Graphic Designers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia

skilled immigrant
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Contents

1. Working as a Graphic Designer [NOC 2021: 52120]

Job Description

Graphic designers and illustrators are visual communicators – they create images to communicate information for publications, advertising, films, packaging, posters, signs and interactive media such as Web sites.

As a Graphic designer you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- consult with clients about project, audience, content, budget
- determine the best and most appropriate medium
- prepare and present sketches, layouts, and graphic elements using traditional tools, multimedia software and image processing, layout and design software
- estimate the cost of materials and time to complete graphic design projects
- co-ordinate all aspects of production for print, audio-visual or electronic materials, such as websites, social media and other digital media

Sources:

- WorkBC Career Profile for Graphic Designers & Illustrators
  https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/graphic-designers-and-illustrators
- Career Cruising – Profile for 'Graphic Designer'
  https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising
  Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

Industry Overview

Demand for graphic designers and illustrators often decreases when the economy slows down. However, job prospects in some areas remain stable.

Many organizations, including banks and insurance companies, retailers and municipalities, now employ large numbers of graphic designers to complete design projects in-house. Other areas of specialization currently in demand include accessible design, sustainable practices, user experience (UX) design and 3D illustration.
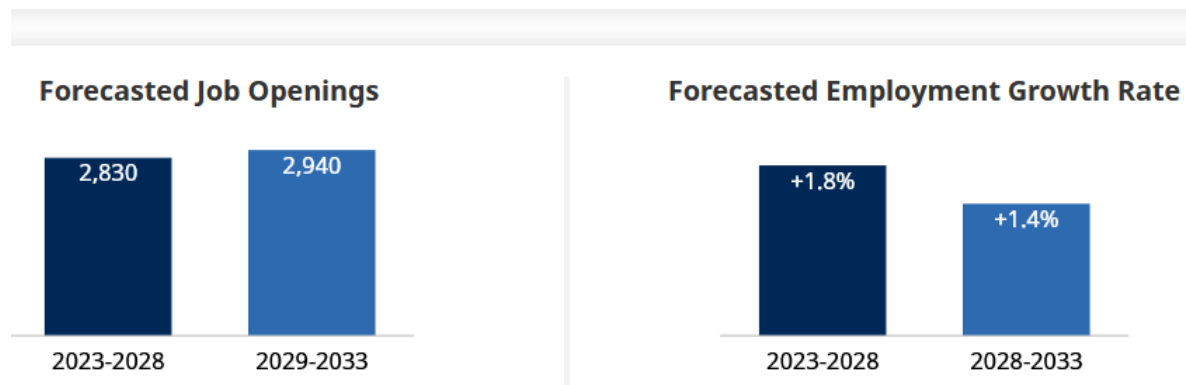
Historically, most job opportunities in design and illustration were found in larger urban centres, but opportunities for remote work are now available.

Job Outlook in BC

Graphic Designers & Illustrators

Forecasted Job Openings (2023-2033)

5,770

Forecasted Job Openings

2023-2028	2029-2033
2,830	2,940

Forecasted Employment Growth Rate

2023-2028	2028-2033
+1.8%	+1.4%

Source: WorkBC

Outlook for Graphic Designers & Illustrators by BC Region, 2023-2033

Region	2023 Estimated Employment	Average Annual Employment Growth	Expected Number of Job Openings 2023-2033
Vancouver Island / Coast	1,750	1.4%	710
Lower Mainland / Southwest	12,190	1.7%	4,650
Thompson- Okanagan	780	1.7%	340
Kootenay	190	-0.3%	20
Cariboo	95	-1.1%	30
North Coast / Nechako	45	-1.4%	0
Northeast	40	1.8%	10

You can learn more about the graphic design industry in BC from:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Graphic Designers & Illustrators**
  https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/graphic-designers-and-illustrators
- **Career Cruising – Profile for 'Graphic Designer'**
  https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising
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Types of Employers

Graphic designers are employed by advertising agencies, design firms, and multimedia production companies and also larger companies with advertising or communications departments and by government agencies.
Many graphic designers are self-employed.

Salary

In BC, the annual median salary is $65,175. According to the *2022/2023 Creative Earners Survey*, in BC the average annual salary for graphic designers is $63,480 and senior graphic designers is $70,000.

Sources:
- WorkBC Career Profile for Graphic Designers & Illustrators
  https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx
- 2022/2023 Creative Earners Report (Association of Registered Graphic Designers)
  https://www.creativeearners.ca/

Job Bank Canada provides hourly wages for graphic designers and illustrators in BC regions:

Community/Area	Low ($/hour)	Median ($/hour)	High ($/hour)
British Columbia	20.67	31.25	56.00
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	20.67	32.50	60.00
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	17.40	25.58	47.48

Source: https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages

Working Hours

Working hours depend on the place of employment. Designers who work for large companies or design firms usually work regular business week hours. Freelance graphic designers generally have more irregular schedules, and often work longer hours. If an important deadline is approaching, you might work overtime including evening and weekends.

2. Skills, Education and Experience

Skills

- strong creativity & artistic talent
- strong computer skills
- good organizational and communication skills
- problem solving skills
- excellent ability to work under demanding timelines and meet deadlines

Education and Experience

Graphic designers and illustrators generally require a university degree in visual arts, with a specialization or completion of a college diploma in graphic design, or equivalent.

Other requirements may include:

- Certification by the Association of Registered Graphic Designers (RGD) or the Design Professionals of Canada (DesCan)
- A well-developed portfolio so clients and employers can see your demonstrated skills

Qualifications

Certification is not mandatory to work as a graphic designer in British Columbia. However, certification through the *Design Professionals of Canada* or *Association of Registered Graphic Designers* may improve your employment prospects.

Certification with the *Design Professionals of Canada (DesCan)* requires 6 years of combined education and professional practice and a confidential portfolio review of your work by the National Certification Board. Certification with the *Association of Registered Graphic Designers* requires 7 years of education and/or relevant work experience, and an evaluation of your professional portfolio.

More information:

- **Design Professionals of Canada Certification**
  https://descan.ca/certification/
- **Association of Registered Graphic Designers Certification**
  https://rgd.ca/certification

Source:
- WorkBC Career Profile for Graphic Designers & Illustrators
  https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx

3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

Online Job Postings

- **Behance – Find Creative Jobs**
  https://www.behance.net/joblist
  under "All Creative Fields", select 'Graphic Design'
- **Indeed.com**
  https://www.indeed.ca/
- **Talent.com**
  https://ca.talent.com/

Professional Associations' Career Resources

- **Design Professionals of Canada Job Board**
  https://descan.ca/job-board/
- **Association of Registered Graphic Designers Job Postings**
  https://rgd.ca/jobs

Identifying the Right Position

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For graphic designers, look for these related job titles (from NOC):

- advertising designer

- graphic artist
- layout designer
- package designer
- page designer

Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of graphic design employers in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Find a Canadian Designer (Design Professionals of Canada)**
  https://descan.ca/find-a-designer/
- **Business in Vancouver – Biggest Digital & Media Agencies in BC**
  At VPL Central Branch, 338.9711 B97
- **Reference Canada**
  https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada
  Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "graphic design" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.
  Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/ to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online at https://www.vpl.ca/siic/.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**
  https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**
  https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience

- **Networking for Employment**
  https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
  https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada

5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations

Associations for the graphic design industry in BC and Canada provide information and assistance. Some require paying a fee for membership.

- **Advertising & Design Club of Canada**
  http://theadcc.ca/
- **Design Professionals of Canada**
  https://descan.ca/the-society/
- **Association of Registered Graphic Designers**
  https://rgd.ca/
- **Creative Futures Career Guide**
  https://www.creativefutures.ca/career-guide/

Industry Journals

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession. Examples at the Central Library:

- **Applied Arts Magazine**
  Available at VPL Central, 741.605 A65 and online
  https://www.appliedartsmag.com/
- **Design Currency. Design Professionals of Canada**
  https://descan.ca/design-currency

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at https://www.vpl.ca/siic.