

Prop Maker

Prop makers create a wide range of objects, such as furniture, replica weapons and moving models, for use in theatre, television and film. They follow the brief from a production or set designer and use a variety of practical skills to make realistic-looking items.

The Work

You could be:

- using a wide range of skills, such as carpentry, sculpting, sewing, computer-aided design (CAD), painting and modelling, to create objects
- discussing requirements with a set or production designer and drawing up designs
- carrying out research to make sure that objects look authentic
- making objects according to how they will be used, for example making what would normally be a heavy object light enough for an actor to lift
- experimenting with different materials, such as latex, leather, wood, metal or fabric, to see what works best
- using a variety of tools, from paint brushes and hammers, to power saws and welding equipment
- altering existing objects, using techniques such as distressing (making something look old or worn)
- repairing props that are damaged during use
- hiring or buying props.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries may vary, depending on:

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

Many prop makers work freelance. They charge a fee, which can vary depending on the work and their reputation. These may range from £10 to £20 an hour and £85 to £250 a day.

The rates recommended by the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) range from £550 a week for a trainee props person to £1,400 a week (TV) or £1,430 a week (Feature Film) for a props department co-ordinator based on a 50-hour week).

Conditions

- If working on a large production (most likely in film or TV) you usually work with a team of people.
- If working on a small production (often in theatre) you may work on your own and carry out costume making and set building as well as prop making.
- Working hours vary and weekend and evening work may be necessary when meeting a deadline.
- You could work in a studio, workshop or prop room, in a theatre or on a TV or film set.

- The conditions might be noisy, dusty and cramped.
- Some of the materials you would use may give off unpleasant and dangerous fumes.
- You might have to wear protective clothing, gloves and a mask.
- Sometimes you may have to travel to suppliers or to carry out research.

Getting In

- Skills and talent are more important than formal qualifications, but many prop makers do take an art-based or technical theatre course.
- Relevant subjects include production arts, technical theatre, art and design, 3D design and model making.
- A number of Scottish colleges offer Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND) in these areas.
- Entry to HNC usually requires 1 or 2 Highers and for HND, 2 Highers.
- The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland offers a degree in Production Arts and Design which has a pathway for prop making. Entry is with 3 Highers.
- Computer-aided design (CAD) skills are useful.
- Competition for jobs is high so it can be useful to have some experience, for example through an amateur theatre group.

You can look for work with theatres, film and TV production companies, community arts groups and companies that specialise in supplying props. Most film studios are based in London and south-east England, but there are theatres and TV companies based around the UK.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- practical and have good craft skills
- imaginative and creative
- patient and accurate, with an eye for detail
- good at problem solving
- able to understand plans and drawings
- able to interpret and visualise ideas
- able to work to deadlines and within budgets.

You need to have:

- an interest in design and technology
- drawing and IT skills
- good communication skills
- the ability to work on your own as well as in a team
- awareness of health and safety procedures.

Training

- You would train and gain experience on the job with your employer.

- You would continue to develop your skills by attending relevant part time courses and training opportunities.

Getting On

- You may move on to be a senior prop designer.
- You may move into set design, production design or stage management.
- You may become self-employed, working on a freelance basis.
- There are some job opportunities overseas for prop makers, especially if you are working for a firm that operates internationally.
- You may need to move around to find new opportunities.

More Information

There are a number of websites advertising jobs in the theatre, film and TV industries, such as [The Stage](#) and [Mandy](#).

Young Scot and Creative Scotland operate the 'Nurturing Talent - Time to Shine Fund', which aims to support young people aged 11-25 and interested in developing creative or artistic skills. Both individuals and groups can apply for funding up to £1,000. For more information see the Young Scot website.

The Creative and Cultural Skills website has a careers section called [Creative Choices](#) which covers careers information, jobs and opportunities in the theatre, including props work.

Contacts

Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT)

Tel: 020 7242 9200
 Email: office@abtt.org.uk
 Website: www.abtt.org.uk
 Twitter: @theabtt

BECTU Scotland (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union)

Email: info@bectu.org.uk
 Website: www.bectu.org.uk
 Twitter: @bectu
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/BECTUOfficial

Creative and Cultural Skills

Tel: 020 7015 1800
 Email: info@ccskills.org.uk
 Website: www.ccskills.org.uk
 Website (2): ccskills.org.uk/careers
 Twitter: @CCskills
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/ccskills

ScreenSkills

Tel: 020 7713 9800
 Email: info@screenskills.com
 Website: www.screenskills.com
 Twitter: @UKScreenSkills
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/UKScreenSkills

Stage Management Association (SMA)

Tel: 020 7403 7999

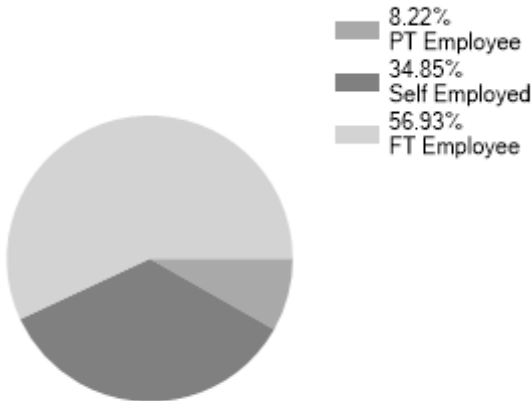
Email: admin@stagemanagementassociation.co.uk

Website: www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk

Twitter: @SMAAssoc

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

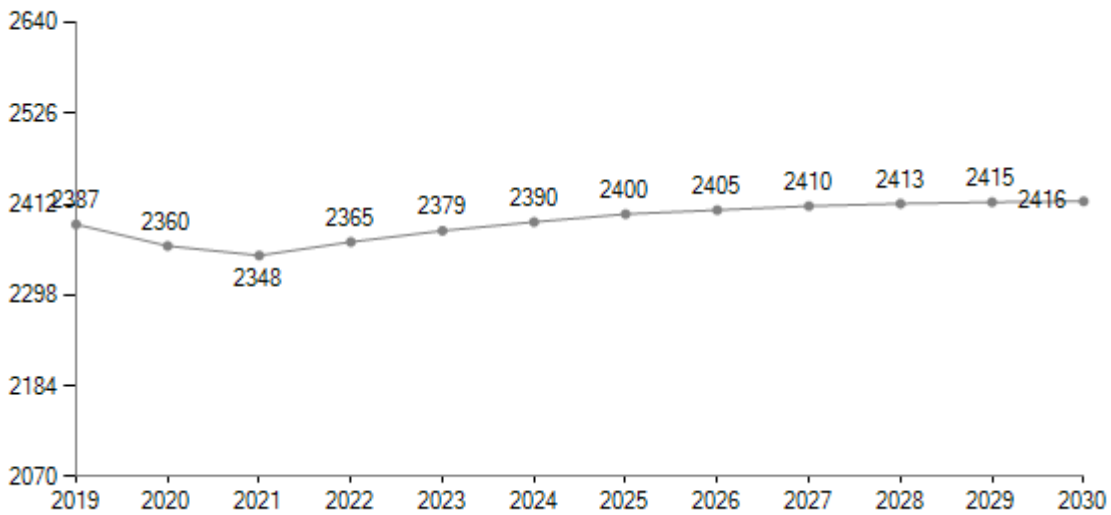


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)