

# Mapping Your Future

## Fashion

### Why Work in Fashion?

New York City has always been a fashion capital. For a long time, most of the clothing made in the U.S. was manufactured here in the famous Garment District. Big department stores, such as Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Saks Fifth Avenue started here, to be close to where the clothing was made. Even though clothing is now mostly made outside the U.S., New York has remained the center of fashion design, and people come from all over the world to see what New York City designers are cooking up. More fashion designers are based here than anywhere else in the country, including some of the most famous and successful designers in the world. Each designer relies on a team of workers to get their goods—clothes, outerwear, accessories, and shoes—designed, made, promoted, and sold. All of these activities translate into job opportunities in fashion just subway stops away.



### What Kinds of Jobs are there in Fashion?

Jobs in the fashion industry fall into one of three main categories:

- **From Sketch to Sample:** People in design and production work with fashion designers or brands to create a design concept and then transform it into merchandise. This process includes creating early models called “prototypes,” and turning them into samples they can sell to retail buyers.
- **From Showroom Floor to Store:** People in purchasing and sales buy goods from designers after studying fashion trends and seeing samples. They then sell the merchandise in retail stores and other outlets. Other people are in charge of arranging the goods in windows and throughout the stores so that they are appealing to customers.
- **Getting the Word Out:** People in public relations entice people to buy merchandise. They might work for designers or brands who want to sell their goods to buyers, or for retailers who want to sell them to consumers.

While most merchandise is now manufactured overseas, the rest of these activities happen right here in New York City.

### How Can You Break into the Fashion Industry?

The fashion business is competitive. This means that there are a lot of eager, talented and hardworking people just like you trying to break in. To get a job, you need to stand out from the crowd.

A good way to get your foot in the door is to go to college and get an internship. More and more fashion hopefuls are going to college and maintaining internships within the industry. Most formal internship programs are only offered to college students. Internships are important because they show students the nuts and bolts of the business while helping them network for jobs. Many employers are also known to hire their best interns for paid, full-time work.

Several large fashion companies actively recruit interns from top area fashion schools. New York City also has hundreds of smaller fashion firms. Many may be too small to formally partner with colleges, but they almost always need more help. If you don't get a formal internship, you should try to reach out directly to one of the smaller firms and offer to lend a helping hand.

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## How Do You Get Ahead?

Getting your foot in the door may be the easy part compared to what it takes to get ahead once you're in. Like most ready-to-wear clothes, fashion jobs are not one-size-fits-all. Salaries, work assignments, job titles and career paths vary by employer. There is definitely more than one way to get ahead, but these skills, characteristics and qualities will surely help you get there:

- You must be creative. This industry is all about new ideas, whether you are creating a design concept, a sales strategy or a public image. Regularly brainstorming new, useful ideas will benefit your team and help you get noticed.
- Aside from fashion-sense, you also need good math and analytical skills to work in design and production. Much of this work is about measuring and understanding proportions. A lot of these jobs also require a high degree of computer literacy, especially knowledge of Adobe® design software such as Photoshop® and Illustrator®.
- Merchandisers and buyers need to be good at predicting which fashions will sell the best.
- Salespeople must know how to entice customers and help them find and buy goods.
- People interested in public relations must be loyal, decisive and well organized. Their work is all about relationships—with clients, vendors, and the media—and knowing how to successfully navigate them.
- You must be patient, flexible and willing to take on extra work. Most people in the fashion industry get ahead by working their way up over time and proving themselves. In fashion, there is plenty of work to be done and not always enough people to do it. Going above and beyond what is asked of you can help you get ahead faster.
- You must have strong oral and written communication skills. Phone calls, texts, and emails power this fast-paced industry. They move all fashion-related activities from one step to the next. Whether you are ordering fabric, buying collections, or creating media/press kits, you must be able to communicate clearly and professionally. Mistakes, no matter how small, can create major delays and other problems for your company.
- You must be friendly and polite. Whether you work in production, sales or public relations, you will be working with all sorts of personalities. You will ask people to do things for you and they will ask you to do things for them. Fostering positive relationships with coworkers and key contacts will help you (and your team) get what you need when you need it.

### The Untold Story (until Now!) of Your Favorite Belt and How You First Met

Think about your favorite belt. It began its journey as an idea or concept, first sketched by a designer with help from her design team. Next, a technical design team makes a blueprint, called a “tech-pack,” that tells manufacturers exactly how to make the belt. Using these instructions, a manufacturer makes a few samples of the belt and delivers them to the designer. The designer debuts a sample of this belt on the runway at New York Fashion Week. Buyers, celebrities and social media representatives at the show instantly fall in love with the new belt.

This positive reaction tempts buyers to order belts for their stores. Before they proceed, however, they also apply knowledge of customer preferences to make an informed decision. A buyer for a popular chain store orders the belt in different colors and sizes. Once the order is placed, the design firm manufactures the belt and ships the belts to their stores.

Soon after the fashion show, you see celebrities being photographed wearing the belt while others are tweeting all about it. You also start seeing the belt advertised on TV, in the magazines, and on subway ads. The belt has definitely piqued your interest.

Then, one day you walk by a store and see that belt in a window that was strategically arranged by a visual merchandiser. The belt looks great with the outfit on display, and you realize you have to have it. You decide to go into the store to check it out. A salesperson takes you to see the belt. You really wanted to buy it but price tag is out of your price range... that is, until the salesperson told you about a promotional discount. That's right; some marketing specialist came up with a promotion. The first 1,000 customers could buy the belt at half the price, and you happen to be customer number 952! Unable to turn down this great deal, you buy it.

This may not be exactly how you first met your favorite belt, but it's probably close. As customers, we see items in a store and don't think about what it took to get them there. Going from design to a sale involves many steps and people along the way, creating many different fashion industry jobs.

# Put Yourself on the Map: How to Use This Brochure

Like any map, this Career Map helps you find your way to new places – in this case, a bunch of careers within one specific industry. (An industry is a loosely defined area of businesses engaged in similar work.) As you read, ask yourself: what different kinds of jobs are there? How does one job lead to the next? Which ones will I like? How much money can I earn, and how long will it take me to get there? What kind of training do I need?

One of the best ways to find a satisfying career is to get clear about your personal interests and strengths. What do you most enjoy doing? What do your friends, teachers, parents say you do best? Do you prefer to work with people, ideas or things? Do you want to be in charge, or work alongside your peers? Which of these jobs will let you be your best?

Once you've found a path that sounds like a good fit, it's time to test it out. Find someone who works in the industry – ask your friends, parents, teachers and neighbors if they can introduce you. Ask if they are willing to talk with you for a few minutes. This is called an "informational interview." You're not asking them to find you a job; you're only asking to listen and learn about their experience. If you ask in a professional manner, many people are happy to speak with you. (If you're nervous about this, ask a teacher, guidance counselor or parent to help.)

Before you meet with this person, reread the brochure and write down any questions you have, for example:

- What do you spend your day doing in this job?
- How did you get started in this field?
- How much reading, writing or math do you do in your job?
- How do people dress at the work place?
- Do you have a routine set of tasks you do every day or do you do something different every day?
- Do you work the same schedule every week, or does it change?
- What courses would I take in high school or college to prepare for this job?
- What is my next step after high school if I am interested in this field?
- Where can I find people who can help me learn more about this field?

Make sure to send a thank you note, and in no time you'll be on your way. For more information about this industry and many others, you can visit [www.careerzone.ny.gov](http://www.careerzone.ny.gov)



**Find someone  
who works in the  
industry – ask your  
friends, parents,  
teachers and neighbors  
if they can introduce  
you.**

## INCREASING LEVELS OF EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIRED



Bachelor's Degree or Some Experience	Bachelor's Degree and a Lot of Experience
<p><b>Product Development Tracker</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Ensures the tech pack arrives at the right place at the right time to be transformed from a concept to a prototype, from a prototype to a sample and, eventually, from a sample to a final product for sale. Involves a high level of coordination and overseas communication. Must be able to meet deadlines.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$22,000 to \$47,000 per year</p> <p><b>Colorist/Color Specialist</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Manages all aspects of a brand's color process. This includes developing the palette, approving colors and ensuring consistency throughout a brand. Additional responsibilities include production tracking and follow up.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$22,000 to \$67,000 per year</p> <p><b>Assistant Technical Designer</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Uses drawings, measurements, and descriptions to help the technical designer assemble a "tech pack," which is a blueprint for producing garments. Sends design instructions to factories and tracks production and shipping.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$37,000 to \$46,000 per year</p> <p><b>Technical Designer</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Prepares the tech pack, overseeing the process from style and design concept to first prototype, to the final, production-ready sample. Works with management, design, production, and merchandising staff to ensure fit, quality and delivery.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$32,000 to \$90,000 per year</p> <p><b>Assistant Fashion Designer</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Supports the design team by keeping an active history of past, present and future design-related actions (typically using a database). Also researches and identifies trends.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$42,000 to \$66,000 per year</p>	<p><b>Mental Health Counselor</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Guides the team through the design process from beginning to end. Researches trends, markets, fabrics, and trims. Develops design concepts and designs garments or accessories according to brand identity, style plans, sales needs, and emerging fashion trends. Coordinates with production, sales, marketing and other teams within the firm.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$57,000 to \$125,000 per year</p> <p><b>Design Director/VP of Design</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Leads the design team. Oversees all aspects of the design collection and is responsible for all decision-making along the design process. Acts as point person for the design team to management and major buyers.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$73,000 to \$195,000 per year</p> <p><b>MAP KEY</b></p> <p> Projected by the New York State Department of Labor to grow faster than average between now and 2020.</p> <p><b>Pay Range</b> The pay range reflects typical pay from entry level to experienced. The higher pay takes many years to reach and development of significantly greater skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Jobs that are primarily part-time are expressed as hourly pay; jobs that are primarily full-time are shown with annual pay. Those that could be either are shown both ways.</p> <p><b>Education</b> Minimum education and experience requirements. This may vary from employer to employer.</p> <p><b>This flyer highlights jobs in the sector projected to have the same or more openings between now and 2020.</b></p>

# Types of Employment

	HOURS/WEEK	SCHEDULE	WAGE/SALARY	PAYMENT	COMMON BENEFITS
<b>Full-Time</b>	Usually 35+	Steady	Annual	Weekly or bi-weekly	Paid sick leave, vacation time, health insurance, retirement savings
<b>Part-Time</b>	Usually <35	May vary	Hourly	Weekly or bi-weekly	Usually none
<b>Temp</b>	As needed by employer	May vary	Hourly	Weekly or bi-weekly	Usually none
<b>Per Diem</b>	As needed by employer	Daily or Per Shift	Hourly	Weekly or bi-weekly	Usually none
<b>Self-employed aka Freelance</b>	Varies	Varies	Negotiate rate of pay with client	Upon completion of work or on a schedule of deliverables	None: must pay own taxes and health insurance
<b>Union</b>			Typically higher than comparable non-union positions		As negotiated by the union with the employer on behalf of members

## For more information on careers in this industry:

<http://www.nycedc.com/industry/fashion>

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/fashion-designers.htm>

<http://www.nycfashioninfo.com/default.aspx>

## For information about the DOE CTE Programs:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/SpecialPrograms/CTE/default.htm>

<http://CTECouncil.org>

## Where can I get additional general information on careers?

For careers in New York State: [www.careerzone.ny.gov](http://www.careerzone.ny.gov)

For general career information, including videos of nearly 550 careers: [www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)

For general career information: [www.bls.gov/k12](http://www.bls.gov/k12)

# From the Showroom Floor to Store (a.k.a. Purchasing and Sales)

## INCREASING LEVELS OF EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIRED



High School or Equivalent	High School or Equivalent and a Lot of Experience or Associate Degree
<p><b>Stock Clerks, Sales Floor</b> DUTIES: Receives and stores sales floor merchandise. Stocks shelves, racks, cases, bins, and tables with merchandise. May also check inventory and mark merchandise. PAY RANGE: \$17,000 to \$27,000 per year</p> <p><b>Salesperson</b> DUTIES: Sells merchandise to customers in retail settings. Keeps a store stocked, orderly, and clean. Makes sure the sales floor reflects the store and brand's design concepts PAY RANGE: \$17,000 to \$33,000 per year</p>	<p><b>Retail Sales Manager</b> DUTIES: Manages retailer or store sales operations, including merchandising and sales staff. Trains staff and schedules sales floor shifts. Establishes performance goals for sales staff to meet. Collects information about sales and analyzes it to determine inventory needs and monitor customer preferences. PAY RANGE: \$34,000 to \$63,000 per year</p>
High School or Equivalent Plus Some Experience or Some College	Bachelor's Degree
<p><b>Visual Merchandiser</b> DUTIES: Installs, arranges, and maintains the visual presentation of window and retail displays to promote sales, design concepts, and a positive shopping experience for customers. PAY RANGE: \$26,000 to \$51,000 per year</p> <p><b>Key Holder</b> DUTIES: As a senior salesperson, assists store manager with day-to-day store operations like opening and closing the store, managing registers and cash flow, overseeing security measures, supporting sales staff, and resolving customer conflicts. PAY RANGE: \$32,000 to \$55,000 per year</p> <p><b>Assistant Buyer</b> DUTIES: Provides administrative and analytical support to the Merchandise/Retail Buyer. May develop and submit purchase orders; review and analyze reports; and work with design firms to resolve shipping and delivery conflicts. PAY RANGE: \$34,000 to \$55,000 per year</p>	<p><b>Retail Store Manager</b> DUTIES: Directs day-to-day store operations. Develops and implements strategies to improve sales, promote a positive customer experience and increase profitability. Recruits, hires and trains store staff. PAY RANGE: \$39,000 to \$79,000 per year</p> <p><b>Retail Store Manager</b> DUTIES: Selects and orders merchandise on behalf of retailers. Develops relationships with design firms, negotiates prices, tracks shipments and forecasts trends among target consumer groups. Utilize forecasting tools and interacts with buying and sales teams to inform purchase orders. PAY RANGE: \$42,000 to \$90,000 per year</p> <p><b>Retail Store Manager</b> DUTIES: Creates marketing campaigns to promote/increase designer or brand sales. Gathers and analyzes information on competitors, prices, sales and methods of marketing and distribution to inform campaign strategy. PAY RANGE: \$46,000 to \$91,000 per year</p>

# Getting the Word Out (a.k.a. Public Relations or Promotions)

## INCREASING LEVELS OF EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIRED



Some College	Bachelor's Degree and a Lot of Experience
<p><b>Public Relations Assistant</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Supports a fashion firm's public relations team. Tracks samples, helps to manage media and contact lists, keeps track of industry trends and helps to coordinate special events.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$27,000 to \$44,000 a year or \$15 to 24 per hour</p> <p><b>Blogger/Social Media Content Writer</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Writes, reviews, edits and adapts a fashion firm's marketing material for social media use. Applies search engine optimization ("SEO") practices to web content writing to improve overall web visibility.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$22,000 to \$60,000 per year</p>	<p><b>Public Relations Manager</b> ⚡</p> <p>DUTIES: Manages the fashion firm's public relations activities and staff. Directs publicity programs and campaigns. Promotes a positive public image for the client.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$95,000 to \$181,000 per year</p> <p><b>VP or SVP of Public Relations</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Plans and directs all aspects of a major fashion firm's public relations policies and projects. Is responsible for making sure that all external communications meet public relations goals for the client.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$135,000 to \$200,000+ per year</p>
Bachelor's Degree or Some Experience	
<p><b>Public Relations Specialist</b> ⚡</p> <p>DUTIES: Creates and promotes the public image or "brand identity" to generate consumer interest. Prepares and distributes media kits (e.g., press releases, product images and logos, etc.). Manages sample inventory, online image library, and graphics request processes; handles media requests; and reports on media coverage.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$40,000 to \$116,000 per year</p> <p><b>Social Media Coordinator</b></p> <p>DUTIES: Shapes and carries out activities to improve online presence, especially among target consumers. Oversees and coordinates all activities concerning the firm's web content and social media accounts.</p> <p>PAY RANGE: \$73,000 to \$116,000 per year</p>	