**For Updated information and job postings join the U of R Film Industry Resource Group on Facebook-this is a private group so you must ask to join.**

http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=wall&gid=111941818832396

**Practical General Advice:**

Stay local until you know what you want. You don’t necessarily need to move to New York or Los Angeles to work in the business. A lot of movie production is going rogue. States like Michigan, Georgia, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania have become active spots for films due to big tax incentives. Because working in film is a major life commitment, don’t expect to just work an eight hour day or have a lot of free time during shooting. It might be a good thing to test the waters closer to home. Most film jobs are also freelance so getting your first job doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll be employed for a long time. Film shoots generally last three to six months. That’s plenty of time to realize if this is a career you want to continue on with but not really enough time to justify moving yourself to a major metropolitan area (where housing is usually super expensive).

To find out what’s shooting in your home town or surrounding areas contact the local film commission. Each state has a film office that helps market the state to film productions and works as production support for the companies that come to town. If you contact the film office they should be able to tell you what movies are coming to the area and provide you with contact information so that you can call and send your resume. Film offices are also excellent places to intern.

Film School is a good choice to get more experience, but I would only recommend it if you’re sure you want to be a writer, director, or producer. It can be costly, and although attending a good school can help you get in the door and help your work get attention, it’s still not a guarantee for employment or success. The entertainment industry is truly all about who you know.

That said, it’s never a bad idea to take a class in writing, photography, or art. This might help steer you toward what you really want to do in the industry.

If you think film school is the way to go, see the list of schools below (these are just a few, out of thousands, so do some research):

http://education-portal.com/top_ranked_film_universities_in_united_states.html
Remember to choose a program that is well rounded. Good films come down to good stories. Telling good stories requires knowledge of writing, working with actors, as well as technical aspects like cinematography and lighting.

**Getting Your First Film Job:**

There are about a million ways to go about getting your first film job. Below are just a few of the more successful ways I’ve found. Most of this advice relates to office production assistant (PA) jobs or similar entry level jobs in other departments based in Los Angeles and New York but can be applied elsewhere.

A number of departments are involved in making a film: art, set decoration, and costume to name a few, which hire production assistants. Really, the only way to get into the business is to work your way up to a desired position. Starting out as a department PA is a good way to get a taste of what each department does during a production and it’s a great way to network. PA’s are the gophers, and they interact most with the cast and crew. It’s not always a glamorous job, but if you’re good at it, people will remember you and will definitely be willing to help you out in the future.

**Actually finding your first job:**

1. Ask your friends and family whom they know. Send emails and introduce yourself and include your resume. Follow up on any lead you can.

2. *Production Weekly* is a master list put out by the studios and agencies that names all their upcoming projects, where they are shooting, as well as the production office contact info. The only problem with this resource is that you have to be on the email list to get it. Ask friends and acquaintances already working in the business if they get it or know someone who does, then ask them to forward it to you. So many people get it, that they are always happy to share.

   If there is a project on the list that is interesting to you, contact the production office and ask if you can fax your resume to the different departments. Also ask if they know what openings are available for PAs or if the producers will need assistants. If it's early enough in the prep of the film, they should have lots of PA spots open. PAs are always local hires and never travel to a location.

3. The *Ross Reports* are newsprint booklets, sold at magazine stands and bookstores like Barnes and Noble in New York and LA. They are published weekly and are used by actors to find out about casting calls for films being shot in NY and LA. You can call the casting office to request the production office information and inquire about open positions.
4. Plain old research. If there are films or TV shows that you love, see what production company made them. You find this on www.imdb.com. Contact the production company; tell them you're looking to be a PA or an assistant. Ask if you can send them your resume.

The Hollywood Creative Directory (http://www.hcdone.com/) is a good place to find production company contact information.

5. www.mandyjobs.com is another resource for finding creative/production jobs. A lot of indie companies post here. Just be wary because they mix paid and non-paid listings. Make sure you know what type of job you're responding to.

6. Most of the major studios have internship programs. It's not always a bad thing to go through the corporate side. Studios will often times staff their bigger productions internally. You can check the studio websites directly. The major studios in LA are Warner Bros., Universal, Disney, Sony, DreamWorks, Fox, and Paramount. There are a ton of smaller studios too, like Miramax, The Weinstein Co., Lions Gate, and HBO.

7. Rice Gorton Pictures is a post production accounting firm that has started a Google groups email list for production and production accounting jobs. Productions looking for crew send their postings and they do a biweekly list of jobs. Jobs are for all states, and there’s a group for just production and another for production accounting, you can ask to be added to one or both. ricegorton@googlegroups.com

NOTE ABOUT PRODUCTION ACCOUNTING: If you want to be a producer, it would be very helpful to your career to work as an accounting clerk on at least one feature film. You don’t need to have formal accounting experience. By working in production accounting you will learn how the producers of the film and the studio work together to create and maintain the budget for the film. Accounting is the only department that works closely with every other department during production so it’s a great way to get to know all of the crew and their duties.

Also production accounting clerks/PAs get paid better than most other PAs on a movie and they often have slightly better hours.

8. Cast and Crew Production Payroll provides production services to most of the feature films being shot all over the world. (Entertainment Partners is the other major production services company.) Russell Blaine is Cast and Crew’s marketing director and helps staff a lot of production accounting jobs. If you are interested in production accounting, email your resume to russell.blaine@castandcrew.com.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: The hardest thing about moving to cities like New York and LA is that you have to get "in." Working in a department like accounting or set decoration may not necessarily be your dream job, but remember a film job will probably only last 3-6 months. Having a
temporary job working in the industry will give you time to get settled in, and to look for a position that's more in line with what you really want. Also for producer and development assistant jobs, as well as jobs in other creative departments, most companies won't hire you unless they know you. Working on a feature film where you get to know the producers and other staff will help you parlay that relationship into something more. If there are 50 people on a film crew, that's 50 more contacts than when you started. Get to know everyone and every department, even if you are just an accounting clerk or PA.

9. If writing is what you really want to pursue but you don’t want to go to film school, I would suggest taking a screenwriting class or seminar.

Mediabistro.com offers one day and weekly classes on all kinds of writing, both in person and online (great for those of you outside NY and LA). They are reasonably priced and give you access to industry professionals, which is very helpful for networking.

If you’re in the New York area, you can try the New School and Hunter College as well as any of the other CCNY schools; they all have continuing education classes in film and screenwriting. In LA, UCLA has a great screenwriting class in its continuing adult education department.

Other Resources:

RECOMMENDED READING for aspiring writers and film makers

Here is a list of some of the books I use frequently for reference and for inspiration. Writers and directors need to know how to tell good stories. Storytelling begins and ends with keeping your audience captivated.

1. Story by Robert McKe
2. Writing Treatments That Sell by Kenneth Atchity and Chi-Li Wong
   ** This book sounds commercial but is one of the best guides to characterization and structure I have found, even more than the McKee book which is often considered the premiere text for screenwriters. IF YOU ARE GOING TO INVEST IN ONE BOOK ON SCREENWRITING BUY THIS ONE.
3. Writing Down the Bones by Natalie Goldberg
4. On Writing by Stephen King (Yes! The Stephen King.)
5. Writing to Change the World by Mary Pipher
6. Rebel Without a Crew by Robert Rodriguez (I don’t advocate financing your film by making yourself a medical guinea pig, but this book is a great story about the dedication it takes sometimes to survive this crazy business.)

While reference books are helpful in grasping the nuts and bolts of script writing, my advice to you would be to read anything you can get your hands on, such as magazine articles, newspapers, non-fiction books. You’d be surprised at how many films and television shows are adapted from articles that have run in periodical publications.
**PUBLICATIONS**

1. *Creative Screenwriting* ([www.creativescreenwriting.com](http://www.creativescreenwriting.com))
   **Script** covers both features and television, although many of the articles are dedicated to discussing the process and development of television scripts and ideas.

**RESOURCES**

*The Writer's Store* ([www.writersstore.com](http://www.writersstore.com)) They carry supplies and offer great discounts on Final Draft script writing and Movie Magic budgeting software.

*Script City* ([www.scriptcity.net](http://www.scriptcity.net)) They have a huge selection of existing film and television scripts. Scripts are available as hard copies and in electronic formats.

*Moviebytes.com* ([www.moviebytes.com](http://www.moviebytes.com)) Lists the various competitions and fellowship programs available to screenwriters and film makers.

**FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS**

*Scriptapalooza* ([www.scriptapalooza.com](http://www.scriptapalooza.com)) This online competition has a revolving screenplay and teleplay submission policy. Winners and finalists are read by industry professionals. Many writers who place gain representation.

*Austin Film Festival* ([www.austinfilmfestival.com](http://www.austinfilmfestival.com)) Austin is really the only true festival for writers. Every October they sponsor a week-long writers’ conference with incredible guest panelists. They also sponsor a teleplay competition that allows writers to submit spec scripts for existing television shows as well as original material. They give special jury prizes for television and feature scripts.

*ABC/Disney Writer’s Fellowship* ([www.abctalentdevelopment.com](http://www.abctalentdevelopment.com)) This is a yearlong fellowship program that fosters young writers by pairing them with industry mentors. This is a full-time paid position. Most fellowship winners are staffed to television shows after they complete their fellowship. They also have programs for executive training and directing.

*Warner Bros. Drama/Comedy Writers’ Workshops* ([www.writersworkshop.warnerbros.com](http://www.writersworkshop.warnerbros.com)) This is a non-paid 10 week program, candidates attend workshops and are mentored by writers on existing WB television shows.

**NBC Page Program** (New York and Los Angeles)  
([http://www.nbcunicareers.com/earlycareerprograms/](http://www.nbcunicareers.com/earlycareerprograms/)) NBC has a lot of early career training programs that are worth looking into. Although highly competitive to get into, once accepted, you are given access to lots of experience in the industry that most people just starting out don’t receive.

** Most of the major film and television studios have fellowship and writing competitions that foster diverse young film makers. Check individual websites for information and application packets.