

# How to get into Publishing

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE



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CHAPTER

# 01

INTRODUCTION

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# Introduction

At Inspired Selection, we're here to support you as you take your first steps into the world of publishing and every step after that.

This guide is designed to give you a solid introduction to the publishing industry: its key sectors, the wide range of roles available, and how we can help you find the right fit. You'll also find practical advice on crafting a standout CV and cover letter, as well as tips to help you shine in interviews.

Let us walk you through the recruitment journey and show you how our expert consultants, passionate about publishing and deeply connected across the industry, can help you launch a fulfilling and successful career.

With strong relationships throughout the publishing world and a track record of placing talent since 1999, we're proud to be your trusted partner in building your future.



“

*“We're here to support you as you take your first steps into the world of publishing”*

”



# Who we are

At Inspired Selection, we're proud to be the UK's leading specialist recruitment consultancy for the publishing industry. Since 1999, we've been passionate about discovering and supporting the next generation of publishing talent, as well as helping experienced professionals take the next step in their careers.

Our work is guided by four core values that shape every interaction and decision we make:

1.

**Collaborative:**

We build strong, lasting partnerships with our clients and candidates, working together to achieve shared success.

2.

**Kindness:**

We lead with empathy and respect, creating a supportive and positive experience for everyone we work with.

3.

**Inclusive:**

We champion diversity and equal opportunity, helping to shape a publishing industry that reflects the world we live in.

4.

**Empowering:**

We provide the tools, insights and encouragement to help you take control of your career journey with confidence.

With our head office in London and consultants based across the UK, we work with publishers of all sizes and specialisms. In 2023, we launched our new website, a central hub for live vacancies, industry insights and expert advice. It also features The Library, a dedicated space filled with resources to help you break into publishing, stay informed and grow your career.

Whether you're looking for your first role or your next big move, we're here to support you every step of the way. And who knows...one day, we might be helping you build your own team.

# Why Choose a Career in Publishing?



Publishing is a dynamic, creative, and ever-evolving industry that offers a wealth of opportunities for graduates and early-career professionals. Whether you're passionate about storytelling, education, research, or technology, publishing provides a platform to make a real impact.

Not only does the industry offer competitive starting salaries compared to other creative sectors, but it also promises a fast-paced environment where you'll develop a broad range of transferable skills from day one.

As technology continues to transform how we create, share, and consume content, publishers across consumer, academic, educational, scientific, medical, and corporate sectors are seeking fresh talent with diverse backgrounds and digital fluency. This demand opens doors for candidates with a wide variety of interests and skill sets to thrive in multi-platform, multi-channel publishing businesses.

So, why publishing? Because it's an industry where creativity meets innovation, and where your ideas can shape the future of content.

From content creation and editorial to marketing, sales, rights, and production, there's something for everyone. The next few pages will introduce you to the different sectors and roles within publishing, helping you discover where your strengths and passions align.

CHAPTER

# 02

GETTING STARTED

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# INTERNSHIPS & WORK EXPERIENCE

When beginning your career in publishing, one way of helping you decide which sector or type of role that might suit you the best is to try them out by completing work experience or internships.

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**WORK EXPERIENCE  
IS A GREAT WAY TO  
GAIN VALUABLE  
SKILLS SOUGHT  
AFTER BY  
EMPLOYERS**

---

Work experience is a great way to gain valuable administrative skills sought after by employers in those entry level roles, as well as getting a feel for the type of work to see what might be the best fit for you.

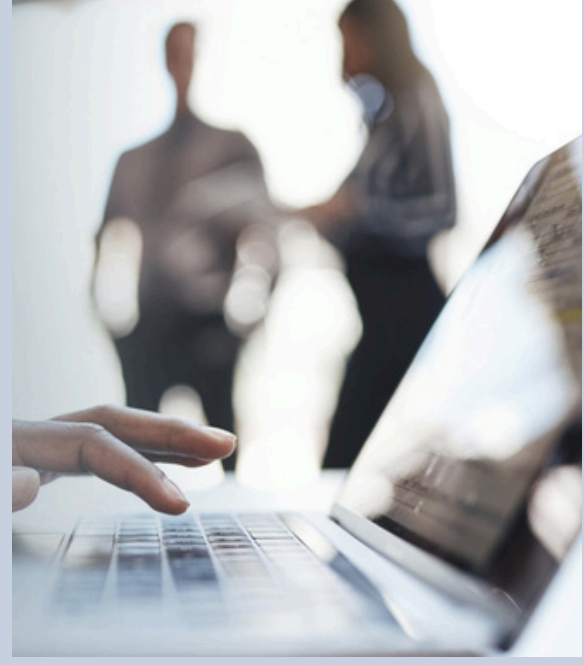
Whilst most people believe they have a clear idea of what path they want to take in publishing, don't be afraid to try out different types of publishers and roles when searching for work experience. You may surprise yourself with what you end up gravitating towards!

Don't limit yourself to publishing houses either! Gaining office experience in any environment will provide you with skills and experience any employer will be looking for.

You can also try out media and creative agencies as well as charities and professional organisations who have publishing arms. All will provide you with solid, worthwhile experience that you can offer a potential employer when making the leap into a permanent role.

The best way to secure work experience is to look on publishers' websites for schemes or write speculatively to their HR departments with your CV and covering letter.

# Digital Skills in Publishing



## BEYOND THE PRINTED PAGE

The days when being a “digital native” set you apart are long gone. Today, everyone entering publishing is expected to be fluent in digital culture, but what truly makes a candidate stand out is the ability to adapt, learn, and leverage technology creatively in an industry that’s evolving faster than ever. Curiosity is the new coding!

Publishing now sits at the crossroads of AI, data, immersive media, and audience experience. Publishers are looking for people who can think beyond the printed page, who understand how stories, information, and learning can live across text, audio, visual, and interactive spaces.

## WHAT THE INDUSTRY VALUES NOW

### AI Fluency

You don’t need to code AI systems, but you should understand how they shape the publishing process. This can include an awareness of, and consideration for, their presence in activities across: editing, translation, marketing, licensing, and content personalization. Appetite to engage with AI tools responsibly, critically, and creatively is now a core skill.

### Data Awareness

Publishers have more audience insight than ever before. The ability to interpret analytics, whether from e-commerce, social platforms, or readership engagement data, is key to publishing intelligently and commercially. Data helps ensure that content reaches the right readers, in the right formats, at the right time.

### Multi-format Thinking

The future of storytelling is multi-sensory. Publishers are investing in audio (podcasts, audiobooks), immersive formats (AR/VR experiences, enhanced eBooks), and interactive educational platforms. An appreciation for this breadth of content environments is highly valued.

### Adaptability and Collaboration

Job functions are changing and technology is blurring the boundaries of roles and breaking down silos. The stars of the future will be those who can work across disciplines, collaborating with AI tools and human teams alike.

### Ethical and Creative Use of Technology

As AI and automation become embedded in every workflow, publishers need people who can use technology thoughtfully, balancing efficiency with creativity, and innovation with responsibility.

# Digital Skills in Publishing

*You're applying for a digital role, whether it's in a digital team or not!*

Digital capability touches every department, but it's especially central in:

- Marketing and Sales (e.g. data analytics, SEO, GEO automation, social strategy)
- Editorial and Content Creation (e.g. AI-assisted editing, translation, and accessibility tools)
- Design and Production (e.g. AR/VR assets, multimedia storytelling, UX for digital products)

Some examples of digital products:

- Audiobooks and podcasts
- AR/VR-enhanced books and learning materials
- E-learning platforms and digital classrooms
- Interactive eBooks and apps
- Online libraries and subscription platforms



Some examples of technical programs / tools:

- **Analytics & Insights:** Google Analytics, Looker Studio, Tableau
- **AI Tools:** ChatGPT, Co-Pilot, Claude, Gemini
- **Content Management Systems:** WordPress, Squarespace, Droopal, Joomla
- **Client Relationship Management Systems:** HubSpot, Salesforce, Apptivo
- **Marketing, SEO & GEO:** Search Console and Analytics, SEMrush, social scheduling platforms e.g. HootSuite

# The Sectors

## Trade Publishing

Trade is often the sector that people are most familiar with when thinking about publishing. It encompasses a wide range of genres and formats including Publishers of Fiction and Non-Fiction Books for adults and children, Illustrated Books, E-books, Games, Apps as well as Literary Agencies. These formats are often purchased in bookstores or with online booksellers with the target audience for trade publishers being the general public meaning they have the biggest audience in comparison to Education, Academic and Professional Publishers who are aimed at certain groups.



## Educational & EdTech Publishing

Educational Publishing is all about creating materials to help teachers teach and to help students learn. The content Educational Publishers produce can be anything from print and digital textbooks to guides and assessments as well as any resources students and teachers are using in the classroom including flash cards and online materials and is tailored towards different age groups and curriculums.

Working in Educational Publishing means working with or for Educational institutions, educational charities, schools, EdTech organisations, ELT or MFL publishers as well as those producing content for different learning needs.

# The Sectors

## Professional Publishing

Professional publishing is a really broad sector as it encompasses everything from working with legal, business and financial publishers who produce content for these professions to professional membership bodies who might be publishing legislation, standards or news content aimed at their members or who have their own magazine internally.

Professional publishing also includes news and media publishing, this can be both B2B or B2C, across printed magazines and online, charities who are creating content and communications, as well as service providers to the publishing industry who might help to distribute, license or even print books.



## Academic & STM Publishing

The Academic and STM sector includes universities, higher education and scholarly publishers and content providers, online libraries and scientific research and includes lots of varied types of content including books, journals, teaching cases, training content, discovery platforms, reference works and more! The audience for academic and STM content is usually university students, teachers, researchers, medical professionals and experts in scientific fields. It's purpose is to educate and help students through their degrees, pass medical qualifications and advance knowledge and is a hugely rewarding sector to work in.

CHAPTER

# 03

ROLES IN PUBLISHING

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# Editorial

The editorial department is about preparing content ready to be published, whether that is sourcing the content, project managing it through the publishing process or doing hands on editorial work. This could be across books, magazines, journals, digital, online, video or any type of multimedia content.

This is a great place for those with strengths in spelling, grammar and structure of the English language. It also requires excellent project management skills, great concentration and a focused attention to detail.



## KEY SKILLS

- Attention to detail
- Project management
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Technical literacy



# Roles in Editorial

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## KEY SKILLS

- Organisation
- Time management
- Problem Solving
- Negotiation
- Relationship Management

# Production

The Production team ensures every book is delivered on time, on budget, and to the highest quality. The production department holds responsibility for: gathering quotes and dummies for new projects before print, creating new e-book formats, finding printers, negotiating prices and confirming schedules, delivering the print ready files and clear instructions to the printers, and for ensuring books are printed and delivered correctly, according to the agreed schedule.

This department thrives on organisation, precision and collaboration, working closely with Editorial, Design and external suppliers to keep projects running smoothly. It's also ideal for anyone who enjoys systems, processes and finding smart, practical solutions.

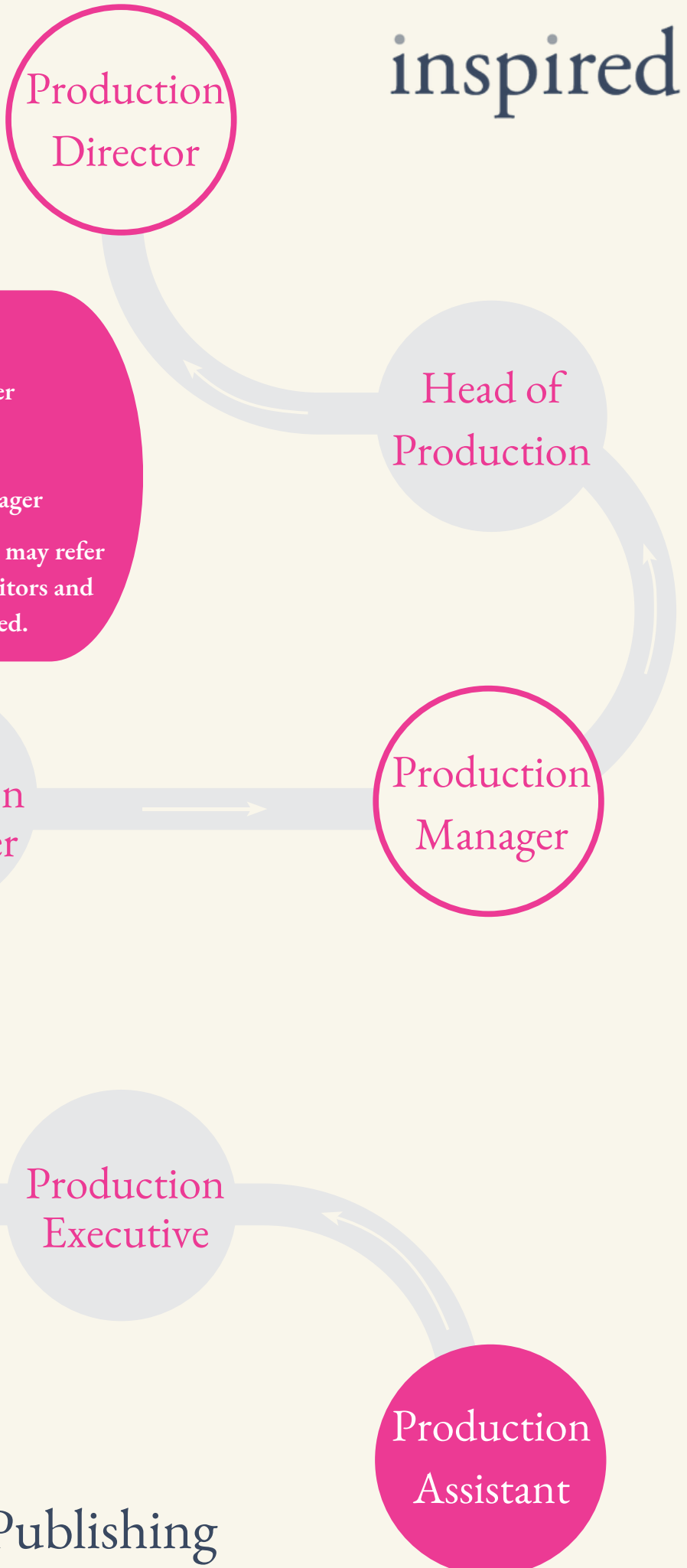


# Roles in Production

Other job titles you might see include:

- Print Production Coordinator / Manager
- Digital Production Manager
- Publishing Services Manager
- Operations Executive / Operations Manager

Academic, STM and Professional publishers may refer to Production Controllers as Production Editors and their roles are more project management based.



# Design

Designers are responsible for how the content looks and work across covers, layout, typeface, pictures or all of these things! They will do a lot in-house design work themselves but also have a network of freelancers who they work well with and outsource projects too, so as well as having design skills you need to be good at communicating with stakeholders, organised and great at project managing. Within highly illustrated publishing, e.g. children's picture books, the designers may need to commission an illustrator.

Another example is in non-fiction adult publishers that create beautiful photographic books, designers may need to organise a photographer, studio or location and then direct the photo shoots. Typically, designers will need proficiency with the Adobe Creative Suite and a great eye for all things visual.



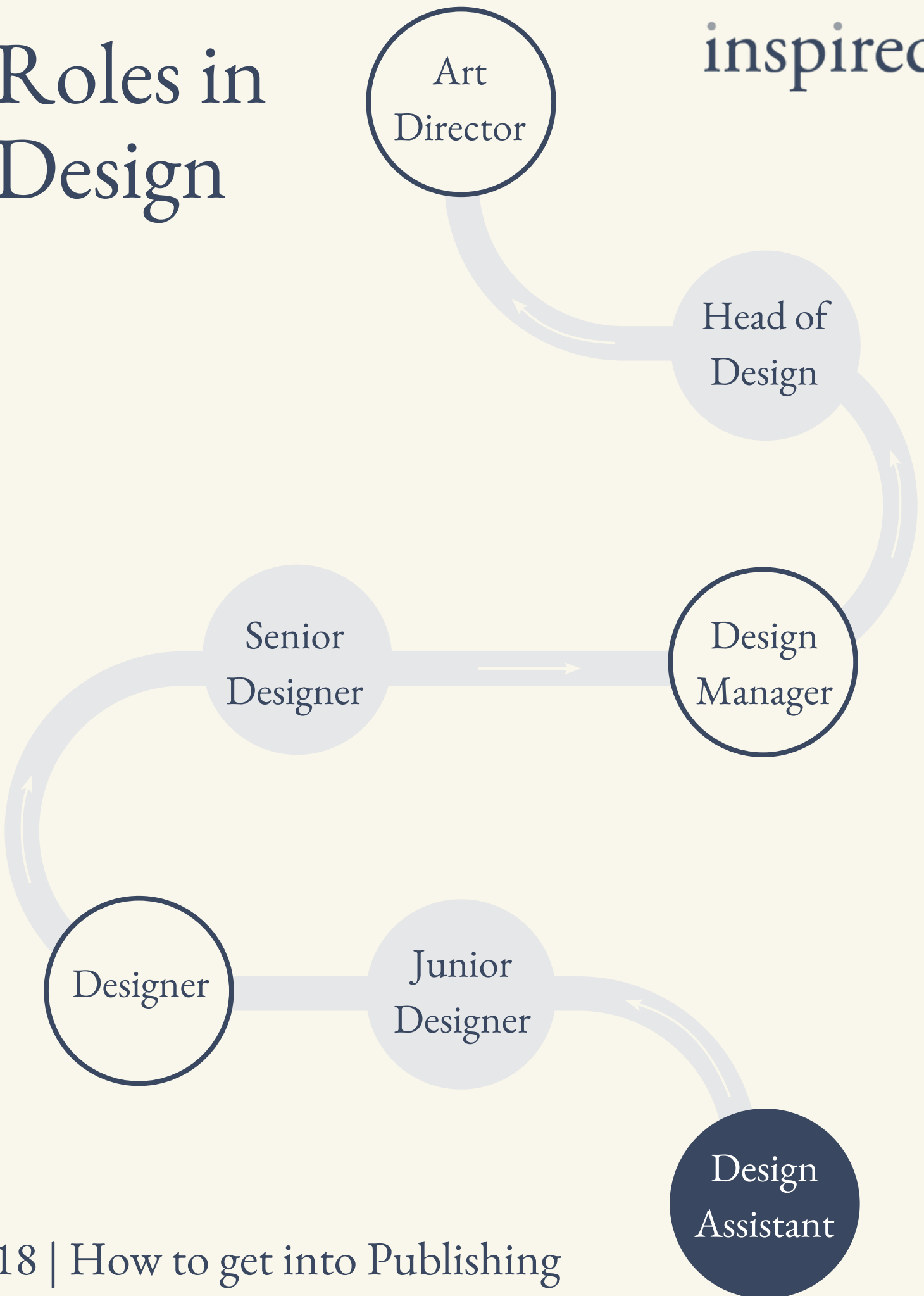
## KEY SKILLS

- Creativity
- Attention to detail
- Digital design tools
- Resilience
- Time management



# Roles in Design

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# Marketing

A fantastic blend of creativity, strategic thinking, and analysis, the marketing department is an exciting entry point into publishing. It's where your flair for digital storytelling, writing, and social media content creation comes to life, whether you're crafting engaging TikTok videos, designing Instagram carousels, or building community on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube. You'll also learn how to measure the impact of your work, using tools like Google Analytics, CRM platforms, and Excel to interpret campaign performance and audience behaviour.

## KEY SKILLS

- Creativity
- Social Media
- Communication
- Project Management
- Data analysis

Understanding metadata (the behind-the-scenes data that helps content get discovered) is increasingly important and central to marketing. From optimising keywords and descriptions to tracking engagement metrics, metadata helps ensure your content reaches the right audience at the right time.

Marketing in publishing also involves building strong relationships with authors, retailers, influencers, and internal teams. Creativity is key: you'll be writing compelling copy for email campaigns, newsletters, blog posts, event materials, and social media.

If you're passionate about writing, audience engagement, digital media, and data, marketing offers a dynamic and rewarding path into the publishing industry.



# Roles in Marketing

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# Publicity

If you love talking to people, are organised and able to juggle multiple tasks at once (this will be essential for balancing the needs of your authors!) publicity may be the department for you. As a publicist, you will primarily be responsible for author-care and liaising closely with authors, journalists, influencers and broadcasters to plan and deliver creative campaigns in order to raise awareness of the publisher's books and authors. This may include pitching to a radio/TV show, booking an author tour or planning a book launch. You will need to be a strong communicator, love liaising with different people and building professional relationships. If you enjoy travelling and like dividing your time between projects, publicity could be for you, as you will need to organise events and travel to different conferences, festivals and author events as required.

As a publicist, you will primarily be responsible for author care and liaising with various media outlets.



## KEY SKILLS

- Creativity
- Communication
- Writing skills
- Organisation
- Networking



# Roles in Publicity

Other job titles you may see in PR & Events include:

- Campaigns Executive / Manager
- Communications Manager
- Events & Publicity Manager
- Head of Campaigns & Publicity





## KEY SKILLS

- Communication
- Organisation
- Problem Solving
- Resilience
- Commercial Awareness

# Sales

The sales department is a fast-paced and crucial part of any publishing team, the roles can vary from being field based sales to key account management and specialist roles focusing on digital sales strategy too. Sales drive the publisher's revenue stream, and so people who work in sales are usually very commercial with a strong grasp of market trends and consumer behaviour. These roles require excellent communication and listening skills, the ability to build and maintain strong relationships and the capability to influence others. You will also need to understand and anticipate the needs of customers and feed insights back to the editorial, product and marketing teams. Increasingly, publishing sales also involves working with metadata, with ecommerce retailers and digital platforms to maximise discoverability of titles. This is a fantastic role for those who love constantly meeting new people, have a keen interest in customer service and a consultative sales approach that is more focused on building relationships rather than a hard sale.



# Roles in Sales

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# Rights

Rights (and licensing) is a similar department to Sales, because it's responsible for bringing in profit for the publisher. Typically, Rights departments are focussed on selling foreign rights to international publishers, so foreign language skills are a great plus! These roles can require willingness for extensive travel, strong negotiation and communication skills. Those in the Rights department travel to the big Book Fairs as well as to their assigned countries or territory for customer meetings. When not travelling, those in Rights are keeping a keen watch on their territory in order to understand the types of books and content that will appeal to their market. They are also constantly researching and contacting old and new customers to establish potential new business.



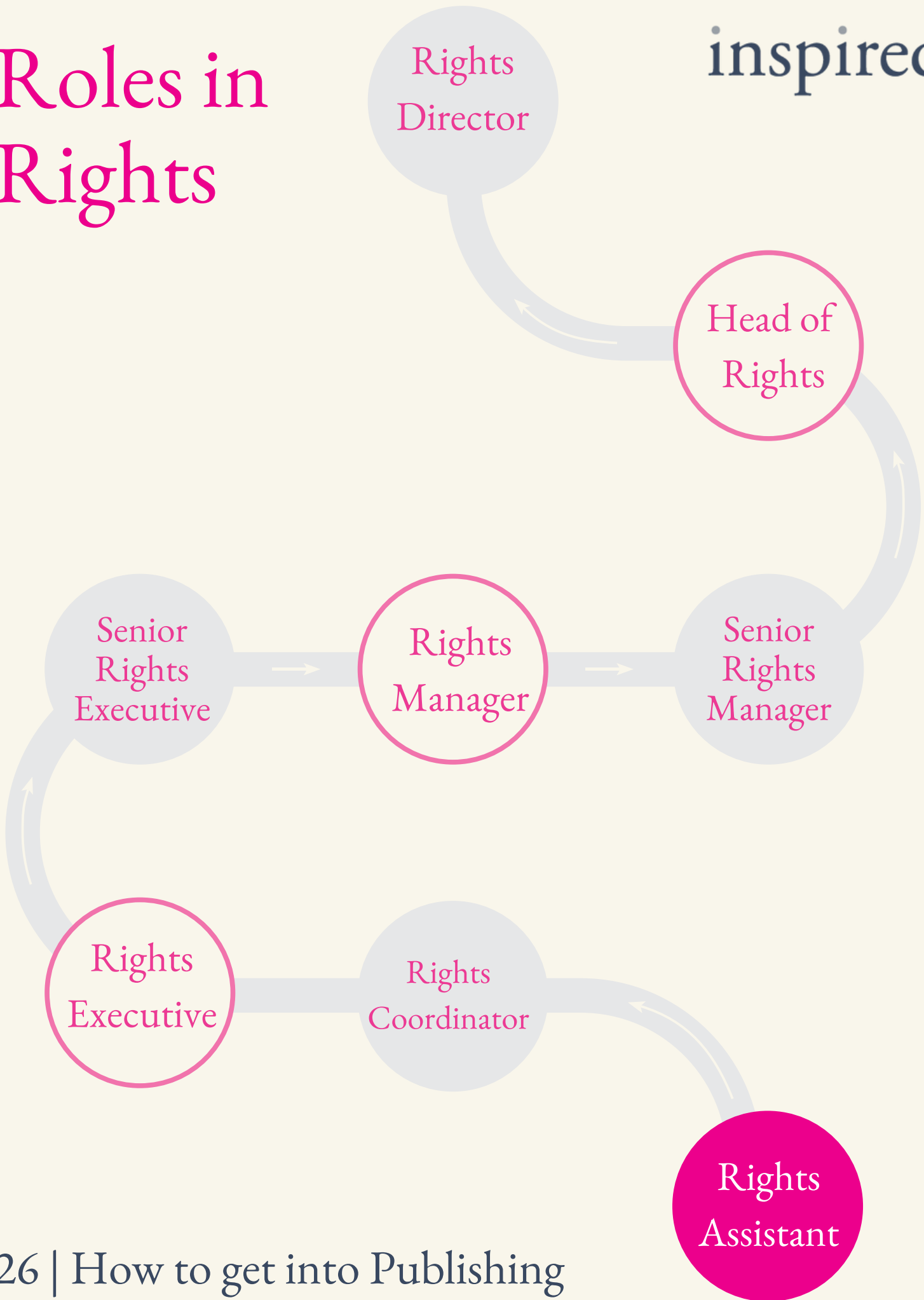
## KEY SKILLS

- Languages
- Research
- Communication
- Relationship Building
- Commercial awareness



# Roles in Rights

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CHAPTER

# 04

## APPLICATIONS & INTERVIEWS

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# How to make your CV stand out



There are several stages in the recruitment process and all are equally important, so making sure you stand out from the crowd is crucial. At Inspired, we make sure all of our candidates receive support throughout this process from having a strong CV and tailored cover letter to preparing you fully for your interview. Over the next few pages you will find some hints and advice on getting that perfect CV, ensuring your cover letter shines above the rest and those all-important interview tips to ensure you excel at every stage.

Your CV should be an outline of your experience, a taster of what you can offer a potential employer.

It is your opportunity to promote your strengths, aptitudes and demonstrate how your skills match those of your desired role. A general rule to remember is that your CV should be no more than two pages.

See what you should  
include in your CV  
on the next page.

**1 Your name and contact details:** This should all be clearly outlined at the top of the CV.

**2 Profile/Summary:** Ideally this should be 1 or 2 sentences - keep it short, as you can expand this in your covering letter. It should summarise your experience and give your career objectives.

**3 Work Experience/Employment:** Most recent first, state the start and end month and years for each position. Use bullet points to make information easier to pick out and have more of an impact.

**4 Key Skills/Qualifications:** Give details of any relevant training courses, languages, IT packages and driving licence.

**5 Education:** In reverse chronological order (beginning with most recent) include dates, locations and qualifications obtained. The degree subject, dissertation subject and if related to publishing, the modules can be included if space permits. If you have recently graduated, you may want to list this ahead of work experience.

**6 Hobbies/Interests:** These give the employer a sense of your personality, and if you have a personal blog / Bookstagram or Booktok page, do include this too.

**7 References:** You don't need to add details at this stage, 'Available on request' is sufficient.

Joe Bloggs  
10 Inspired Street  
London  
SE1 9RS

**1**

Mobile: 012345678910

Email: joe.bloggs@hotmail.com

### Personal Statement

**2** English Literature graduate with strong organisational and communication skills. Experienced in administrative support and event coordination in fast-paced publishing environments. Skilled at managing schedules, producing accurate documentation, and ensuring smooth operations. Detail-oriented team player with a proactive approach and passion for media and content creation.

### Employment History

Inspired Publishing Group, London  
PA to the Finance and Creative Director

October 2024 – Present

- Travel booking and itineraries
- Diary management
- Minute taking
- Copy and audio typing
- Event organisation – including AGM, investor lunches, board meetings and Christmas party
- Administrative duties
- Meet and greet guests
- Organisation and event management of the group conference in the US

### Professional Qualifications and Education

Copyediting & Proofreading Course, London  
Social Media for Professionals, London  
10 Week Media Course, London

March 2024  
February 2024  
July 2023

Modules included:  
Advertising, PR, Marketing, Advance Word 2000, PowerPoint, Access, Excel and Front Page, Typing 70 WPM.

### University of Bristol

BA(Hons) English Literature

2:1

2020 – 2023

The Grange School, Surrey  
A – Levels

2013 – 2020

French

A

History

B

Business Studies

B

Ten G.C.S.E.'s gained including Maths and English

### Hobbies & Interests

**6**

I enjoy cooking, skiing and running my blog on crime fiction. I am active member of the Society of Young Publishers and was copy editor of the university newspaper *The Heron*.

### References

**7**

References will be supplied upon request.

# Perfecting Your Cover Letter



## COVERING LETTER GUIDANCE

Your covering letter is a key part of your application. It introduces you to the hiring manager and allows you to explain why you are interested in the role, what attracts you to the company, and how your skills and experience make you a strong fit. This is your opportunity to show your enthusiasm and suitability beyond the CV.

We are always happy to support you in preparing a covering letter for any role we are representing you for. If you are ever unsure how to begin or structure it, please don't hesitate to ask for advice.

Although every covering letter should be unique, there are a few essential principles to keep in mind when writing one.

## WHAT MAKES A STRONG COVERING LETTER?

### Research the Company

Before writing, take the time to learn about the company. Look at their recent publications, products, services, campaigns, or announcements. This will help you understand their tone, values, and goals and allows you to explain clearly why you want to work for them.

*Tip: Try to refer to a specific imprint, title, or area of the business that genuinely interests you.*

### Keep It Concise and Focused

Your covering letter should be no more than one page, ideally submitted as a Word document. Aim for three or four well-structured paragraphs. It should be addressed to the hiring manager and clearly summarise:

- Why you're interested in the company and role
- How your skills and experience match the job
- What you hope to contribute if selected

### Make It Match

Once you've identified what the employer is looking for, use your covering letter to show how your background aligns with their needs. Provide concise examples from your work, education, or any relevant experience to show how you meet their requirements.

If you're applying for your first publishing role, draw on transferable skills from university, retail jobs, voluntary work, or internships.

### Include Specifics from the Job Description

Keep the job description or advert in front of you while you write. Highlight the skills, experience, and attributes the employer is looking for. Your goal is to reflect those same qualities in your own experience.

# Perfecting Your Cover Letter

## WHY IT MATTERS IN PUBLISHING

Publishing is a competitive industry where strong written communication is essential. Your covering letter is not only a chance to express your motivation, but also to demonstrate your writing ability, attention to detail, and professionalism.

Poorly written, overly general, or error-filled letters can unfortunately hold back otherwise strong candidates. A well-written, thoughtful letter can help you stand out.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

For more in-depth guidance you can access [The Inspired Guide to a Perfect Cover Letter](#) in the Inspired Library, along with other helpful resources to support your job search and career development in publishing.



## Key Tips for Success

- **Avoid repetition:** Don't just repeat your CV, highlight and expand on key points that are most relevant.
- **Be enthusiastic, but professional:** Show genuine interest without sounding overly casual or insincere.
- **Proofread:** Spelling or grammar mistakes in a publishing job application are taken seriously. Ask someone else to review it as well.



# Interview Guidance

## *Before*

### Research the position and organisation

Make sure you understand what they do, their key products, and recent news or developments.

### Know your key strengths and areas for development

Particularly in relation to the job description.

### Check the interview format

Make sure you know what to expect (for example, one-to-one, panel, or presentation).

### Plan your outfit

Make sure you feel confident and professional.

An interview is your opportunity not only to make a great impression on the hiring managers, but also to learn more about the company and the role, and to clarify any questions you may have. Having worked hard on your application and secured an interview, this is your chance to continue that momentum and turn your preparation into success.

### Practice answering competency-based questions

Make sure to use examples that demonstrate your skills and achievements.

### Prepare at least three thoughtful questions

Make sure to ask these at the end of the interview.

### Look up your interviewers on LinkedIn

Get a sense of their roles and backgrounds.

### Plan your journey

Ensure you arrive in good time, or test your tech if it's a video interview.

## *During*

### First impressions matter

Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake (if in person) and make good eye contact.

### Be positive and composed

Speak clearly, take your time, and avoid rushing or rambling.

### Stay relevant and focused

Listen carefully to each question and keep your answers concise and upbeat. Always emphasise how you can add value to their organisation, rather than what you hope to gain from them.

## *After*

### Show Enthusiasm

Thank the interviewers for their time and confirm your continued interest in the role.

### Follow up

Politely ask when you can expect to hear back about next steps.

### Stay Positive

Even if this particular role isn't quite right, maintaining a good impression could lead to other opportunities with the company in the future.

# Further Resources



Here are some other useful organisations and resources to help you learn more about the industry and take your first step in publishing:

[The Society of Young Publishers](#)

[Independent Publishers Guild](#)

[The Publishers Association](#)

[Bookcareers.com](#)

[The Bookseller](#)

[The ALPSP](#)

# THANK YOU



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