

Freelance life

This is a training module from the ScreenSkills 'From Script to Screen' programme.

The text includes multiple choice questions for you to answer. Each question is identified with the words 'Multiple choice question' and finishes like this:

Question end

That's so you can stop and think. Each question end is followed by the correct answer or answers, and feedback.

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Section A: Introduction

Hi, I'm Mohammed – I'm a Payroll Assistant – and like pretty much everyone else here, I'm a freelancer.

Have you thought about how freelance life is going to work for you? This is not your conventional working day. Control, freedom, and opportunity – those are all part of freelance life. But in this profession, you could be moving to a new job every few weeks or months. How do you feel about that?

- Are you excited by the opportunities?
- Are you prepared to deal with unpredictability?
- Are you ready to work hard and make a good impression?
- Is your CV or résumé ready to go? Are you feeling confident about finding work?

Remember, CV and résumé are two names for the same thing. We'll use both terms in this module.

Section B: You're in control

Freelancing puts you in control. And, as you progress in your career, you can start to design your own path. It's a powerful combination of autonomy, opportunities, development and ownership.

Of course, with all that freedom comes responsibility and unpredictability. External factors also play a big part, but you're in the driver's seat, and that means that your success depends on your hard work, passion, and tenacity.

And at the start of your career, sometimes it can feel like there's no overall plan. You might find yourself taking opportunities because you can't financially afford to pass on a job. That's ok – it's all part of freelance life.

If you're flexible, happy to work on a range of different content and able to travel, you'll establish yourself more quickly.

This profession is not like a traditional company where you get hired and then stay for years. You're always lining up your next job.

Section C: Short-term contracts

Multiple choice question. How long do you think a single short-term contract might last?

- A. Days
- B. Weeks
- C. Months
- D. More than a year

Question end

Any of those answers could be true! Some contracts last for a few days or weeks. Others can be quite long – even over a year.

Freelance life can be challenging, of course – it takes time to prove what you can do and to build your reputation. You need to be receptive to feedback, enthusiastic and ready to work long hours.

But the beauty of working like this is that most of the time you get to choose when you work and which shows you work on. You're always working on different projects with different people in different locations.

No two jobs are exactly the same, which means that you're continually growing and racking up experience and skills. This work is a vocation, and needs commitment – that's for sure!

And to take advantage of all these opportunities, you need to know how and where to find work.

Section D: How and where to find work

There are lots of ways to find out which productions are crewing up and what roles they need. This varies in different countries and regions. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

Roles are often advertised on social media.

There are membership organisations like guilds and unions that publish production jobs on their membership board. Look for industry publications, organisations and websites in your area that share training, apprenticeship, and networking opportunities.

Networking on your current job and beyond is probably the best way to go, but also look for events, meet-ups, festivals and panels that will give you the opportunity to make new connections.

Research job sections of production companies, studios, and TV networks to check for available positions, training programmes, and apprenticeships. And connect with your peers to build your own network for the future.

Section E: A fantastic résumé can unlock the door

A fantastic résumé is critical to your success as a freelancer. When it comes to finding new work, the best résumé is one that's ready to share as soon as you need it. Wherever you are in the world, people will ask you to send it to them.

So, keep it relevant and up to date. It's not a static document – make sure to add new roles, training, and skills.

So what do you do with it? Be proactive! Here are a few ideas...

When you see that a new production is starting up, call the production company and ask for an email address to send your résumé to. Call them - don't just email. They might not get to see your message.

Make sure to network with production companies even if there are no job openings at the moment. The Office Coordinator or Production Manager is often a good contact.

Look online to find people who work in your chosen department, and see if there's anyone there that you already know who can help. Forget the generic emails, do some research and be specific about what you can offer. Be enthusiastic and create the best impression possible.

To get an opportunity you often have to work hard to find it.

And take advantage of social media. Upload your résumé and work experience to professional networking sites to make it easier for people to discover you.

Multiple choice question. Where do you think freelancers make most of their contacts?

- A. At industry events
- B. On social media
- C. During work

Question end

It's C. Industry events and social media are great opportunities. But once you're actively freelancing, work is the biggest opportunity to make new professional contacts.

When you build strong relationships with your fellow crew, they'll be more likely to recommend you to other productions. Freelancers help other freelancers.

Most people you meet will be generous with their time. Don't be scared to talk to them about their role. Be inquisitive, but pick your moment wisely.

Section F: You can do this!

This is an incredibly competitive industry – but there are amazing opportunities for you to succeed as a freelancer.

If you go the extra mile, people will value your work – and you – and you'll be the stand-out candidate for the next opportunity.

Get yourself known as someone who is reliable, dependable, and hard-working. Being helpful and friendly is the key to success in this industry. Go for it!

And that's the end of this module. This was created by ScreenSkills.