

# Careers involving Textiles



## 20 Reasons Why You Should Consider a Career in the Fashion & Textiles Industry

1. It's a major UK industry with more than 79,000 businesses employing over 340,000 people.
2. The gross value added for the fashion and textiles sector in the UK is estimated at over £11.5 billion, which makes up 3% of the UK economy (<http://goo.gl/vJrOY1>).
3. The UK is the 15th largest textiles manufacturer in the world (<http://goo.gl/96hRZm>).
4. There is a predicted growth of 15,000 – 20,000 jobs in UK by 2020 (<http://goo.gl/96hRZm>).
5. There is a high demand for particular roles within the industry such as pattern cutters and technologists.
6. There is a growth in niche markets around technical textiles, with lots of companies diversifying into this area. Estimates suggest this area contributes £1.5 - £2bn a year to the UK economy.
7. Our designers are considered some of the best in the world.
8. It's a major global industry with career opportunities across the world and skills that transfer from country to country.
9. We wear textiles or touch them most of the time, often without thinking about it. We couldn't live without textiles, whether it be for fashion and

protection, in our homes, offices and the workplace, or in hidden areas such as buildings and for medical applications.

10. It's a broad and varied industry with a wide range of sectors, from the traditional areas of fashion and interiors, to technical textiles such as medical textiles, geo textiles, performance textiles and engineering.

11. There's a huge range of career roles available from designers, to technologists, quality controllers and engineers.

12. There are a wide range of related careers including journalism and retail.

13. Textiles materials are replacing traditional harder materials in some contexts with textiles having some of the strongest materials in the world e.g. Kevlar which is eight times stronger than steel of the same weight.

14. Textiles materials are at the cutting edge of major developments across the world e.g. wearables and e-textiles.

15. Studying fashion and textiles gives you transferable skills such as project management and decision making.

16. Many careers in textiles offer the opportunity to be creative and hands on and some careers offer learning in other areas including science, IT and art.

17. Many textiles careers offer wider opportunities e.g. travelling and learning about business.

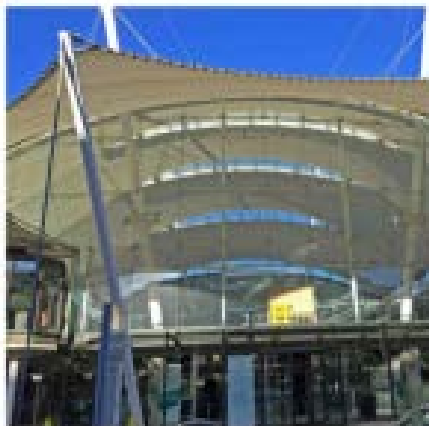
18. Textiles materials make a difference to the lives of others whether it be through medical textiles, such as knitted replacement heart valves, or through fashion that helps people express their individuality.

19. Studying textiles creates informed consumers who are more able to make better decisions when buying and using products.

20. Studying textiles gives you a life skill and for many people it is also a hobby that helps to improve well being.

# What is the modern fashion and textiles industry like?

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Fashion and Textiles: A Growth Industry What is the textiles industry? The textiles industry is one of the oldest in the world. Indeed textiles are as old as people themselves as we have always sought textiles to meet our basic human need for clothing and protection. The word textiles is from the Latin word 'texere', which means 'to weave', but nowadays the word refers to a wide range of flexible materials made up of fibres, yarns and fabrics.

It also refers to a range of products, from clothing through to textiles used in high tech performance situations such as road building, building construction and the production of composite materials for car bodies. The historical importance of the textiles industry means that it has been highly valued, including within the world of business. Indeed weaving was the first industry to be fully mechanised and it was the catalyst to the Industrial Revolution.

The UK has more than 79,000 textiles businesses employing over 340,000 people. The gross value added for the sector in the UK is estimated at over £11.5 billion which makes up 3% of the UK economy (<http://goo.gl/vJrOY1>). The UK is also the 15th largest textiles manufacturer in the world (<http://goo.gl/96hRZm>). The breadth of these industries is very wide from the traditional areas of fashion and interiors to technical textiles such as medical textiles, geo textiles and performance textiles. Combating stereotypes about the textiles industry Textiles can often be pigeon holed as being about 'fashion', 'clothing', and 'sewing' with the aspirational career often being that of a designer.

Whilst these are an important part of textiles they do not fully represent the industry and there are a wide range of textiles areas other than fashion, along with a varied range of careers beyond the traditional role of a designer. Another perception about the industry is that it is dying but this couldn't be further from the truth. Like any other industry, it is changing and evolving, often at a very fast pace, but this doesn't mean it is dying. It is still one of the biggest employers across the world with UK designers being highly sought after internationally. New developments in textiles materials and technologies are happening all the time and technical textiles in particular are a major growth area with the UK industry being a world leader. The industry has found it hard to shake off the 'sweatshop' label. Whilst poor working conditions and low pay do still exist, it is wrong to think this is the only industry where these practices exist. It is also inaccurate to assume that this applies to all textiles manufacturers, as many factories are modern, high tech with good working

practices. A major perception about the industry is that it is only of interest to females but careers in textiles are just as relevant to males who play a key role in most areas of the industry. In particular the increasingly scientific and technical elements of the modern textiles industry are often of interest to males considering a career in the industry.

## **How many different roles are there in the fashion and textiles industry?**

**Which one might be right for you?**



## Careers in the Fashion and Textiles Industry

There are a huge number of potential careers in the fashion and textiles industry and below are some of the key roles available to someone who is interested in this area. Note that the list is not a conclusive one and is a guideline only.

### Sectors

The textiles industry can be divided up into 'sectors'. Each sector focuses on a different part of the industry. Each sector will have some specialist jobs relevant to that sector but most sectors also have a lot of roles that are similar across all sectors e.g. most sectors require designers, technologists, machine operatives, retailers etc. This means that someone interested in being a designer has the choice of designing across a number of sectors e.g. being a sportswear designer or designing specialist new materials for the construction industry.

Examples of different textiles sectors are:

- Sales & retail
- Manufacturing
- Sports & leisure
- Medical
- Transport
- Construction
- Fashion & apparel
- Craft
- Footwear
- Theatre & t.v.
- Education
- Armed Forces
- Interiors
- Toys
- Tailoring & bespoke textiles
- Carpets & flooring
- Technical textiles



### Different roles within each sector

Each sector can also be broken down into smaller sectors, and once again these sectors will require a variety of different job roles e.g. designers, technologists and manufacturers. These areas can be broken down even further, for example, a sportswear designer might be designing sports clothing, sports equipment or sports footwear. The following are examples of possible careers within each sector:

#### Design based careers

- Fashion garments (e.g. men, women, children, bags)
- Uniforms (e.g. workwear, armed forces)
- Protective equipment (e.g. bullet proof vests)
- Costume (e.g. theatre, t.v.)
- Sports wear & equipment (e.g. sports gear, rackets, protective equipment)
- Footwear (e.g. shoes, trainers)
- Technical Textiles (e.g. construction industry, medical textiles, geotextiles)
- Interior Design (e.g. home, office, retail)
- Carpets & flooring (e.g. home, office, retail)



## Manufacturing

- Machinist
- Sample maker
- Pattern maker
- Fabric cutter
- Finishing & Pressing
- Researcher
- Printer
- Dyer
- Weaver
- Knitter
- Production supervisor
- Production planner



## Testing

- Quality Controller
- Materials testing
- Product testing



## Trends & Fashion

- Colourist
- Stylist
- Trend forecaster
- Visual merchandiser



## Retail & 'behind the scenes' retail roles

- Buyer
- Merchandiser
- Advertising & marketing
- Sales assistant
- Retail manager

## Other related careers

- Journalist
- Photographer
- Trainer / Teacher / Lecturer
- Process engineer
- Technician
- Research scientist
- Systems analyst
- Computer programmer
- Machine engineer/technician
- Technician
- Dry cleaning
- Exhibition organiser
- Curator



## Types of Degree Courses

The following information summarises the types of degree courses universities offer in fashion and textiles. It doesn't list all of the available courses from all universities, as there are too many but gives an idea of the main types. The list is not a recommendation for a particular university or degree and courses have been selected to illustrate the variety of potential areas of study. These can then be used as a starting point for searching for similar courses elsewhere.

(Information and links are correct as of September 2017)

### Popular degree courses

Fashion design and textile design are possibly the most well known textiles courses and the ones that most people think of when they think of a fashion and textiles qualification. There are a lot of these types of courses across a wide range of universities (sometimes under slightly different names).

- *Fashion, Manchester Metropolitan University* <http://goo.gl/QRxDkJ>.  
This course is typical of many fashion design courses where students can choose to focus on menswear, womenswear, print, or knitwear.
- *Textile Design, Nottingham Trent University* <https://goo.gl/orxG0Y>  
This course covers both fashion and interiors and students usually study printing, embroidery, weaving and knitting. Similar courses might also include the title surface design or make particular reference to techniques such as printing or embroidery. (Images from the NTU degree show 2016. See more about this work at <https://goo.gl/4HVcsT>).



### Courses designed to meet an industry need

Some courses are designed to meet a specific industry need, whether that be a skill such as pattern cutting or an area of specialist design such as footwear.

- *Fashion design with garment technology, Birmingham City University* <http://goo.gl/py8qNO>  
This course allows you to specialise in fashion pre-production processes, including pattern cutting, fittings, grading and sizing, production planning, costing, testing and producing technical packs. Garment technologists are currently in high demand in the UK and abroad and this type of course is a good example of one that has the good bits of the popular fashion design degrees whilst also being set up to meet the current and future needs of the industry.
- *Fashion Pattern Cutting, London College of Fashion* <http://goo.gl/Ga7NAh>  
This course focuses on developing creative pattern cutting skills for garments, which is a skill that is much in demand at the moment, and the course has been developed with this in mind. This course includes traditional skills along with skills in digital technologies. At interview as well as a creative and technical portfolio applicants also have to demonstrate awareness of fabric development, designers, trends, the design process and their own ability to work independently and as a team.
- *Footwear Design, De Montfort University* <http://goo.gl/mWwC6a>  
This course focuses on developing the design and making skills required to meet the needs of the footwear industry. This type of course is a different twist on the traditional fashion focus. This course requires a portfolio which includes evidence of experience working with modeling techniques (not just within footwear) as well as evidence of an interest in footwear and broader materials generally. It also requires evidence of how a project brief is explored and documented.





A degree is not the only entry point to the textiles industry and there are a number of other qualifications that can be studied at further and higher education level. Many focus on the skills and knowledge to do a particular job in a particular industry.

Some examples of qualifications are:

- City and Guilds
- Higher National Certificates (HNC)
- Higher National Diplomas (HND)
- National Vocational Qualifications
- BTEC (British Technology Education Council)

Visit <https://goo.gl/dLTjwT> for a full list of the different types of qualifications and what level they are at.

For general information on choosing a course and deciding on further and higher education options visit:

- <https://www.studential.com>
- <http://www.careerpilot.org.uk> (although this is a careers website for the South West of England it has lots of useful information for everyone)
- Also take a look at the careers websites mentioned earlier as these have lots of general information on qualifications especially <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>

### **Apprenticeships**

An apprenticeship gives you hands on experience in the workplace along with a salary and the opportunity to gain qualifications. Many apprenticeships cover much of the content of the degrees mentioned above, with some also resulting in a degree qualification.

An apprenticeship combines work with on the job training which is usually one day a week. It usually takes between one and four years to complete an apprenticeship depending on which level you take.

There are a range of apprenticeships in a number of different industries. The ones most relevant to fashion and textiles are:

- Fashion and Textiles
- Costume and Wardrobe
- Fashion and Textiles: Technical
- Retail

There are also a range of other creative career areas with apprenticeships including design, engineering, construction, jewellery and silversmithing.

When you apply for an apprenticeship you will have to attend an interview so it is important to prepare well beforehand e.g. researching the company and role. The National Careers Service has useful tips on apprenticeship applications and interviews (<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>)

For more on apprenticeships take a look at:

- <https://www.getingofar.gov.uk> (a user friendly website on apprenticeships)
- <http://www.fashion-enter.com> (one of the leading providers of fashion and textiles apprenticeships)
- <https://goo.gl/jHzaK8> (government documents on apprenticeships)



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