Snapshot

Career Cluster(s): Architecture & Construction; Arts, A/V Technology & Communications; Business, Management & Administration; Human Services

Interests: Art; design; architecture; working with people

Earnings (Yearly Average): \$56,040

Employment & Outlook: Decline Expected

OVERVIEW

Sphere of Work

Interior designers make indoor spaces functional, safe, and beautiful by determining space requirements and selecting essential and decorative items, such as colors, lighting, and materials. They must be able to draw, read, and edit blue-prints. They also must be aware of building codes, inspection regulations, and other considerations, such as accessibility standards.

Work Environment

Most interior designers work in offices, but technology has changed the way many designers work. For example, interior designers now use software rather than drafting tables to create two- or three-dimensional images. Interior designers also travel to clients' design sites.

Occupation Interest

Interior designers have an artistic eye for the design and layout of dwellings and



An interior designer at work, with tablet computer and material samples. Photo via iStock.com/Naphat_Jorjee. [Used under license.]

businesses and are able to work with clients to bring their wants and needs to life in the most appealing and functional ways possible. Designers also have a sound technical knowledge of architecture, codes, and standards, which must be factored into all design choices.

A Day in the Life—Duties and Responsibilities

Interior designers work closely with archi-

tects, civil engineers, mechanical engineers, and construction laborers and helpers to determine how interior spaces will function, look, and be furnished. Interior designers read blueprints and must be aware of building codes and inspection regulations.

Although some sketches may be freehand, most interior designers use computer-aided design (CAD) software for most of their drawings. Throughout the design process, interior designers often use building information modeling (BIM) software to create three-dimensional visualizations that include construction

Duties and Responsibilities

- Searching for and bid on new projects
- Determining the client's goals and requirements for the project
- Considering how the space will be used and how people will move through the space
- Sketching preliminary design plans, including electrical and partition layouts
- Specifying materials and furnishings, such as lighting, furniture, wall finishes, flooring, and plumbing fixtures
- Creating a timeline for the interior design project and estimate project costs
- Placing orders for materials and overseeing the installation of the design elements
- Overseeing construction and coordinating with general building contractors to implement the plans and specifications for the project
- Visiting the site after the project is complete, to ensure that the client is satisfied

Profile

Interests: Things, Data, People
Working Conditions: Inside
Physical Strength: Medium Work

Education Needs: Varies—Associate, Bachelor's,

and Master's Degree

Licensure/Certification: Varies by State
Opportunities for Experience: Internship

Interest Score: AE

elements such as walls or roofs.

Many designers specialize in particular types of buildings, such as homes, hospitals, or hotels; specific rooms, such as bathrooms or kitchens; or a specific style. Some designers work for home furnishings stores, providing design services to help customers choose materials and furnishings.

Some interior designers produce designs, plans, and drawings for construction and installation. These products may include information for construction and demolition, electrical layouts, and building permits. Interior designers may draft the preliminary design into documents ranging from simple sketches to construction schedules and attachments.

OCCUPATION SPECIALTIES

Corporate Designer

Corporate designers create interior designs for professional workplaces in a variety of settings, from small offices to large buildings. They focus on creating spaces that are efficient, functional, and safe for employees. In their designs, they may incorporate elements of a company's brand.

Healthcare Designer

Healthcare designers plan and renovate healthcare centers, clinics, doctors' offices, hospitals, and residential care facilities. They specialize in evidence-based design, which uses data and research in design decision making to achieve positive results for patients, residents, and facilities.

Kitchen and Bath Designer

Kitchen and bath designers specialize in kitchens and bathrooms and have expert knowledge of cabinet, fixture, appliance, plumbing, and electrical solutions for these rooms.

Sustainable Designer

Sustainable designers suggest strategies to improve energy and water efficiencies and indoor air quality as well as environmentally sustainable products, such as bamboo and cork for floors. They may obtain certification in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) from the US Green Building Council (USGBC). Such certification indicates expertise in designing buildings and spaces with sustainable practices in mind.

Universal Designer

Universal designers renovate spaces to make them more accessible. Often, these designs are used to renovate spaces for elderly people and people with special needs; however, universal designs benefit everyone. For example, an entryway without steps may be necessary for someone in a wheelchair, but it is also helpful for someone pushing a baby stroller.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Immediate Physical Environment

Interior designers split their time between their office, including a home office if the designer if self-employed, and travelling to meet clients at the design site. In this way, designers may be able to set their own working hours but may need to adjust their workday to suit their clients' schedules and deadlines, including meeting with clients in the evening and on weekends.

Human Environment

Interior designers are client-focused professionals by their nature, so human interaction is part of daily routine. Meetings with clients are crucial to establishing a project and keeping it on track, as are meetings with ancillary professionals such as architects, civil engineers, mechanical engineers, and construction laborers and helpers. If the designer works for a firm or other direct employer, they may have to provide project reports. Designers also spend a significant amount of time soliciting new clients, so the ability to sell oneself is an important quality.

Technological Environment

Interior designers are increasingly reliant on computer technology to plan and lay out the project space. CAD software is quite common, as is BIM software. A mastery of drafting tools and techniques is also important, as is being able to provide drawings and documentation to fit clients' needs. Designers must stay on top of current trends and emerging technologies such as green building and energy efficiency technologies.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT

High School/Secondary

High school students interested in a career in interior design should focus equally on art and design courses as well as mathematics, and English to improve communication skills. Thought should be given to postsecondary goals: associate, bachelor's, or master's degrees in interior design. Colleges offering these degrees often require applicants to submit sketches, so high school students should begin to prepare a portfolio of ideas.

Suggested High School Subjects

- Algebra
- Art/Design
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Earth or Life or Physical Science
- Economics

- English
- Geometry
- History
- Physics
- Political Science
- Pre-Calculus
- Psychology
- Statistics
- Trigonometry

Related Career Pathways/Majors

Architecture & Construction Career Cluster

- Design/Pre-Construction Pathway Arts, A/V Technology & Communications Career Cluster
- Visual Arts Career Pathway

 Business Management & Administration

 Career Cluster
- General Management Pathway Human Services Career Cluster
 - Consumer Services Pathway

Postsecondary

Interior designers entering the occupation usually need a bachelor's degree in any

field. Coursework should include classes in interior design, drawing, and CAD.

Programs in interior design are available at the associate, bachelor's, and master's degree levels. Applicants to these programs may need to submit sketches and other examples of their artistic ability.

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) accredits more than 360 postsecondary colleges, universities, and independent institutes that have programs in art and design. The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) accredits about 180 professional-level (bachelor's or master's degree) interior design programs.

Transferable Skills and Abilities

Artistic Ability

Using sense of style to develop aesthetically pleasing designs

Creativity

 Imaginatively selecting furnishings and fabrics and creating functional spaces that serve the client's needs and fit the client's lifestyle

Detail-oriented

 Measuring interior spaces and creating drawings that can be used by workers such as engineers or other designers

Interpersonal Skills

- · Communicating effectively with clients and others
- Soliciting new clients and new work and collaborating with other designers, engineers, and general building contractors on ongoing projects

Problem-solving Skills

 Addressing challenges, such as construction delays or unavailability of certain materials, while keeping the project on time and within budget

Visualization

 Possessing a strong sense of proportion and visual awareness in order to understand how the pieces of a design will fit together to create the intended environment Nearly 100 colleges and universities are affiliated with the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA). These schools offer programs on kitchen and bath design at the certificate, associate degree, and bachelor's degree levels.

Related College Majors

- Commercial & Advertising Art
- Commercial Photography
- Fashion/Apparel Design
- Graphic Design
- Illustration
- Industrial & Product Design

Adult Job Seekers

Adults seeking employment as interior designers should have a background in art, design, or technical fields such as architecture. Individuals working in real estate would have the advantage of a ready-made pool of potential clients. Since a degree in interior design is almost always required, adults should research the desired career path and plan accordingly to achieve the relevant academic goals.

Professional Certification and Licensure

Licensure requirements vary by state. In some states, only licensed designers may do interior design work. In other states, both licensed and unlicensed designers may do such work; however, only licensed designers may use the title "interior designer." In still other states, both licensed and unlicensed designers may call themselves interior designers and do interior design work.

In states with laws restricting the use of the title "interior designer," only candidates who pass their state-approved exam, most commonly the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) exam, may call themselves registered interior designers. Candidate eligibility for taking the NCIDQ exam includes having at least a bachelor's degree in interior design and 2 years of full-time work experience.

California requires a different exam, administered by the California Council for Interior Design Certification (CCIDC). To take this exam, eligible candidates must have a combination of education and experience.

Voluntary certification in an interior design specialty, such as environmental design, allows designers to demonstrate expertise in a particular area of the occupation. Interior designers often specialize to distinguish the type of design work

they do and to promote their expertise. Certifications usually are available through professional and trade associations and are independent of the NCIDQ licensing examination.

EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT

Earnings depend on whether an interior designer is self-employed or employed by a firm, whether they specialize in certain types of design, and the size and duration of projects. Median annual earnings of interior designers were \$56,040 in 2019. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$31,970, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$96,470.

Interior designers may receive paid vacations, holidays, and sick days; life and health insurance; and retirement benefits. These are usually paid by an employer if the designer is not self-employed. Travel expenses may also be covered by an employer.

EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK

Interior designers held 77,900 jobs in 2019. Twenty-two percent were self-employed. Employment is expected to decline 5 percent through the year 2029. There may be some demand created by new construction, but opportunities for self-employed interior designers to renovate existing homes, commercial buildings, and other facilities should be limited. Relatively few interior designers are directly employed in the construction industry, but many of these workers depend heavily on that industry to generate new projects.

Job prospects should be best in high-income areas, because wealthy clients are more likely than others to engage in remodeling and renovating their spaces. Keeping up to date with the newest design tools, such as 3D CAD software, also will improve job prospects.

Related Occupations

- Architect
- Art Director
- Craft/Fine Artist
- Fashion Designer
- Floral Designer

- Graphic Designer
- Industrial Designer
- Landscape Architect

MORE INFORMATION

American Academy of Healthcare Interior Designers (AAHID)

8735 W. Higgins Road, Suite 300 Chicago, IL 60631 847.375.6870 info@aahid.org aahid.org

American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)

1152 15th Street NW, Suite 910 Washington, DC 20005 202.546.3480 membership@asid.org www.asid.org

Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA)

206 Grandville Avenue, Suite 350 Grand Rapids, MI 49503-4014 248.875.6705 info@accredit-id.org www.accredit-id.org

Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ)

225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 210 Alexandria, VA 22314 202.721.0220 inquiries@cidq.org www.cidq.org

Fairchild Books Interior Design Library

c/o Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. 1385 Broadway, 5th Floor New York, NY 10018 212.419.5300 askacademic@bloomsbury.com www.fairchildbooksinteriordesign.com

Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC)

111 West Jackson Boulevard, 14th Floor Chicago, IL 60604 630.544.5057 info@idec.org www.idec.org

International Design Continuing Education Council (IDCEC)

4576 Yonge Street, Suite 405 Toronto, ON M2N 6N4 Canada 888.890.5515 admin@idcec.org www.idcec.org

International Interior Design Association (IIDA)

111 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 222 Chicago, IL 60601 888.799.4432 iidahq@iida.org iida.org

National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD)

11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 21 Reston, VA 20190-5248 703.437.0700 info@arts-accredit.org nasad.arts-accredit.org

National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA)

800.843.6522 info@nkba.org nkba.org

Stuart Paterson



Interior Designer
Cabbages & Kings Interiors, Sandwich, MA
Interior Design, 21 years

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

I majored in fine arts, with a focus on graphic design, at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1991. After graduating from college, I worked in the graphic design field for a short time, and realized I didn't like it.

While working in graphic design I took a part-time job at The Limited clothing store, which at the time had a chain of retail stores. I was attracted to the visual merchandising aspect of the job—setting up window displays and display racks in the store—all of the pretty stuff. Pretty soon after starting work for The Limited, the chain hired me full-time to handle visual merchandising for all of their stores in Boston and Eastern Massachusetts.

Then I moved to the Pottery Barn chain of stores and went from fashion design to home design. My territory widened to include all of New England.

I realized that form of design was definitely my groove. The idea was to attract people to get them to buy products, so if I did a good job, my displays were torn apart immediately by customers buying up all the product.

Seeking a bit more permanent outlet for my creativity, I decided to make the transition to residential design. I could do the same kind of work, but it would last forever. I started helping out a friend in her interior design shop as a sideline and eventually ended up working with clients. Then I got married and moved with my husband to Cape Cod in Massachusetts. That's when I started my own firm.

One of the first things I did was join a business networking group and hold a drawing for four free one-day redesigns of the members' homes. During redesigns, I use what clients have to create a more beautiful, cohesive, and functional interior. The people who won my one-day services showed off their homes to families and friends and word of business started spreading through residential developments and golf course communities. At the end of the redesign, I left the clients with a wish list, and most of the time they called me to execute the design. I was in business.

Only the first four redesigns were free, but they were key. They got people to think of redesigning their homes—with my help. Eventually, redesign became more of a sideline in my business after I started working with a high-end home builder. He was the husband of a client for whom I had done a home redesign. The client really liked it, and her husband asked me to take a look at a foreclosed house he wanted to flip.

I went in and said, "Here's what you need to do to sell it." I suggested which walls to take down and chose the paint colors, lighting, and tile work. I found I loved the contractor's side of home design and adapted to it easily. The builder hired me to work for his company, and now I work up and down the East Coast. I've worked in New Hampshire, Boston, Nantucket, Manhattan, Florida, and Anguilla in the Caribbean.

I never planned a career in high-end home interior design. I just kept following the path of opportunity in front of me. When I built my business model, I wanted my design to be accessible, something normal people like me could afford.

I still do a very wide range of projects. When I work on these larger homes the projects tend to take a year or two, which leaves me time for smaller projects. That's why I picked the name "Cabbages and Kings" for my business—it speaks to all kinds of people.

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

You have to have an innate talent for interior design. You have to have a natural sense of color and proportion and an interest in different types of materials. Everybody wants to do interior design. It seems super glamorous and fun. But while you can learn the language and process used in construction, if you aren't naturally talented in design, you won't last long in the field.

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

I wish I had known how much of interior design relies on innate talent. I would have taken a broader range of courses in college—studied computers or taken extra years of French. I would have spent less time on things that already came easily to me.

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

There aren't a ton of jobs doing what I do, which is design of 10,000-square-foot homes. But there are a lot of other opportunities in design from visual merchandising and one-day redesigns to more traditional scale interior design in the 1,500 to 3,000-square-foot market. There is also contract work for commercial businesses—boutiques, restaurants, and hotels. The key is just to be open-minded and try any opportunity that presents itself until you find the type of design that suits you.

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

Green building is becoming huge. Traditional home designs are going out the window. Formal dining rooms are becoming family rooms. People want home design that reflects how they live their lives. Also, thanks to online companies like Wayfair and Overstock, there's good design out there at affordable prices. People have more access to great design.

Computer-aided design (CAD) is widely used in home design—but not by me. I don't have a head for computers. I don't like them, and I'm not interested in them. I like paper and pencil. I

don't expect my clients to pay for the extra time it takes to draw by hand. But I prefer it. And it hasn't impacted my career.

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

What I enjoy most is creating a setting for people's lives, for all of their moments, good and bad. What I like least is paperwork. Hate it. I can't even tell you how much I hate it.

Can you suggest a valuable "try this" for students considering a career in your profession?

You need to get out in front of other people. Volunteer to do visual merchandising at a local store. Offer to help friends redesign their rooms. When you go to college, take a few courses in design and see how it goes before committing to the field. I'm proof you don't need a degree in interior design to be successful in the field.