

Photographer

Snapshot

Career Cluster(s): Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

Interests: Photography, Art, Photojournalism, Media, Technology

Earnings (2018 Median): \$53,630 yearly; \$25.79 hourly

Employment & Outlook: Slower Than Average growth

OVERVIEW

Sphere of Work

Nowadays, most photographers use digital cameras instead of traditional film cameras, although some photographers use both. Digital cameras capture images electronically, so the photographer can edit the image on a computer. Images can be stored on portable memory devices, such as flash drives. Once the raw image has been transferred to a computer, photographers can use image processing software to crop or modify the image and enhance it through color correction and other specialized effects. Photographers



who edit their own pictures use computers, editing software, and high-quality printers.

Some photographers use unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, to capture shots. The drones are equipped with an integrated camera to capture 360-degree imagery of buildings, landscapes, scenery, or events.

Photographers who work for commercial clients often present photographs in a digital format to the client. Wedding and portrait photographers, who serve primarily noncommercial clients, also may provide framing services and present the photographs they capture in albums.

Many photographers are self-employed. Photographers who own and operate their own business have additional responsibilities. They must advertise, schedule appointments, set up and adjust equipment, buy supplies, keep records, charge customers, pay bills, and—if they have employees—hire, train, and direct their workers.

In addition, some photographers teach photography classes or conduct workshops in schools or in their own studios.

Profile

- Working Conditions:** Work Both Indoors and Outdoors
- Physical Strength:** Light to Medium Work
- Education Needs:** On-Job Training, High School Diploma or GED, Apprenticeship
- Licensure/Certification:** Usually Not Required
- Opportunities for Experience:** On-Job Training, Part-Time Work, Internship
- Holland Interest Score*:** AES, ESA, RIC, RSE, SRC

* See Appendix A

Work Environment

A photographer’s work environment depends primarily on his or her area of photographic specialty. Some photographers, such as those who take studio portraits of children and families, work primarily out of comfortable, well-lit, indoor studios. Other photographers work outside in a multitude of environments and are subject to various weather conditions. Photographers who work for the government, advertising agencies, or private companies frequently maintain

a forty-hour week. Freelance and newspaper photographers, or

photojournalists, generally work irregular hours, travel often, and are expected to be on-call for last-minute projects or emergency events.

Photographers' specialties determine what they photograph and how those images are used. Portrait photographers specialize in photographing people or groups of people. They are generally self-employed and often travel to various locations for special events like weddings, school functions, and other special ceremonies. Commercial and industrial photographers travel to various locations to photograph landscapes, buildings, and merchandise. Their photographs are usually published in books, advertisements, catalogs, or other media. Scientific photographers make a photographic record of objects or events related to science and medicine. These photographers usually have technical training in the sciences as well as the arts. News photographers, or photojournalists, take pictures of relevant people or events for publication in regular newspapers or periodicals. Fine arts photographers are usually highly technically proficient, and may display their photographs in museums, art galleries, or private art shows.

Self-employed and freelance photographers must perform business and administrative tasks in addition to their creative work. Such tasks might include managing employees, handling billing and payments, setting appointments, and obtaining licenses, copyrights, contracts, and other legal documents as needed. They must also arrange their own advertising, marketing campaigns, and self-promotion.

- Composing subjects using distance, angle, and lighting
- Deciding on camera settings
- Using, lights, reflectors, screens and props
- Capturing subjects on film or in digital images
- Editing, printing, and publishing photographic images
- Marketing and advertising services to prospective clients
- Maintaining a professional portfolio

OCCUPATION SPECIALTIES

The following are examples of types of photographers:

Aerial photographers travel in planes or helicopters to capture overhead photographs of buildings and landscapes. They often use cameras with gyro stabilizers to counteract the movement of the aircraft and ensure high-quality images.

Commercial and industrial photographers take pictures of subjects such as buildings, models, merchandise, artifacts, and landscapes. They usually go on location to take pictures for magazine covers, engineering projects, or other purposes.

Drone photographers operate unmanned aerial vehicles with an integrated camera to capture 360-degree imagery of buildings, landscapes, scenery, or events.

Fine arts photographers sell their photographs as artwork. In addition to their knowledge of techniques such as lighting and the use of lenses, fine arts photographers need to have creativity and artistic talent.

News photographers, also called photojournalists, photograph people, places, and events for newspapers, journals, magazines, or television. In addition to taking still photos, photojournalists often work with digital video.

Portrait photographers take pictures of individuals or groups of people and may work in studios. Photographers who specialize in weddings, religious ceremonies, or school photographs usually work on location.

Scientific photographers capture scientific or medical data or phenomena. Because they focus on accurately representing subjects visually, these photographers limit the use of software to clarify an image. Scientific photographers who take pictures of objects too small to be seen with the naked eye use.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Physical Environment

A photographer's working conditions vary greatly depending on his or her specialty. Some photographers can work in clean, comfortable, well-ventilated studios. Others work in unpleasant or dangerous outdoor environments. Photographers regularly travel to and from photographic sites. Those who process film and prints, especially in a darkroom, are exposed to potentially harmful chemicals.

Relevant Skills and Abilities

Communication Skills

- Speaking effectively

Creative/Artistic Skills

- Being skilled in art or photography
- Having a good eye for identifying and capturing subjects
- Displaying a sensitivity to color, light, and shadow

Interpersonal/Social Skills

- Listening to clients
- Cooperating with others
- Working independently and as a member of a team

Organization & Management Skills

- Handling challenging situations
- Paying attention to and handling details
- Promoting one's work to potential clients

Technical Skills

- Operating camera equipment
- Using digital editing software
- Working in a darkroom (film development)

Human Environment

Photographers work with numerous clients, customers, and subjects. They must interact easily with others, and they should be comfortable directing, evaluating, and occasionally comforting their photographic subjects. Photographers sometimes collaborate with graphic designers, journalists, reporters, and editors. Some may report to a supervisor or direct an assistant.

Technological Environment

Photographers must learn how to operate camera equipment in order to be successful. To create a photograph, photographers use film and digital cameras, film, digital memory and storage devices, tripods, lenses and filters, floodlights, reflectors, light meters, and electronic flash units. Image processing may require computers, imaging and editing software,

printers and scanners, photographic paper, darkroom equipment, and chemicals for developing film and prints from film.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT

High School/Secondary

High school students interested in becoming photographers should devote time to the study of communications, computers, art, photography, and media. Aspiring photographers should also engage in extracurricular activities (like the school newspaper or yearbook) that allow them to practice taking pictures, editing their work, and posting or printing their best photographs. Interested students should pursue part-time work with a photographer or store and consider applying to postsecondary photography programs.

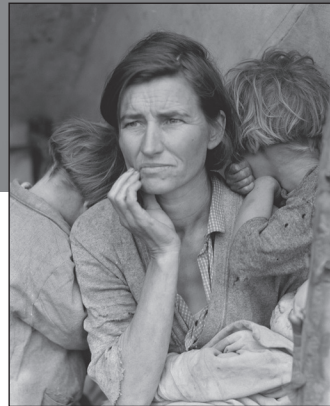
Suggested High School Subjects

- Arts
- Communications
- Computers & Digital Imaging
- Media Studies
- Photography

Famous First

One of Dorothea Lange's most recognized works is *Migrant Mother*. The woman in the photograph is Florence Owens Thompson. In 1960, Lange spoke about her experience taking the photograph: "I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions... She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me."

Source: www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/stories/articles/2014/4/14/migrant-mother-dorothea-lange/



College/Postsecondary

Most photographers find it helpful to have an undergraduate degree or certificate in photography from a university, community college, private art school, or vocational institute. Many vocational education programs offer courses in visual imaging technology as well as in the fundamentals of photography. Other postsecondary programs teach students the practical and technical aspects of photography. Coursework may include the history of photography and cinema, camera maintenance, photojournalism, composition, color printing and print finishing, lighting, retouching, and other related subjects. Prospective freelance photographers may benefit from studying courses in business, including marketing, public relations, and business management.

Related College Majors

- Commercial Photography
- Digital Imaging
- Educational/Instructional Media Design
- Educational/Instructional Media Technology
- Fine/Studio Arts
- Photography

Adult Job Seekers

Many prospective photographers find positions as assistants to local, professional photographers after receiving their formal education. Assistants gain valuable technical experience, on-the-job training, and the practical skills needed to start their own businesses. Other job seekers apply for full- or part-time positions at camera shops, local newspapers, or photography studios. Candidates can also participate in apprenticeships, mentorships, or internships through their schools or photography training programs.

Many photographers subscribe to photography newsletters and magazines in order to make contacts in the industry. Networking, mentoring, and professional development opportunities are also frequently available through professional photographer associations.

Professional Certification and Licensure

Photographers are usually not required to obtain professional certification or licensure in their field; to an extent, this is because the work is highly visual, so photographers can easily provide samples of their work to others. Some professional photography organizations offer voluntary certifications, which may enhance a photographer's marketing and job-seeking efforts. To become a Certified Professional Photographer (CPP) through the Professional Photographers of America, candidates must pass a written exam and provide images for critique. Continuing education is typically required for certification renewal.



Additional Requirements

Photography is a well- respected form of artistic expression. Therefore, aspiring and professional photographers should be naturally artistic and able to understand the fundamentals of photographic composition. Because the field is intrinsically subjective, photographers should maintain the integrity and conviction necessary to present effective artwork and subject analysis, without reacting negatively to criticism. Photographers should be patient, have great eyesight, possess boundless imagination, and demonstrate impeccable communication skills when dealing with clients and subjects.

Fast Fact

States have specific laws governing children in entertainment. For instance, in Iowa, children under age 16 may be employed as models, outside of school hours, for up to three hours a day between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., not exceeding 12 hours in a month, with parental permission.

Source: US Dept of Labor

EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT

The median hourly wage for photographers was \$16.35 in May 2018. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$9.54, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$36.71.

Median annual wages May 2018

Media and communication equipment workers: \$22.24

Total, all occupations: \$18.58

Photographers: \$16.35

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

In May 2018, the median hourly wages for photographers in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

Broadcasting (except Internet)	\$21.89
Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	\$20.86
Photographic services	\$14.21

Some photographers work part time. Hours often are flexible so that photographers can meet with current and potential clients or visit the sites where they will work. For certain types of photographers, workloads may fluctuate with the season. For example, wedding photographers are typically busiest in the summer and fall.

Photographers held about 132,100 jobs in 2018. The largest employers of photographers were as follows:

Self-employed workers	64%
Photographic services	20%
Broadcasting (except Internet)	3%
Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	2%

EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK

Employment of photographers is projected to decline 6 percent from 2018 to 2028. The decreasing cost of digital cameras and the increasing number of amateur photographers and hobbyists will reduce the need for professional photographers. In addition, stock photographic services available online give individuals and businesses access to stock photographs for a fee or subscription, possibly dampening demand for photographers.

Percent change in employment, Projected 2018–28

Total, all occupations: 5%

Media and communication equipment workers: 3%

Photographers: -6%

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

However, the application of newer technologies, such as drone photography, may contribute to increased demand for these workers. For example, drone photography in the commercial sector enables the capturing of images and information for agricultural land, real estate, and new construction projects. In addition, drone photography enables the photographer to create visuals of tall structures, such as cell towers and bridges, that are in need of repair. Drone photography at weddings or special events also captures scenic aerial portraits.

Employment of self-employed photographers is projected to grow 10 percent from 2018 to 2028. Demand for portrait photographers will remain as people continue to want new portraits. In addition, corporations will continue to require the services of commercial photographers to develop compelling advertisements to sell products.

Declines in the newspaper industry will reduce demand for news photographers to provide still images for print. Employment of photographers in newspaper publishing is projected to decline by about one-third from 2018 to 2028.

Photographers will face strong competition for most jobs. Because of the relative ease with which photographers may enter the occupation, there will be many qualified candidates for relatively few positions.

In addition, salaried jobs may be more difficult to obtain as companies increasingly contract with freelancers rather than hire their own photographers. Job prospects will be best for candidates who have a strong portfolio and related skills, such as in editing photos and capturing digital video.

Related Occupations

- Art Director
- Camera Operator & Videographer
- Cinematographer
- Motion Picture/Radio/TV Art Director
- Photographic Process Worker

Related Military Occupations

- Audiovisual & Broadcast Technician
- Broadcast Journalist & Newswriter
- Photographic Specialist

Conversation With . . . **KRISTIN BOYER**

Owner & Lead Photographer

K. Boyer Photography

Atlanta, Georgia

School Photographer, 8 years

1. What was your individual career path in terms of education/training, entry-level job, or other significant opportunity?

For me, becoming a professional photographer was a happy accident. I never picked up my camera with intent to start a business; it just happened.

I graduated from Florida State University with a BS in psychology, and then went on to paralegal school. I entered the workforce as a paralegal for a corporate law firm, and I quickly realized that a behind-the-desk job in a corporate environment was not for me. So I went into sales in the legal profession and worked for CT, a division of Wolters Kluwer, selling products that helped companies perform their legal and regulatory compliance tasks. I worked in sales there for many years, serving as an account rep, trainer and then into sales training before I left to start a family. I stayed at home for about 10 years doing various odd jobs, working for my brother, working as a teacher at a preschool.

Then I received a camera as a gift from my husband. The rest is history. I picked it up and learned everything I could, taking classes at photography schools in Atlanta and online. I now have a full time dream job as a portrait photographer. What started out as a hobby, has turned into an income that can help feed my family and put my kids through college.

2. What are the most important skills and/or qualities for someone in your profession?

Patience, fun and a huge amount of organizational skills are most important. One of the joys for me is that you never know what to expect when you work with kids. You can plan ahead all you want (and I do because I am a type A personality) but ultimately, the kids are going to do what the kids are going to do and I just take photos of it all. For each school, it's common to provide a selection of 10,000 culled photos. Because of the sheer volume, organization is key. There is a lot of technology, time and energy required in getting it all right.

3. What do you wish you had known going into this profession?

I would love to have more knowledge of social media, SEO and website technical details. It's very time consuming to be a sole practitioner and be an expert at everything. One of the best things I have learned over the years is that I don't have to know it all. I can off load those things to people who specialize in those areas. It supports me by allowing me to spend more time taking photos and making money and I support other small business such as myself by hiring out the things I don't know how to do.

4. Are there many job opportunities in your profession? In what specific areas?

There are many opportunities for photographers and for the businesses that photographers use. You can go to a photography conference or trade show and walk into the vendor exhibits and see many jobs that have something to do with photography. This profession covers many areas. There's everything from printers and prop manufacturers, to accounting and office help. On the technology side, there's social media and Internet help, such as how to upload, organize and support websites and 100,000 images so families can order online and download the photos.

5. How do you see your profession changing in the next five years? How will technology impact that change, and what skills will be required?

Technology plays a huge role and is changing rapidly. Part of this change is the availability of cameras to the general population and moms entering the workforce as photographers in their spare time. That's how I started and grew a career. School portraits are very different than they were even five years ago because of changing technology in cameras, and how the photos are delivered and sold to the customer. Anyone has the ability to set up a website and an online store to sell photos. There's also a move away from the stodgy old backdrops to more refreshing photos taken outside. This allows many independent contractors such as myself to offer a much more personalized service to schools and families.

You will need to multitask, adapt, learn new equipment, organize, lead, plan, juggle and have a lot of patience.

6. What do you enjoy most about your job? What do you enjoy least about your job?

I enjoy most everything about my job and whatever I don't enjoy, like accounting, I outsource. I love interacting with people and capturing the "perfect" photo that I know parents will love. I love the crazy, unpredictability of kids and I love to be silly. I hate the technology, like slow Internet speeds, backups and workflow organization that stands in my way in delivering photos to my clients. But it is all part of the

package. I love being my own boss, making my own schedule, and I love learning. I even love making mistakes. I love all the new photography gadgets that keep coming out to market. The photo conference where I meet other like-minded photographers are amazing and so rewarding and fulfilling. I would never be able to work for someone again.

7. Can you suggest a valuable “try this” for students considering a career in your profession?

Pick up a camera and follow a family for a few hours. Or volunteer at a day care or church preschool and snap photos of kids on the playground. It's not as easy as it looks because kids don't sit still for photos. But if you can catch them, keep their attention and make them genuinely smile, you can make a great living doing something that is different and fun, every single day.

SELECTED SCHOOLS

Many colleges and universities offer bachelor's degree programs in the arts; some have majors or programs in photography. The student may also gain initial training through enrollment at a community college. Below are listed some of the more prominent institutions in this field.

Art Institute of Chicago

36 S. Wabash
Chicago, IL 60603
800.232.7242
www.saic.edu

California College of the Arts

5212 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94618
510.594.3600
www.cca.edu

California Institute of the Arts

24700 McBean Parkway
Valencia, CA 91355
661.255.1050
www.calarts.edu

Columbia College Chicago

600 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60605
312.369.1000
www.colum.edu

New York University

70 Washington Square S
New York, NY 10012
212.998.1212
www.nyu.edu

Rhode Island School of Design

2 College Street
Providence, RI 02903
800.364.7473
www.risd.edu

Rochester Institute of Technology

1 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, NY 14623
585.475.2411
www.rit.edu

University of California, Los Angeles

405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90095
310.825.4321
www.ucla.edu

University of New Mexico

1 University Boulevard NE
Albuquerque, NM 87131
505.277.0111
www.unm.edu

Yale University

New Haven, CT 06520
203.432.4771
www.yale.edu

MORE INFORMATION

American Society of Media Photographers

150 North 2nd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215.451.2767
www.asmp.org

American Society of Photographers

3120 N. Argonne Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53222
www.asofp.com

Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design

236 Hope Street
Providence, RI 02906
401.270.5991
www.aicad.org

National Press Photographers Association, Inc.

3200 Croasdaile Drive, Suite 306
Durham, NC 27705
919.383.7246
www.nppa.org

North American Nature Photography Association

6382 Charleston Road
Alma, IL 62807
618.547.7616
www.nanpa.org

Professional Photographers of America, Inc.

229 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 2200
Atlanta, GA 30303
800.786.6277
www.ppa.com
PPA Awards:
www.ppa.com/competitions/

Richard Adler/Editor