

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions were taken from the [Discover Creative Careers Industry Insight: Focus on VFX](#), with [Framestore](#). Amy Smith, Framestore's Global Director of Recruitment and Outreach who chaired the session, has responded below:

The VFX/animation industry seems very complex - lots of job roles with unusual names. What can a young person do to find out what area they should go into at the beginning, or does it not matter that much and you can move around once you are 'in'?

To find out more about all of the different job roles in the industry the best thing to do is to take a look at our [visual effects careers map](#). That should help narrow down the artistic roles from the technical from the administrative and at least give a group of jobs that are more or less of interest to a young person. Within that group of jobs though there is definitely scope to move around a bit once you're in the industry and a lot of entry level jobs (for example a runner, assistant technical director or tracking/matchmove artist) can, by their nature, lead on to a number of different positions next so there is definitely flexibility.

What are the main softwares you use?

For compositing the main software we use is Nuke. However, for someone starting out we would recommend Photoshop and Adobe After Effects. For the rest of our roles/departments we mostly use either Houdini or Maya. Again though, someone starting out should definitely begin with Blender.

Where do I find out more about apprenticeships?

You can find out more about apprenticeship opportunities in visual effects [here](#) and [here](#).

Are there any other routes other than an apprenticeship or Uni?

There really isn't any specific route into the industry that is better/worse/right/wrong! The main requirement (for a visual effects artist role) is to have a portfolio of relevant work. So really the question is how the individual feels they would best be able to develop that portfolio. If it's through being entirely self-taught via YouTube video that's great, if it's through a short course online or in-person, great, if it's Uni or an apprenticeship then wonderful. Any and all options are not a problem. We also have people who transition in from related industries such as games, animation or even architectural visualisation too.

What can a school aged student start to do to find out whether a career in FX is for them? Should they learn coding, draw stuff, make their own animations etc?

One of the best things they can do is try out our virtual work experience programme [here](#). But yes, making or creating anything (code, drawing, photographs, mini films, animation, clay models etc. etc.) are all fantastically relevant skills that could lead someone into a career in our industry. They could also sign up for an industry mentor to talk to and ask questions to via our industry wide [mentoring programme](#).

Finally, we also offer in person work experience for those who are really keen and you can find all of the information for this year [here](#).

What GCSEs are required?

There are no specific GCSEs that we require in order for you to be successful in visual effects. However, subjects that might be useful include: art & design, design & technology, photography, film studies, media studies, ICT, engineering, computer science, physics or maths.

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What type of University courses are recommended to go into a career relating to this?

We have people from all sorts of different degree courses - from fine art, illustration, software development, computer science, graphic design, theatre, film production, economics, business through to things as far afield as pharmacology and zoology! However, if you specifically thought you might like to study a relevant degree then there are some great suggestions and details available [here](#).

What would be your top tips for getting into this industry? Any portfolio tips?

There are lots of tips available about getting into a number of different visual effects roles available [here](#) for you. For portfolio tips, take a look [here](#).

What are the typical salaries?

For a junior a typical salary range would be £25,000 - £35,000 per annum
For a senior a typical salary range would be £50,000 - £70,000 per annum
And for the most experienced VFX supervisor it will be £100,000+

Can you work from home?

Like a lot of industries after the pandemic, we now work in a hybrid way. Most of our team are in the office two days a week and then work the rest of the time from home.

Do you work set hours or are you needed to work when needed?

We work normal office hours, Monday to Friday!

Does the VFX industry have a big crunch culture?

As we near the end of our projects and getting close to finishing them the hours can get long and there can definitely be some late nights. However, the better a VFX studio is at managing their schedule and managing their client, the less that this tends to happen. Sometimes the completely unpredictable happens and some long days and a handful of weekend days will be required, but it's not all the time and it is only typically at the very end of a project. There are also some departments that are more prone to crunch time than others. The departments that are earlier in the process (concept art, 3D modelling, animation etc.) tend to do much less overtime than departments that are near the end of the process such as compositing.

Is it much easier to do these effects with the tech you have available now?

It is definitely easier than it was when we first started out 30 years ago. The speed of technology means that we can accomplish a lot more work (now we might work on 1000s of shots on a single film whereas several years ago we may have only worked on 20 or 30 shots) in a shorter time (a single frame could have taken up to 24 hours to compute before, now that same frame might compute in a matter of minutes). This all means that the complexity of what we can produce has increased. Therefore, it's not necessarily 'easier' to do visual effects now (because the effects are increasingly complex) but it's definitely faster and more prolific!

How might/is AI affecting the industry and FX jobs?

AI is definitely going to make us more efficient but history shows us that each time we make technical advances for productivity our clients simply ask us to use that time to create more versions, try more visions and just generally allow them to continue to tweak every last detail of something - so efficiency doesn't always equate to less work! There is also the possibility that some of the more repetitive and manual entry-level jobs will be replaced with machine learning solutions and so young people entering our business will be entering in more

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engaging and interesting roles but potentially with a slightly higher bar to clear or perhaps some additional training post-studies within the workplace. We don't anticipate that AI will actually replace most of our roles simply because of the copyright and intellectual property issues that are inherent in the tools at present.

How do you manage to coordinate your work and make sure everyone knows what they are doing?

In addition to our artists, we have a whole team of people that we call 'Production'. They are the team who are responsible for managing our projects and ensuring that everyone knows what they need to be doing, when they need to complete tasks and they are also the ones communicating our progress to the clients and overseeing our budget. They are a crucial part of what we do and it's a great job for someone who likes to be organised!

How do you work with other departments such as concept/pre-viz design?

We have our own in-house art department or concept art team in addition to our own virtual production and pre-viz team! So we collaborate internally all the time on projects and share information between teams regularly.

Do you ever go onto set to get a feel for what you are required to replicate through visual effects?

Absolutely! We don't get to send everybody to the set but our VFX Supervisors will definitely go on set for most projects and help the Director to film things in a way that will work for us later and to make sure that we have all of the reference materials/photographs that we will need to replicate anything that they have built for real.

What is the budget for a typical visual effects project?

It depends on how many shots there are as well as the kind of project (a TV show will have a smaller budget than a film for example). But typically a VFX budget would be somewhere in the £2,000,000 to £10,000,000 range.

Do you work directly with the cast and crew as well?

Sometimes we do, yes! Especially if we need to create a digital double of an actor or actress in which case we will need to body scan them to get their dimensions. But we will also sometimes work with them on sets where perhaps they will need to interact with a computer generated character or environment.

How much do you use storyboards to plan your effects?

We still definitely use storyboards but more often now we will use what's called pre-viz or previsualisation which is essentially a 3D computer generated storyboard. Previz is used on almost every project now.

Educational visits and careers events

We also received several questions about Framestore educational visits and attendance to careers events - please contact outreach@framestore.com to discuss these further.