

careers in the fashion industry



General Overview.....	4
Positions in the Fashion Industry.....	5
Careers in Fashion Management.....	5
Careers in Fashion Design.....	9
Careers in Textiles.....	12
Securing a Position.....	13
Cornell Resources.....	13
Networking.....	14
Preparing Materials for Job Application.....	17
Types of Resumes.....	17
Portfolio.....	17

An introduction to careers in the fashion industry

The fashion industry is constantly evolving and there are countless possible career paths. This guide is an introduction to a variety of careers in the fashion industry, as well as an overview of different ways to seek and apply for employment. The best way to learn more about careers in the fashion industry is through relevant coursework and real-world experiences, such as internships.

This guide can assist in narrowing down your interests and serve as a starting point for exploring more options and opportunities that may interest you. While there is no guaranteed path for acquiring your dream job in the fashion industry, it is important to make the most of your experiences to identify what you enjoy about each.

positions in the fashion industry

This section offers summaries of some of the careers within the fashion industry. It is divided into multiple sections based on industry focus, including Fashion Management, Design, and Textiles. Each summary includes a description of the role, a salary range, and basic requirements of experience and education. This is not an exhaustive list, rather a brief overview to help you discover possible careers for further research and exploration.

Careers in Fashion Management

Fashion design management is the application of business, economics, and marketing principles to the fashion industry in order to market apparel and textile products. Given this expansive definition, fashion management encompasses a wide range of professions, however, each shares the common goal of ensuring maximum performance for a particular brand.

Advertising Director

Role: Develops and implements a company's advertising strategy to increase production sales. Works to position the company well, relative to the company's competitors. Creates unique promotional campaigns on various levels, ranging from in-store to world-wide campaigns.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Advertising, Communication, or Related Field • 3-5 years experience in promotion and retail • Knowledge of consumer and fashion • Ability to sell items and pitch ideas

Salary Range: \$43,312 – \$119,886

Average: \$76,955

Allocator

Role: Responsible for planning and managing merchandise deliveries. Coordinates shipping and delivery of products from vendors to buyers and retail locations. In charge of managing warehouse location and supplies. Analyzes the product needs of individual stores and ensures proper products and product amounts are delivered.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Merchandising or Retail • 2-4 years experience in retail sales

Salary Range: \$35,740 – \$60,000

Average: \$44,447

Buyer

Role: Responsible for all product purchases for their department of a company. Monitors trends to determine which items will more likely be purchased by customers and will earn the company profit.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Merchandising, Retailing, Design, Textiles, or Related Field • Experience in entry-level buying roles, such as assistant buyer, as well as 2-4 years of retail sales experience

Salary Range: \$45,693 – \$102,955

Average: \$61,435

Company Sales Representative

Role: Facilitates communication between the company and potential buyers with regards to all of a company's product lines across multiple retail sectors.

Requirements: Organized • Strong communication skills • High level of enthusiasm

Salary Range: \$29,593 – \$59,564

Average: \$39,300

Financial Planner

Role: Works with buyers to develop large scale, company-focused sales forecasts, inventory plans, and spending budgets in order to minimize markdowns and increase profits. Utilizes past data to project overall sales and pricing.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Merchandising, Retailing, Design, Business, or Related Field • Experience in manufacturing and planning roles

Salary Range: \$39,235 – \$108,339

Average: \$61,361

General Merchandise Manager

Role: Head of entire merchandising division within a retail store. Responsible for seasonal ideas and managing buyers across all divisions. Develops buying and selling strategies that maximize business performance and profitability. Ensures that pricing decisions, promotional strategies, and marketing activities will support the overall objectives of the merchandising team. Works with buyers to develop an assortment of products that can appeal to customers.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Merchandising, Retailing, Business, Management, or Related Field • Experience in retail sales and managerial responsibilities

Salary Range: \$30,000 – \$144,262

Average: \$48,718

Manufacturing Sales Representative

Role: An independent business owner. Sells product lines from multiple manufacturers to buyers within a particular product line of the retail sector. Works within one given market and is paid on commission.

Requirements: Very disciplined, highly motivated, competitive attitude, trustworthy

Salary Range: \$36,000 – 86,000

Average: \$54,321

Merchandiser

Role: Collaborates with Director of Product Development in deciding seasonal production. Then, organizes and manages the product development process. Responsible for the creation of a balanced, marketable and timely line. Creates original line plan and targets wholesale costs by analyzing sales from previous seasons, trends, and customer demands.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Apparel Design or Related Field
• 3-5 years experience in Product Development

Salary Range: \$37,095 – \$100,334

Average: \$46,299

Merchandise Coordinator

Role: Employed by retail stores to handle categorization, inventory, pricing, and display of merchandise. Services any accounts in a specific geographic area. Travels to sites to work with owners, buyers, managers, sales personnel, and customers. Writes orders, stocks sales floor, sets up floor displays, creates simple promotions.

Requirements: General knowledge of the fashion industry • Strong communication skills

Salary Range: \$25,220 – \$52,000

Average: \$41,129

Retail Sales Associate

Role: Works the store floor to sell the product. Manages customers and maintains store appearance and product displays. May be viewed as a starting position in fashion, but can easily be turned into an exciting career.

Requirements: Sales ability • Friendly demeanor

Salary Range: \$15,000 – 62,000

Average: \$33,306

Sales Promoter

Role: Encourages growth of company through exposure and development of its brand and imaging. Utilizes knowledge of the costs and effectiveness of various advertising platforms, as well as the importance of promotion and public relation skills. Possesses deep understanding of specific products and overall company brand image. Knowledgeable in media, advertising, promotion, and graphic design.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Promotion, Advertising, Merchandising, Business, or Related Field • Experience in sales and industry/advertising • Understanding of fashion marketing • Ability to see and communicate trends • Knowledge of consumer desires and actions

Salary Range: \$40,171 – \$96,635

Average: \$61,972

Sourcing Manager

Role: Determines factories and manufacturers from which the products will be sourced. Works with overseas and domestic producers to negotiate production contracts, place orders, and monitor production and delivery schedules.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Merchandising, Product Development, Business, or Related Field • 2-3 years of experience as a Buyer or Wholesale Merchandiser • Experience in sewing and production construction with deep understanding of fabric properties and uses

Salary Range: \$68,414 – \$123,646

Average: \$94,421

Special Event Coordinator

Role: Increases company visibility by creating and coordinating events for exposure. Involved in all aspects of event space development. Ensures that spaces and events match the products.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Merchandising, Design, Promotion, or Events Planning • Experience in event coordinating and special event planning

Salary Range: \$29,471 – \$54,305

Average: \$41,547

Production Planner

Role: Responsible for anticipating and planning all steps needed to produce final products. Creates the production plan by reviewing sales forecasts, planning fabric production and ordering, scheduling the garment construction timeline, and collaborating with multiple departments to ensure all parties have necessary information and materials.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design, Business, Marketing, or International Marketing • Knowledge of business and manufacturing

Salary Range: \$43,867 – \$78,000

Average: \$56,570

Public Relations Director

Role: Identifies ways to achieve cost efficient promotions. Ensures that company holds a favorable view with the public. Works with various media platforms to maximize company outreach.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Marketing, Public Relations, Business, or Related Field • 8-10 years experience in Public Relations • Strong writing and budgeting skills • Ability to pitch oneself, company, and ideas

Salary Range: \$49,755 – \$139,746

Average: \$83,562

Quality Control Manager

Role: Responsible for developing guidelines and standards for company quality expectations. Ensures manufacturers properly construct garments and detailing, as instructed by the company to maintain product quality and earn company profit.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Textiles or Textile Testing with preference given to individuals with a master's or Ph.D • 5-10 years of experience in quality control • Solid understanding of garment construction • Knowledge of spec sheet construction and use

Salary Range: \$44,578 – \$98,327

Average: \$66,955

Careers in Fashion Design

Fashion Design is the process of conceptualizing, constructing and designing products for the apparel design industry. There are multiple areas one can pursue within the design side of the fashion industry, as well as multiple levels of careers. Careers within design require innovative and creative thinkers who can keep up with the dynamic and exciting demands of the industry.

Accessories Designer

Role: Conceptualizes, designs, and develops jewelry, handbags, hats, belts, gloves, scarves and other accessories. Works to create items that will compliment clothing and add further individuality to the wearer's outfit. Responsible for managing the production of product from start to finish.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design or Fine Arts • Versatile design abilities and interests

Salary Range: \$48,000 – \$95,000

Average: \$57,492

Creative Designer

Role: Develops the designs for products within their specific department by formulating original ideas for garments and other products based on interpretations of current trends, modification of previous designs, and creation of new designs. Accounts for the predetermined price range, customer profile, and brand image in constructing designs that adhere to company values and protocol.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design • 1-5 years of experience as an Assistant/Associate Designer • High levels of creativity

Salary Range: \$48,245 – \$95,477

Average: \$62,822

Director of Product Development/Design Director

Role: Creates strategic plans for the product development division of a company. Specifies what the company will design, produce, and market. Sets the pricing, sizing, taste level, fashion level, image, and timing decisions for the line being produced.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design, Product Development, or Related Field • 8-10 years of experience as a Creative/Technical Designer • Strong understanding of consumer behavior

Salary Range: \$55,198 – \$146,218

Average: \$117,625

Fashion Illustrator

Role: Creates artistic visual representations of various fashion items for designers, magazines, advertisers, and retailers to showcase a company's brand. Responsible for creating artistic, dramatized renderings of the items in a variety of mediums, including charcoal, paint, CAD, etc.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design or Fine Arts (ideally with a fashion focus) • Strong skills in both electronic and hand sketching

Salary Range: \$42,150 – \$124,780

Average: \$83,465

Technical Designer

Role: Interprets the creative design concepts designed by the Creative Designer to make prototypes of potential new products. Collaborates with Creative Designer to modify and finalize designs prior to mass production. Responsible for turning the Creative Designer's vision into a reality.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design or Product Development • Strong understanding of garment construction
• Strong sketching abilities • CAD skills

Salary Range: \$38,431 – \$88,584

Average: \$59,376

Trend Forecaster

Role: Observes color preferences, stylistic choices, and interests across multiple communities to determine the major trends for upcoming seasons. Combines knowledge of fashion, history, consumer research, and business information to formulate forecasts and presents them to the fashion industry for implementation in future lines.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion, Visual Arts, Marketing, Consumer Behavior, or Related Field

Salary Range: \$45,693 – \$224,000

Average: \$124,846

Pattern Maker

Role: Develops patterns for apparel products through flat patterning or draping. Interprets sketches from the Creative Designer and instructions from the Technical Designer to determine the most efficient way these garments should be patterned for proper manufacturing and mass production.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design • Strong construction skills, attention to detail, and focus on accuracy

Salary Range: \$30,110 – \$93,807

Average: \$55,796

Shoe Designer

Role: Responsible for the design and conceptualization of footwear for a variety of people and purposes. Considers usage and targets consumers to create products that will suit their needs. Must also consider all construction and material elements to ensure design continuity.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design or Fine Arts (ideally with a fashion focus) • Strongly recommended to have previous academic or industry experience with footwear

Salary Range: \$42,150 – \$124,780

Average: \$84,400

Materials Developer

Role: Responsible for the development, research, approval, and study of various raw materials, fabrics, and trims for products. Constantly considering the functionality of products and working on ways to improve designs.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Textiles or Related Field • Experience in material development or material testing • Strong problem solving skills and eye for innovation

Salary Range: \$62,000 – \$170,000

Average: \$119,501

Careers in Textiles Focusing on the physical, chemical, and engineering properties of textile materials and their applications, careers with a textile focus are centered around the more scientific side of the fashion industry. These careers fall within a large range of careers and industries, including medical and engineering, but all share the same focus on textile usage and material science.

Material Scientist

Role: Works with a variety of materials to develop, process, test, and create textiles for a particular sector. Sectors may include fashion, industrial, or interiors with a range from clothing to medicine.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Material Science, Fiber Science or Related Field • Strong understanding of material composition and usage

Salary Range : \$57,000 – 108,607

Average: \$81,806

Textile Colorist

Role: Responsible for the producing and branding the color of fabrics used for garment construction. Develops color schemes, color formulas, and dying processes for textiles. Also responsible for checking color quality and tracking inventory and supply requisition.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Art of Textile Design • Knowledge of latest fashion trends • Strong understanding of color theory and color properties

Salary Range: \$32,816 – \$114,604

Average: \$72,950

Textile Product Developer/Designer

Role: Designs original patterns and prints. Determines how designs may be applied to fabrics in all industries. Designs can be made through surface design such as embroidery or beadwork, weaving patterns, or printing onto the fabric.

Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design, Textiles, Visual Arts, Graphic Design, or Related Field • Experience with sewing • Strong knowledge of CAD software

Salary Range: \$34,255 – \$83,625

Average: \$50,239

Textile Technologist/Engineer

Role: Designs and develops the weave structure and production rate of textile construction. Determines equipment and procedures necessary to create all fibers, yarns, and fabrics. Develops textiles for a range of products, including apparel, industrial fabric, and medical equipment.

Requirements: Master's Degree in Fiber Science, Textile Engineering, or Related Field • Strong understanding of textile properties and characteristics

Salary Range: \$46,807 – \$134,554

Average: \$97,420

Looking for open positions within the fashion industry can be different from traditional job hunting. While other industries may rely more heavily on job listings and postings, such openings can be more competitive and harder to come by in the fashion industry. The fashion industry tends to rely more on networking, word-of-mouth, and personal recommendations. This section offers tips on how to expand your options and take advantage of more opportunities during your time at Cornell and beyond.

Where to look for Openings

As previously mentioned, applying for positions within the fashion industry is quite different from more traditional positions. The difference comes from the emphasis on personal connections and recommendations within one's specialty. However, there are also more traditional methods for job searching that can be used to secure a position within the industry. These options include calling companies, searching websites, and looking for postings. Some notable websites for fashion listings include Women's Wear Daily (<http://jobs.wwd.com/jobs/>) and Business of Fashion (<https://www.businessoffashion.com/careers>). The Career Exploration Center also researches positions available within the industry and will happily help you find and prepare for these positions.

Cornell Resources

Cornell offers multiple resources for students looking for positions within the apparel industry ranging from on-campus recruiting to email blasts with opportunity alerts. Potential employers will contact the university and request to visit campus to present to classes and recruit or they will request that their company's listing be forwarded amongst the student body. To be notified of these opportunities you must be on the FSAD listserv.

Cornell Fashion Industry Network (CIFN)

The Careers in the Fashion Industry organization is sponsored by the FSAD Department and is student-run. CIFM invites guest speakers and provides students with networking opportunities, as well as notifications of job and internship opportunities.

Cornell Handshake

Cornell Handshake is a web-based system, sponsored by Cornell Career Services that provides listings of job and internship opportunities. Such opportunities also include on-campus recruiting and career fairs. Additionally, you can access general career information through Handshake. Please take note that to be eligible for on-campus recruiting, you must first complete the Handshake tutorial.

Networking Networking is crucial to acquiring a position within the apparel industry because it is such a specialized field. Employers desire to hire individuals whose skills and talents can be spoken for, especially by other respected fashion houses or individuals. Recommendations from one's previous employers, alumni connections, and peers can carry a lot of weight. This is something to always keep in mind. Due to the emphasis on networking within the fashion industry, it is important to have an understanding of how to connect with others and maintain healthy, professional relationships.

Tips and tricks for Networking with Alumni and for Informational Interviews

Do's

- Research the alumni's company/organization.
- Try to arrange an in-person conversation or phone conversation.
- Allot 30 minutes or more for the interview and be cognizant of the other person's time.
- Stay in touch and periodically update the alumnus on how you are doing or any new developments in your career exploration.
- Send a thank you note/email immediately after speaking with the alumnus.
- Dress professionally as you would for a job interview or as professionals in the alumnus' workplace dress.
- Be mindful of your body language.
- Ask for names of more people you could potentially contact and if it is alright with the alumnus if you used their name as a referral.
- Be clear when explaining what area of the company you're interested in as to allow the alumni to direct you to the appropriate person within the company

Dont's

- Don't directly ask for a job.
- Don't schedule too many informational interviews back-to-back.

Sample Question Categories

- Preparation - how to prepare for different aspects of working in your field of interest.
- Lifestyle - inquire about work-life balance and quality of life when working at the alumnus' company/organization.
- Job Outlook - how does employment evolve over time at the company.
- Company Culture - how does the company treat its employees and what is expected of them
- Job Routine - what does their work consist of and what has been most satisfactory/challenging in field.
- Job Search Techniques - how would they approach the job search process; would they mind reading over your resume to

Tips for Networking by Email

- Use meaningful subject line.
- Mention commonalities.
- Keep it concise.
- Tell them about yourself.
- Keep the focus on the reader, rather than yourself.
- If you say that you will follow-up, it is your responsibility to do so.
- Try, try again - do not be discouraged, keep reaching out.

Tips for Networking at Events

Preparation:

- Establish your goal - know what kind of information or assistance you would like to receive and be ready to discuss your interests and future ambitions.
- Research - know the company and person's background prior to attending the event so that you can ask relevant and meaningful questions.
- Prepare a business card/method to write down your own contact information - a business card or resume enables you to share your contact information easily with others.
- Research the organization hosting the event as this is an easy topic to fall back on while networking during the event.

During the Event:

- Dress appropriately - dress to impress, inquire about proper attire for the event, and be sure that you are comfortable in what you are wearing.
- Power pose - in a private place, stretch your arms up over your head to restore energy.

At the event:

- Taste, do not eat - if it is a food event, remember that you are not there to be fed, and make sure one hand is free at all times to shake hands.
- Start with small conversation - talk to those around you who may be sitting by themselves, as they will appreciate the company, and it can lessen your nerves.
- Make contact - offer a little information about yourself and be mindful that this is a conversation, rather than a presentation.
- Firm handshakes - nice and firm to convey confidence.
- Let others into your conversation - include others who may be hovering around your conversation.
- Glancers - if the person you are talking to is looking around, take note of the social cues and politely leave the conversation.
- How to leave a conversation - never interrupt the speaker, let them finish their thought and then politely excuse yourself.
- Exchange contact information - those in higher positions may not disclose their contact information as readily, be prepared for them to direct you to their administrative assistant, most often you can find contact information for their assistant through your own research. Don't be afraid to ask for their business card!

After the event:

- Follow up - make sure to reach out to the individuals you were speaking with to remind them who you are and thank them for their time.
- Ask for more information - if you feel it is appropriate, ask the individual to meet for coffee or if they would be available for a small phone interview. Use this opportunity to learn more about that person, their position, and work history. This will allow you to learn more about potential career paths while establishing a deeper connection with the individual.
- If you have established a strong enough relationship with this contact, reach out if you are looking for career advice and see if they have any recommendations for you, this is the whole point of networking!

preparing your materials

This section offers brief overview of the different materials you might need to prepare prior to applying for a job and taking an interview. To ensure that your materials are effectively communicating your personal brand, you may want to consider having others look over your resume(s) and portfolio. This means having a consistent color, aesthetic, and general format for your business cards, resume, cover letter, portfolio, etc. This way, they can provide you with constructive feedback to strengthen and solidify the image you are trying to convey. The Career Service Center reads over resumes and cover letters on a walk-in basis and will also conduct Mock Interviews for when your materials land you an interview.

Traditional Resume A resume is a one-page document that summarizes your education, experiences, and accomplishments. The document serves as reflection of you and your qualifications. Also, it is the first impression that an employer will have of you. Employers will likely be glancing through dozens, if not hundreds of resumes. Therefore, it is important that your resume is concise and stands out positively to employers.

Design Resume A design resume is also a one-page document, which serves the same function as a traditional resume. The difference is that graphic presentation is a much more important factor. Through colors, fonts, text placement, and layout, you are able to convey your personality, creativity, and professionalism to employers. For employment or internship positions within the fashion industry that are more focused on creativity and design, you may want to consider submitting a design resume with your application in place of a traditional resume. However, while you can be more creative in a design resume, make sure it is still organized and easy to read – it's very probable that those reading your resume are from business background.

Portfolio A portfolio is a compilation of your design work and projects. The portfolio serves as a concrete display of your style and talents. Works included can go beyond fashion-related pieces to include work completed in different mediums - sketches, drawings, paintings, graphic design work, interior design work, sculptures, and much more. Your portfolio should be cohesive, with each piece having a specific role and being meaningful to you. Be sure that you can talk through the process and significance of each piece, should you be asked about your work.

Some may choose to have a digital portfolio where their portfolio is displayed on a personal website or portfolio-specific site. For interviews and networking events, it is recommended to have a printed version of your portfolio on hand for interviewers and employers to quickly access and for you to use as a reference to your work. Throughout your college career and beyond, you can expect to be updating and revising your portfolio.

