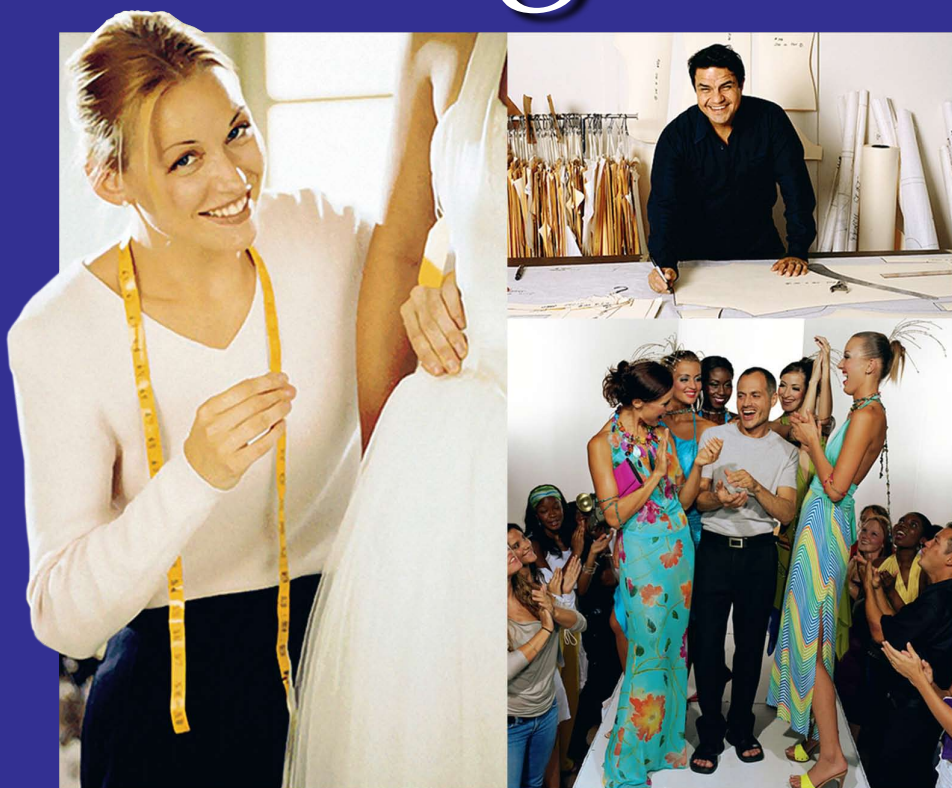


Get paid to design clothing!

FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Fashion
Designer**



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1. Introduction

Welcome to the world of fashion design! As a fashion designer, you will have an interesting and exciting career — one that many people only dream about. You will know months in advance what people all over the world will be clamoring to wear, and it may very well be your clothing that they are after.

Fashion designers inspire the way people all over the world look and feel about themselves. For centuries fashion design has touched almost everyone in some way, affecting the way ordinary people live their lives and shaping their very culture. From the caveman days of fur and leather to today's stiletto Jimmy Choos and designer sweatpants, what we wear says a lot about who we are.

In this field, there is a long history of ordinary people rising from humble beginnings to become outstanding success stories. For example,

designer Laura Ashley got her start as a secretary. Vera Wang began designing when she became engaged at age 39 and couldn't find a suitable wedding gown for the mature first bride. Miuccia Prada was studying theatrical mime when she decided to take over the family handbag business. Ralph Lauren was born into a middle-class family who lived in the Bronx, and used to buy suits with his pocket money at age 12. He is now one of the richest and most famous designers in the world.

Of course, it takes hard work, creativity and a true passion for fabulous clothes to achieve greatness as a fashion designer, but choosing this book is an important step in the right direction.

1.1 What a Fashion Designer Does

As a fashion designer, you will use your sense of style and flair for the original to design clothing and accessories for production and sale. Fashion designers conceive new looks for the items we wear, and then make their ideas real. Every piece of clothing in your closet, from your businesswear to your underwear, was invented by a fashion designer somewhere. They saw a need for that item, and so did you.

Designers are generally expected to come up with a collection of clothing for each season. Collections tend to feature variations on a theme and are usually created about two seasons ahead of time.

Fashion designers may choose to specialize in a type of clothing — for example, children's clothing, women's sportswear, or men's formalwear. You could also specialize in only one of the steps in fashion design, such as patternmaking, sewing samples, or trendspotting.

Fashion designers are involved not only with the creative process but also with the practical concerns of manufacturing and marketing apparel. They must understand the practical process of transforming an apparel concept into a tangible garment.

As a fashion designer, you might spend your day:

- Browsing fashion magazines and websites for inspiration
- Shopping for new fabrics and accessories

- Meeting with clients to measure and discuss one-off projects
- Sketching ideas in a journal
- Creating patterns for various sizes by hand or with computer-aided design (CAD)
- Creating samples of your designs by sewing or having them assembled
- Meeting with sales reps or your manufacturer
- Promoting yourself and your designs to potential clients

Fashion designers will work flexible, but often long hours, in a creative and dynamic industry. They may find motivation in striving towards being the next Versace or Donna Karan, or simply working at something they love.

1.2 Benefits of a Fashion Design Career

There are many great things about being a fashion designer. While most people are attracted to the creative aspects of the job, there are also practical benefits that add to the appeal of creating fashion for a living.

Lots of Options

As a fashion designer, there are multiple career paths for you to choose from. Some designers work for top design houses such as Ralph Lauren and Chanel. Others are employed by mass-market manufacturers of men's, women's and children's apparel. Still others strike out on their own, establishing a distinctive style and overseeing fashion creation from initial concept to manufacturing and merchandising.

About a third of all fashion designers are self-employed. That third covers not only designers at the very top of the trade but also those who run their own private-label boutiques in cities and towns around the U.S. and Canada.

Job Stability

Clothing is a basic necessity, which means that there will always be a market for clothes. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that employment for fashion designers will remain relatively stable through 2016. Although the clothing industry is experiencing a slowdown in the manufacturing end of things (due to a sluggish economy and the outsourcing of manufacturing to overseas companies), there is an increasing number of job opportunities for designers that will accommodate new people coming into the field.

In 2007 (the most recent year for which statistics are available) apparel logged nearly \$213 billion in retail sales, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This figure was up an astounding 27% from clothing and accessory store sales in 2002. These statistics support the idea that the apparel and accessories marketplace should continue to offer opportunities for fashion designers.

Earning Potential

Entry-level clothing designers in the United States make anywhere from \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year — admittedly not that great, but everyone's got to pay their dues. A median salary for experienced designers is about \$50,000 per year, and designers for large companies, or with their own popular line of clothing, can expect to make upwards of \$100,000 per year. Of course, if you decide to go into business for yourself, the earning potential will be virtually limitless.

Personal Satisfaction

Every designer interviewed for this book — regardless of experience level — was filled with a passion for the business. Making lots of money is nice, but you'll never really enjoy it unless you love what you do. Fashion design is a creative and challenging career.

Chances are, you won't ever be bored as a fashion designer. There are always new trends to follow and unusual ideas to pursue. You will also have the satisfaction of seeing your projects completed on a frequent basis, and creating products that make people feel good about themselves.

Recognition

If you like to be recognized for your achievements, then this is the career for you. You may have noticed that during the Academy Awards, the announcers often talk more about what the stars are wearing and who the designers are than about the celebrities themselves. Who doesn't like to be recognized for their hard work? A successful fashion designer can get used to this kind of attention.

Independence and Flexibility

If you're starting up your own business, then you may choose to work in your pajamas at night, or whenever or however you'd prefer. The fashion industry traditionally employs creative, open-minded people, so you are more likely to have a flexible work environment and creative, interesting supervisors than in many other types of jobs.

You Can Start Now

It is possible to become a fashion designer whether you have a formal design education or just a talent for design (and both options are explored in this guide). A degree can be very helpful in landing a job in the industry; however, some of today's top designers do not have a formal education. While you will probably want to continue learning about fashion throughout your career, you don't have to wait to begin.

These are just some of the many benefits of working in this exciting field. If they sound like a good fit for you, read on to find out how to get started!

1.3 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Fashion Designer* is arranged to take you through the process of either getting a job as a fashion designer or starting your own fashion design business. It incorporates insider tips and advice from more than 15 industry experts, including successful fashion designers, employment agencies, and fashion educators.

Chapter 2 ("*A Look at Fashion and Design*") is your introduction to the world of fashion and design. You'll learn about some of the key players in the industry, why people buy certain products, and why certain ideas

sell. This chapter will also walk you through the process of designing a garment, step-by-step, from concept to finished product.

Chapter 3 (*“Developing Your Skills”*) gives a variety of options for learning about design and becoming a skilled designer. You’ll find out what talents employers are looking for in this industry, and find out about formal educational programs as well as opportunities for self-study. In this chapter you’ll get tips for learning hands-on skills such as sewing and drawing, as well as how to develop your creativity and ability to forecast fashion trends.

In Chapter 4 (*“Getting Hired”*), you will discover who hires fashion designers, what positions and salaries are available, how to find out about job openings, how to prepare a portfolio and resume, and how to do well in an interview.

Chapter 5 (*“Starting Your Own Business”*) takes you through the steps involved in setting yourself up in business as an independent designer. Whether you want to sell your designs to individual clients or to stores, we’ll advise you on how to develop a business plan, evaluate your costs, get startup funding, set up your workspace, get your supplies together, and fill orders for your designs.

Chapter 6 (*“Marketing Your Designs”*) will tell you where and how to sell your designs. You’ll learn how to reach your target market, what promotional tools you need, and the techniques you’ll use to make everybody want to be seen in your clothing.

Finally, Chapter 7 (*“The Road to Success”*) contains a variety of success stories to inspire and inform you about career paths others have taken. The book is rounded out with a selection of resources for further study, and for keeping up with the ever-changing world of fashion.

When you are finished with this guide you will know what steps to take next and where to go from there. By applying what you learn here, it’s just a matter of time before you’ll be where you want to be... in an exciting career as a fashion designer!