

# Stunt performers

This is one of a series of job profiles within the Audiovisual sector developed with industry experts to help industry newcomers understand the different job roles and the skills required in order to succeed. We aim to keep this information as current as possible and would welcome any comments to help us improve this profile; please email us on: [jobprofile@skillset.org](mailto:jobprofile@skillset.org). All Job profiles can be downloaded and printed from our website [www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org)

Stunt Performers are highly trained and qualified professionals. They usually have some prior experience of working on film sets, as Extras, Walk Ons, Actors or Runners. They are employed by film production companies to take Actors' places when dangerous or specialised actions are specified in the script, or to perform roles requiring specific skills, e.g., martial arts, diving, boxing, etc. Stunt Performers are subject to stringent checks, in order to verify that they can carry out the work effectively, and most importantly, safely. Their work is overseen and accredited by the Joint Industry Stunt Committee's (JISC) Register of Stunt/ Action Co-ordinators and Performers (the Register), which is produced with the approval of the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television, the BBC, ITV, PRA and Equity. The Stunt Register is divided into four categories of membership: Probationary, Intermediate, Full and Stunt Action Co-ordinators, and is the only approved directory of all potential employees in the UK Visual and audio visual industries who are JISC qualified, and thus competent to manage and/or perform work of a dangerous, hazardous or specialised nature. Stunt Performers in the film industry are usually freelance.

## What is the job?

Stunt Performers are responsible for performing Supervised Stunts, which are overseen by Stunt Co-ordinators, who are usually employed on high and medium budget feature film productions, and are responsible for stunts across all the filming units involved. On small films, Intermediate Stunt Performers may carry out individual stunt sequences involving one performer without the direct personal supervision of a Stunt Co-ordinator, provided that he or she is the only performer, and that they have carried out all the necessary planning, and prepared all Risk Assessments and other Health and Safety documentation.

Intermediate Stunt Performers cannot supervise Probationary Performers, other Intermediate Performers, or any other performers. Stunt Co-ordinators must research the type of stunts required by the script, working in close collaboration with the Stunt Performer, the Producer, the Director, and other members of the production team, in order to create realistic, safe, and, in some cases, spectacular screen action. Although their work on sets or on locations may only last for short periods of time, Stunt Performers must carry out meticulous research in order to be able to perform stunts safely, while duplicating as closely as possible the Actors' appearance and body language while in character, so that stunt scenes can be edited seamlessly into the overall action. Probationary members' work must be supervised at all times by a JISC Registered Stunt Co-ordinator.

## Typical career routes

To work in Stunts, individuals must be at least 18 years old. They must work for at least 3 years as Probationary Members of the Register, a further minimum of 2 years as Intermediate Members, or Stunt Performers, before they can progress to Full Membership,

and a further period of not less than five years to become a Stunt Action Co-ordinator. Because of the potentially dangerous, hazardous or specialist aspects of their work, career progression for Stunt Performers is strictly regulated by the Joint Industry Stunt Committee. For each stage during the grading process meticulous records, including JISC Logbooks and original stunt contracts, must be maintained and submitted to the Register. Evidence of work is only accepted if the details recorded for each day of work are witnessed and signed as true by the relevant Stunt Co-ordinator, Producer, Associate Producer, or First Assistant Director. Logbooks should show that the stunts performed were in as many different areas of work as possible.

### **Essential knowledge and skills**

Stunt Performers must be able to communicate effectively in order to explain their actions, and any possible repercussions, to other members of the production team. They need meticulous research and planning skills, and must pay close attention to detail at all times. They need to be adaptable, and able to react quickly and safely to changing circumstances. They must be able to liaise with, and take orders from others, including the Director and the Stunt Co-ordinator, and work as part of the production team. They should be able to deal tactfully with Actors, who they may be replacing in scenes deemed too dangerous or specialised for the Actors themselves to perform. They need strength and stamina, as well as specific physical skills, including the ability to assume a different body shape or language, depending on the age and fitness of the Actors they replace. They must also remember their own, and the Actors', exact positions and movements at any given time during the performance, to assist with continuity. Stunt Performers should also have an understanding of the production process.

Stunt Performers must be familiar with current Health and Safety legislation and requirements, Risk Assessment and accident/incident reporting procedures, and they must maintain the relevant qualifications. They should be able to identify hazards and implement the appropriate precautionary measures for their activities, and incorporate these into Risk Assessments. Stunt Performers are responsible for their own and for others' Health and Safety on set or location, and must carry out accurate and detailed Risk Assessments for each stunt. Where appropriate, the Risk Assessment must be counter-signed by the Stunt Co-ordinator, or by the First Assistant Director. Stunt Performers must keep accurate and comprehensive records; copies of Risk Assessments must also be submitted to the Production Office.

### **Training and qualifications**

Considerable costs are involved in training to become a Stunt Performer. To be accredited by the JISC, Stunt Performers must provide evidence of qualifications to the required standard in six or more of the categories listed below, one of which must be in Group A.

- Group A      Fighting – Categories: Martial Arts, Boxing
- Group B      Falling – Categories: Trampolining, High Diving
- Group C      Riding and Driving – Categories: Horses, Cars, Motorcycles
- Group D      Agility and Strength – Categories: Gymnastics, Rock Climbing
- Group E      Water – Categories: Swimming, Sub Aqua

The categories must fall within at least four groups, but not more than two categories should fall within one group. At least one year's experience is required in each qualification. Stunt Performers at all levels must maintain their skills, and continually acquire additional qualifications, throughout their careers, in order to maintain their employability.

### Where to go for more information

- **Skillset** is the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries. The first sources of information for all jobs in the industry are the National Occupational Standards. For information about training, links to the Skillset network of training partners, and access to the comprehensive Skillset/BFI course database, visit the website [www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org). **Skillset Careers** for detailed media careers information and advice, visit the website [www.skillset.org/careers](http://www.skillset.org/careers)
- **Equity** is the trade union representing artists across the whole spectrum of arts and entertainment, and offers representation, specialist knowledge and advice for its members and student members on work in Film, Television, Radio, and other Recorded and Live Performance. They include Walk on and Supporting artists in membership. T: 020 7670 0254. [www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)
- **The Joint Industry Grading Scheme** <http://jigs.org.uk/>
- **The Stage** newspaper is the entertainment trade weekly. Recruitment advertisements, useful links, and 'how to guides' are on its website [www.thestage.co.uk](http://www.thestage.co.uk)
- **Contacts** is published annually by The Spotlight, and provides details of all aspects of the entertainment industry. [www.spotlight.com](http://www.spotlight.com)