses at private schools.
- Information on recognised dance courses is available from the Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT).

As with all artistic careers, getting in depends largely not only on your talent but also on successful networking. At first you may have to work in an unpaid placement in order to make contacts. You can work for a dance company, or film, TV or video production companies.

You may work on a freelance basis, earning a fixed fee for individual projects, or a major company such as Scottish Ballet may employ you.

What Does It Take

You should have:

- a creative imagination

- a high level of dancing ability
- a knowledge of established dance steps and movements
- an excellent sense of rhythm and understanding of the theory of timing in music
- a good ear for music
- a knowledge of human anatomy
- good spatial awareness
- a good memory to recall sequences of movements
- energy and stamina to try out the movements yourself and demonstrate them to others.

You also need:

- patience, stamina and excellent focus
- self-discipline and determination
- good communication skills for working with people
- an awareness of health and safety
- marketing and business skills, if you work freelance.

Training

- The One Dance UK website has information on professional development, and Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT) offers advice and information on all aspects of dance education and training.
- Through the National Choreographers' Forum, One Dance UK offers professional development schemes with seminars, workshops and networking opportunities for choreographers.

Getting On

- Once you are an experienced freelance choreographer, you can get One Dance UK to enter your name in the Choreographers' Directory, which is a resource for producers in the arts and entertainment industry.
- You may have periods of unemployment between productions. You could have a secondary part time career to fall back on, for example as a dance teacher or arts administrator. Teaching students can also provide a way of showcasing your work.
- If you are successful in establishing a reputation you might set up your own production company.

Contacts

Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT)

Tel: 020 7240 5703

Email: info@cdmt.org.uk

Website: www.cdmt.org.uk

X: @CDMTorg

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One Dance UK

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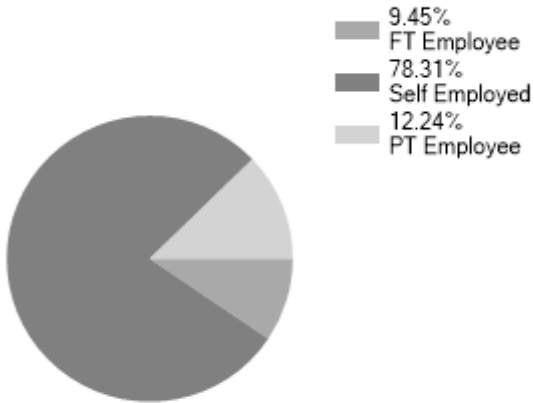
Website: www.onedanceuk.org

X: [@onedanceuk](https://twitter.com/onedanceuk)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/onedanceuk

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

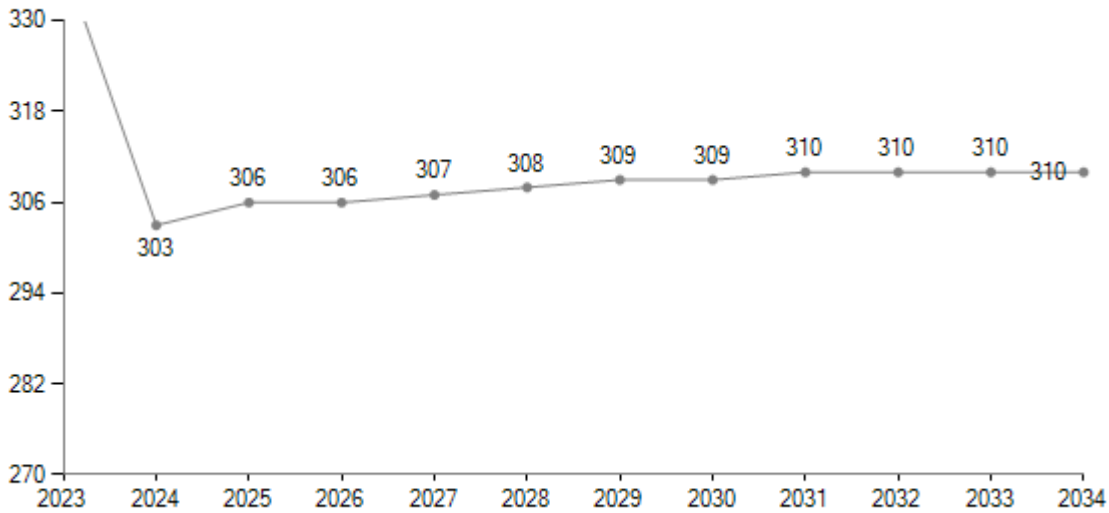


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)