



Career Opportunities in Theatre (AA Transfer Degree Plan)

NATURE OF THE WORK: Actors, producers, and directors express ideas and create images in theater, film, radio, television, and other performing arts media. They interpret a writer's script to entertain, inform, or instruct an audience. Although the most famous actors, producers, and directors work in film, network television, or theater in New York or Los Angeles, far more work in local or regional television studios, theaters, or film production companies, preparing advertising, public-relations, or independent, small-scale movie productions.

Actors perform on stage, radio, television, video, or motion picture productions. Some actors do voiceover and narration work for advertisements, animated features, books on tape, and other electronic media. They also teach in high school or university drama departments, acting conservatories, or public programs.

WORKING CONDITIONS: Actors, producers, and directors work under constant pressure. Many face stress from the continual need to find their next job. To succeed, actors, producers, and directors need patience and commitment to their craft. Actors strive to deliver flawless performances, often while working under undesirable and unpleasant conditions

Acting assignments typically are short term, ranging from one day to a few months; which means that actors frequently experience long periods of unemployment between jobs. The uncertain nature of the work results in unpredictable earnings and intense competition for even the lowest-paid jobs. Often, actors, producers, and directors must hold other jobs in order to sustain a living.

When performing, actors typically work long, irregular hours. For example, stage actors may perform one show at night while rehearsing another during the day. They also might travel with a show when it tours the country. Movie actors may work on location, sometimes under adverse weather conditions, and may spend considerable time in their trailers or dressing rooms waiting to perform their scenes. Actors who perform in a television series often appear on camera with little preparation time, because scripts tend to be revised frequently or even written moments before taping. Those who appear live or before a studio audience must be able to handle impromptu situations and calmly ad lib or substitute lines when necessary.

EMPLOYMENT: In 2002, actors, producers, and directors held about 139,000 jobs, primarily in motion picture and video, performing arts, and broadcast industries. Because many others were between jobs, the total number of actors, producers, and directors available for work was higher. Employment in the theater, and other performing arts companies, is cyclical. About one fourth of actors, producers, and directors are self-employed.

Employment in motion pictures and in films for television is centered in New York and Hollywood. However, small studios are located throughout the country. Many films are shot on location and may employ local professional and nonprofessional actors. In television, opportunities are concentrated in the network centers of New York and Los Angeles, but cable television services and local television stations around the country also employ many actors, producers, and directors.

EARNINGS: Median annual earnings of salaried actors were \$23,470 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$15,320 and \$53,320. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$13,330, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$106,360.

JOB OUTLOOK: Employment of actors, producers, and directors is expected to [grow about as fast as the average](#) for all occupations through 2012. Although a growing number of people will aspire to enter these professions, many will leave the field early because the work—when it is available—is hard, the hours are long, and the pay is low. Competition for jobs will be stiff, in part because the large number of highly trained and talented actors auditioning for roles generally exceeds the number of parts that become available.

Suggested citation: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Career Guide to Industries, 2004-05 Edition*, Federal Government, Excluding the Postal Service, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos093.htm>