Craft Skills Across the Economy

Silvia K Ceramics
- Located in the heart of Brighton on the south coast of the UK, Silvia K ceramics studio produces tableware ranges that are sold in the UK, Europe, Canada, and America.

The London Glassblowing Studio
- London Glassblowing is one of Europe’s most prominent studio glass galleries, providing workspace for glass artists alongside a gallery to sell their work.

Cox London
- Sculptors and artisans Christopher and Nicola Cox founded Cox London in 2009. They lead a team of specialist technicians in their London studio and workshops, creating furniture and lighting in bronze, silver, wrought iron, blown glass and stone.

Craven Dunnill
- Shaftesbury: Bespoke Tile Makers for the Interior Market.
- The main factory is located on the original site that Craven Dunnill founded in 1872, at the Shaftesbury Tile Works in Shaftesbury, Dorset. The second factory is situated in Burrowbridge, Somerset, right at the heart of the North Staffordshire Potteries.

LAA International
- Contemporary bar and furniture.
- Founded in 1960s London, when Janet Littlewood and her husband Eric were inspired to approach Terence Conran at Habitat with their traditional brilliantly coloured enamelled plates from their native Poland.

Cod Steaks
- Cod Steaks is a multi-disciplinary design and construction company specialising in bespoke 3D solutions for film, TV, PR, exhibitions and retail.
- From their workshop facilities in Bristol, Cod Steaks handle projects of every scale, from one-off props to fully scale theme park and visitor attraction builds.

Traditional Pottery
- Whitchurch Pottery make fine pottery using hand-thrown and hand-shaped methods, exporting worldwide.

Glass Art
- Glass artist Matt Dorrian has collaborated with the Royal Free Hospital to create glass models for tissue engineering.

Bill apply their expertise in nanomaterials and electrospinners to the biotechnology, medical and counter-terrorism industries.

Bentley Motors wood workshop use traditional woodwork skills to create luxury car interiors.

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Routest into Craft

We know from talking to lots of craft professionals that there isn’t just one route into your career — some courses focus more on practical skills whilst others include more theory.

Taking a creative subject such as Art and Design or Design and Technology at school will help you to be adventurous in investigating the potential of art, craft and design. These courses provide opportunities to explore a wide range of hands-on designing and making skills. Introduce innovative materials and technologies and you could offer a pathway to progress further onto Creative and Higher Education courses and a career in the UK Creative Industries.

Studying Art and Design or Design and Technology can also enhance observation and experimentation for other subjects in school and facilitate better student mental health and wellbeing.

Gareth Wadkin, Senior Lecturer for BA (Hons) Printed Textiles & Surface Pattern Design, Leeds Arts University

GCSE
Craft skills are taught through Art and Design and Technology courses in your GCSEs of which you can choose. The good news is that some options at GCSE will help you to develop the hands-on skills that you need to build on at A Level.

A Levels
An A Level in Art and Design or Design and Technology will help you to develop your creative and technical skills. Both are two-year courses assessed through a combination of coursework and exams.

BTEC
BTEC qualifications have a vocational focus and students work on assignments based on real-life scenarios throughout the course. They might also undertake work experience. BTEC is available at Levels 1, 2 and 3, with Level 3 being equivalent to A Level.

Art and Design Foundation Diploma
The Art and Design Foundation Diploma is a one-year bridging course that helps students make the transition from secondary education (e.g. BTEC or A Levels) to specialist art and design education.

A Foundation Diploma allows students to explore a range of specialist courses before choosing their specialised degree course. These might include painting, drawing, digital, textiles, installation art, printmaking, graphic illustration, craft and 3D design or fine art.

University
Universities across the UK offer craft-related courses — you can browse the list of courses available on the UCAS website. Depending on your interests, you might want to study:

- An Art and Design BA, which will enable you to explore a range of art and craft disciplines before specialising in a particular area. For example: Art and Design at University of the Arts London (UAL) or 3D Crafts at Plymouth College of Art.
- A BA in a specialist craft discipline — if you have a passion for a particular material or discipline you might want to choose a special craft course. For example: Artist Blacksmithing at Harwood College of Arts, Fashion Textiles Embroidery at UCA, or Artist Designer Maker: Glass and Ceramics at University of Sunderland.

Apprenticeships
An apprenticeship is a paid entry-level job with a training aim. Apprenticeships must work with an employer for at least a year, learning how to do a real job.

Apprenticeships currently have three core elements:
- A National Vocational Qualification
- An on-the-job element
- A knowledge-based element, including English, maths and communications

Even if you know you want to be an artist or designer, the range of options open to you might be surprising. So how do you choose what to do next?

Top Tips
- A broad variety of work experience will show employers that you have a range of experiences.
- Try to find work that will help you grow.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for feedback.
- Keep a contact list for future opportunities.

Finding a Work Placement with a Maker
Designer-maker Andy King is founder of King and Webbon, where he and his team create contemporary furniture using a carefully-selected palette of natural hardwoods alongside innovative materials for colour and texture.

Q: What should be agreed at the beginning of a placement?
- Consider what skills you’d like to learn and express this at the beginning of the placement. These might be specific techniques or processes, learning how particular machines or tools are used, or developing a design style.
- Communicate how long you envisage undertaking the placement for, and perhaps say if you like it after, that you might be keen to extend it.
- The maker is investing their time and experience in you. The more you learn, the more valuable you become, so if your placement goes well, there’s a good chance the maker will want to keep on and you’ll have the capacity to do so.

Q: What are the benefits of offering work experience to a young maker — for you and for them?
- If a young person is keen to learn, seeing them develop and start to become more autonomous is very rewarding for the maker. The maker can start to undertake more work and increase their output, and be so thankful you’re there!
- The young person will get to see how design and making can work as a business, and have a great time learning in a friendly environment.

Top Tips from Craft Professionals

Listen to your passions and your strengths. This will keep you motivated in your career. Be aware of the choices that are available to you to develop your craft, do your research and always evaluate what you do and what your next steps are. Learning within a craft career never stops, so always be aware of how you can continue your development. Be an individual, carve your own path and be prepared to be dedicated and self-motivated in your work.

Laure Slater, Textile Designer

When she began her craft career, Laure was not sure if she really wanted to be a craft professional. She then joined an apprenticeship with a craft company and enjoyed every moment of it. She has now been self-employed for over a year and says working freelance has its own set of challenges and you have to be very organised with regards to invoicing, filing your tax return and budgeting your money to make sure it lasts between irregular payments.

Amber Butchart, Fashion Historian

As an art historian, Amber advises students to seek out an apprenticeship with a internationally renowned fashion designer. It is essential for you to fully understand the demands of the fashion world and how to meet the expectations of a client. An apprenticeship will give you the opportunity to experience all aspects of working in the fashion world, whether that is designing, making or selling. It is also essential to network and establish relationships with others in the industry.

Top Tips from Craft Professionals

Seek out an apprenticeship with a established profession. Craftsmanship is an art that requires time and dedication. It is important to have a clear understanding of your motivations and goals before embarking on an apprenticeship.

Theresa Nguyen, Artist Silversmith

Learn from the experts and ask for feedback. It is important to take this feedback on board and use it to improve your skills and techniques.

Be proactive and enthusiastic. Knock on doors and make contact with people who would like to learn from you as much work experience as you can.

Work Experience in Craft

Work experience and volunteering can be a great way to gain insight into a particular industry, and make new connections. If you’re interested in working in a particular discipline you might seek work experience there where you can work alongside a maker with skills that you could also seek out for work experience in different parts of the craft sector by seeking opportunities in galleries, museums or education.

Finding a Work Placement with a Maker

Q: What’s the best way to make a speculative application to a maker?
- Don’t start with ‘hi there’ and follow with a blanket email/about with no relevance to the maker’s practice. Make it personal and address it to a specific person.
- Demonstrate you’ve done some research into the maker. Tell them what pieces of their work you like and why, and why you want to work alongside them.
- Briefly describe what you’ve studied or are studying, and demonstrate your enthusiasm for it.
- If you supply a CV, make it punchy and not wordy, and try to tailor your CV or resume to the maker you’re contacting.
- Similarly, avoid writing an email that appears as a wall of text. Break it down into paragraphs and be concise — your reader will thank you.

Q: How do you get the most from a work experience placement?
- Enthusiasm, curiosity and paying attention are really infectious and help show you’re genuinely interested. I really love it when people make suggestions that contribute to the design and making process. I may have ideas that the maker hasn’t thought of and would love to know.
- Don’t be afraid to suggest something you might like to make during your placement. It can be frustrating if you work on it in your own time, or in quiet times during the placement.
- Be proactive, attentive and avoid looking at your phone all the time. If you prove yourself useful, you’ll go down a storm.

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Top Tips
- Start by exploring the craft organisations and businesses in your area. These might include small and larger craft businesses, makerspaces, cooperatives, universities, galleries and museums. You can use our Craft Map to help you.
- Larger organisations might advertise work experience opportunities on their websites but for smaller ones you might have to make a speculative application. Send a copy of your CV along with an email introducing yourself, explaining what kind of work experience you’re looking for and what your key skills are.
- If an organisation or business offers you a work experience placement, set up an initial meeting so you can discuss expectations, see where you would be working, and get to know each other.
- Take a parent/guardian or other adult with you to this initial meeting.
- Craft businesses can be very small (sometimes only one person) so it can be challenging for them to offer work experience.

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"Alongside my studies I was always proactive in seeking opportunities to develop my skills and I was able to take up life drawing classes after school at a local college. When I was 15 I also found a local woodworker based in Tavistock and worked with him for 5 years visiting him once a week to learn sculptural woodworking. The skills and knowledge he taught me enabled me to see a future in the making industries."

Sophie Hookfield, Artist and Engineer