



# SO YOU WANT TO BE A GRAPHIC DESIGNER?

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## What is a Graphic Designer?

A graphic designer is someone who possesses a curiosity for the visual world. They are obsessed with clear communication and trained to design visual experiences using images, graphic forms and words.

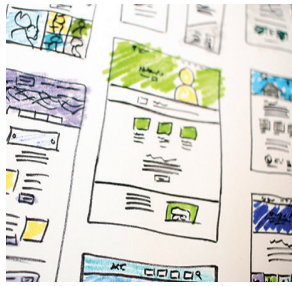
Graphic designers understand people and navigate the needs and desires of a client to shape human experience. This experience can happen at any scale, from the small button on a touch screen, to a large billboard on the side of the road. It also can be for any purpose, whether commercial, educational, cultural, or political.

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## Who becomes a graphic designer?

In trying to decide if a graphic design career is right for you, think about the qualities and interests that many graphic designers share, and see if they overlap with your own. Graphic designers typically are artistic, passionate, and observant people who:

- Love to draw and make things
  - Have a keen awareness of trends and the world around them
  - Happily embrace technology and new experiences
  - Appreciate order and simplifying complicated things
  - Enjoy solving problems and working with others
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## How do I prepare in high school to be a graphic designer?

**Do research.** Check out the AIGA design archives to view award-winning work: [design.archives.aiga.org](http://design.archives.aiga.org). Connect with AIGA KC, the professional association for design, at [www.aigakc.org](http://www.aigakc.org). Meet some designers at KC Design Week. Shadow local designers, tour design firms, visit colleges and speak with design students. Attend a summer design camp at a school like RISD, SCAD or NC State.

**Be interested.** Design is all around you! Take photos of interesting typography, collect examples of your favorite packaging, and start to see what excites you. Join the school newspaper; make flyers for your friend's band; create your own website and embrace any opportunity to put your design skills into action. All you need is a Sharpie and some paper and you're ready to get started!

**Prepare for professional education.** A well-rounded education is essential. Courses in fine art teach you to visualize, conceptualize and think creatively, while social studies, psychology, and public speaking will sharpen your communications skills and ability to put things into context.

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## Check out these websites for more information

AIGA Career Guide:  
[www.aiga.org/guide-careerguide](http://www.aiga.org/guide-careerguide)

AIGA Kansas City:  
[www.aigakc.org](http://www.aigakc.org)

## How to select a design school

### Read the curriculum.

Do the courses emphasize something in particular, such as social justice, interactive design, or typography? Are course offerings current and relevant?

### Take a look at the faculty.

Students work very closely with faculty in design school. Look for faculty portfolios and profiles online and introduce yourself!

### Take a look at the students.

What kind of projects are the students making? Are they inspiring?

### Visit the school.

Take a campus tour and ask to meet with design faculty. If it's an online school, ask to observe a class. If you can, talk to students or recent alumni. Can you picture yourself there for the long term? Does it seem like the right fit?

### Don't rule out any school.

You won't know the true cost of any school until after you've applied. A school with a higher sticker price may be able to offer more scholarship money than one that initially seems cheaper. And a school that's cheaper doesn't necessarily offer a lesser experience. Finally, any money invested in school should lead to an educational experience that lasts, not just an immediate career outcome.