

# CREATIVE MENTOR NETWORK

**Creative Mentor Network has published this book to hold a mirror up to the creative industry.**

**The sad truth is that most of the ‘advice’ you will read has actually been helping a certain section of society ‘make it’ for a long time.**

**We’re working to change that – so it’s simply your talent that matters rather than who you know, where you live and the privileges you can afford.**

# Making It In The Creative Industry: A Practical Guide

So you want to work in the creative industry?  
Good for you.

Sadly, it's not quite as simple as sharpening your pencils and squeezing some fresh ideas out of your supple young brain. There's actually a lot of hidden, unspoken rules to getting ahead in this game.

Luckily, we've produced this book to help guide you through the thorny issues such as: who you should be, how you should act and where you should be from in order to make it in the creative industry.

Because remember: it's not about the quality of your ideas, it's about the quality of your contact list, accent and shoes.

*Good luck.*

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# Getting Started

Getting your foot in the door of the creative industry can be tricky but, whatever your chosen sector, there are lots of different ways of getting started.

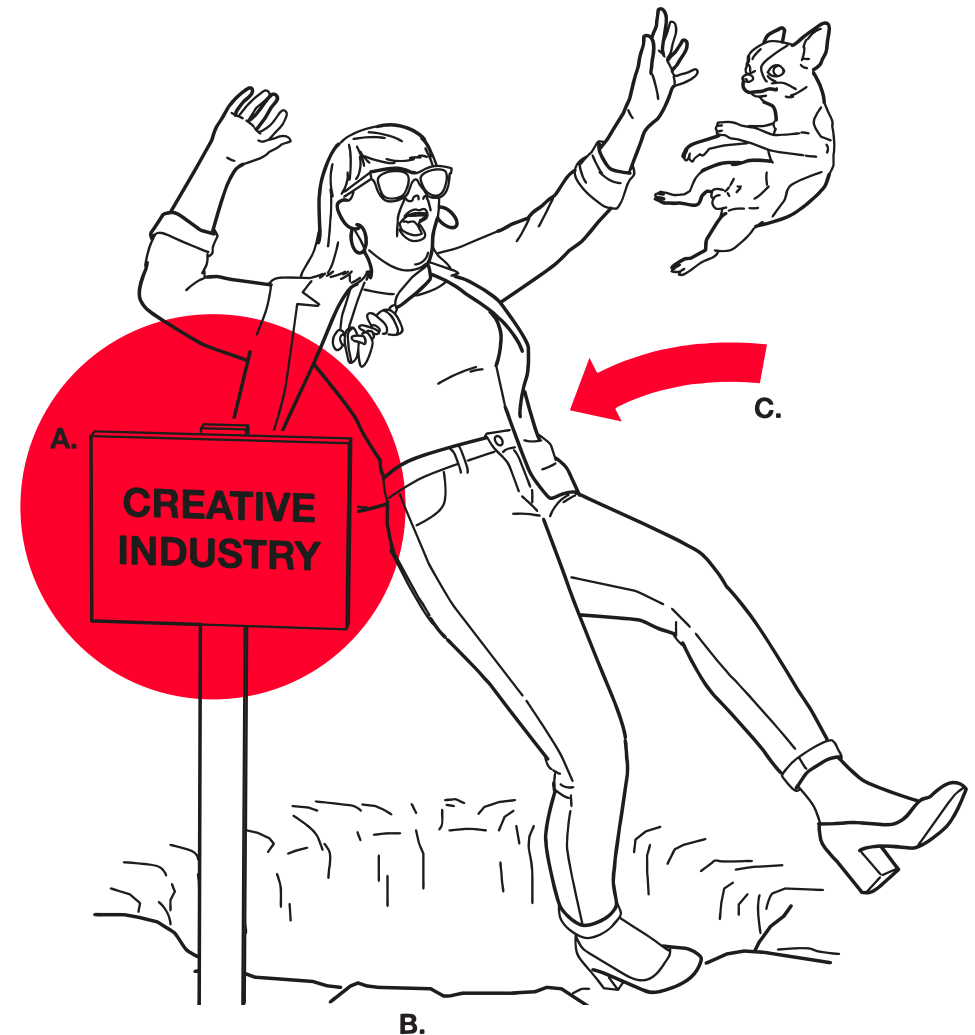
It could be that your mum already works for your preferred company. Another option is that your dad works there. For some, it's an uncle. But it doesn't have to be just blood relatives - god-parents and family friends can work just as well.

If familial nepotism isn't an option, consider attending the same elite university as the boss. The options are, truly, endless.\*

\*Depending on the size of your family & budget.

It's notoriously difficult to get a job in the creative industry, despite everyone you speak to telling you they 'just fell into it'.

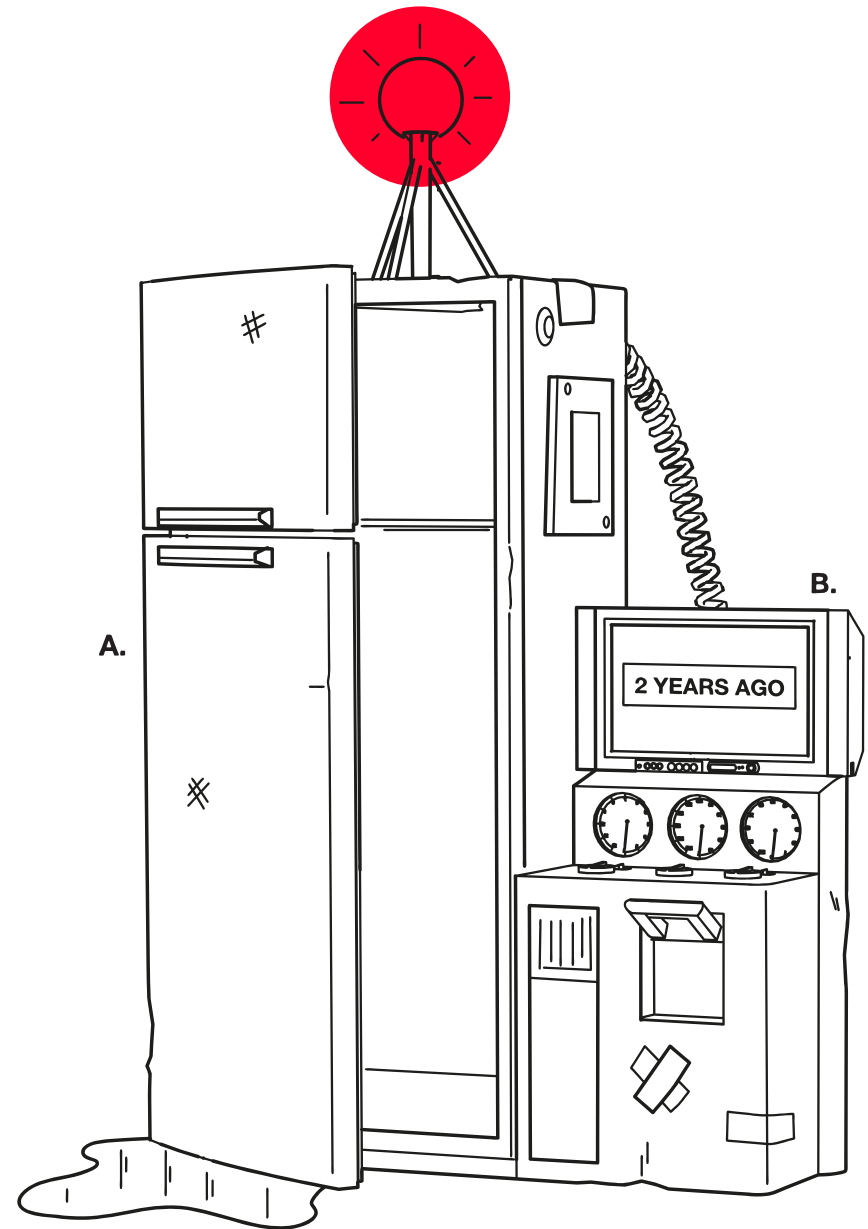
So, *dig your own hole* and fall into it by hitting up all your mates in the industry.



There is a paradox at the heart of the creative industry: entry level jobs can require two years of experience.

How do you build that experience before getting an entry level job that would let you build that experience?

It's simple: *time travel*.



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**WHILE UNPAID PLACEMENTS ALLOW YOUNG PEOPLE TO BUILD THEIR EXPERIENCE BEFORE APPLYING FOR THEIR FIRST ROLES, THEY'RE INACCESSIBLE TO THOSE WHO CAN'T AFFORD TO WORK FOR FREE.**

Every word, every image and every thought is at least 20% more creative by virtue of having been created on a Mac.

So take out a small-to-medium loan at a competitive interest rate and get yourself one\*. If you use a PC, people will spit on your shoes.

*And rightly so.*

\*Ensure that it's updated to the latest operating system - macOS Cannes.

GETTING STARTED



TIP #03

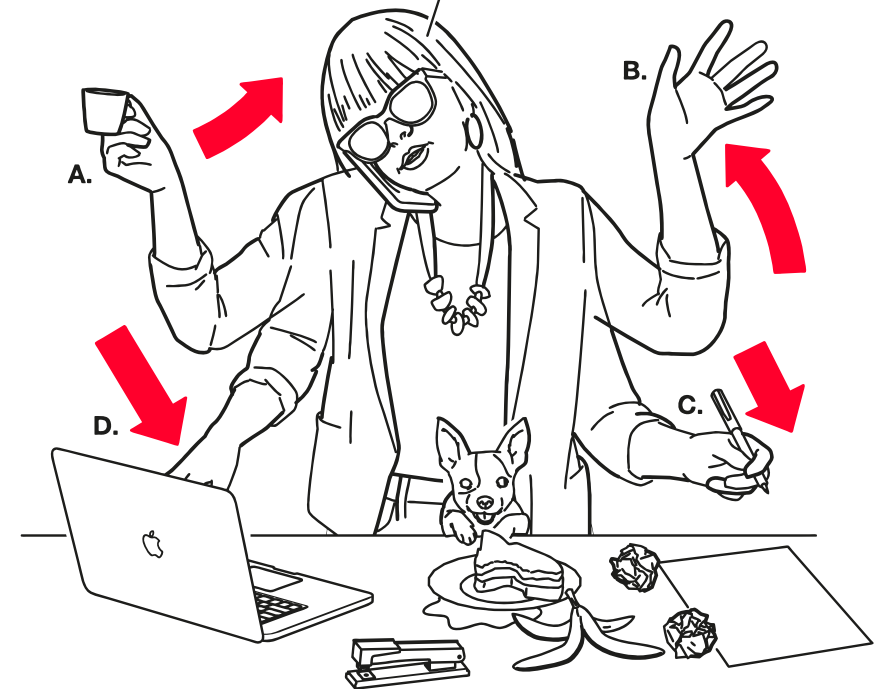
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There is a good reason why imposter syndrome is so common among people from lower socio-economic backgrounds: the creative industry is silly and everything is made up.

Literally no-one knows what they're doing, but some people are more comfortable pretending they do.

To fit in, live with debilitating self-doubt inwardly, but *emit boisterous arrogance outwardly*.

The results of the collaborative deep dive indicate that we need to fast-track the value-add. So let's throw it over the wall and circle back, address the knowledge base to see where there's a strategic fit for an appropriately client-focused mesh market. Yeah?



**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS ARE OFTEN THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILIES TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY. THEY OFTEN FEEL OUT OF PLACE AND LACK THE TIME AND MONEY TO ENGAGE WITH OTHER STUDENTS.**



# Location

You may think that creativity is borderless. It knows no boundaries or constraints - it's too wild and chaotic an energy to be contained by something as mundane as simple geography.

You may think that, but you'd be bang wrong.

At some point in time, it was decreed that no creative industry could exist any further north than Watford and should ideally be contained within the arcane circle that is the M25.

Above all else, *be from London.*

If you can't be from London,  
move to London.

If you can't afford to move to  
London, move to New York.



Don't let London's exorbitant rental prices get in the way of your dream job. *You have two choices:*

1. Move into the London flat that your parents were lucky enough to buy for £50k in the early 90s and tolerate them popping in on weekends.
2. Keep your independence by using your allowance to join other creative kindred spirits in a 15-bed/1 toilet, open-plan warehouse community hub.

LOCATION

The floor plan shows a compact apartment layout. At the top is the kitchen (1m x 2.5m) with a four-burner stove and a sink. To the left is a bedroom (2m x 1m). To the right is a lounge (1.5m x 2m). At the bottom is a bathroom (1.5m x 1m) containing a toilet, sink, and bathtub. A red arrow on the left side points towards the entrance of the flat, which is marked with the letter 'A'.

**Within the M25 (technically), SW28ish**

**£2,600pcm**

A spacious and charming open-plan 'loft-style' apartment in the beating heart of zone 5. The property boasts all modern conveniences arranged in an efficient manner that maximises the use of space and minimises the use of legs. Perfect for entertaining.

Don't even bother booking a viewing - this one's going quick!

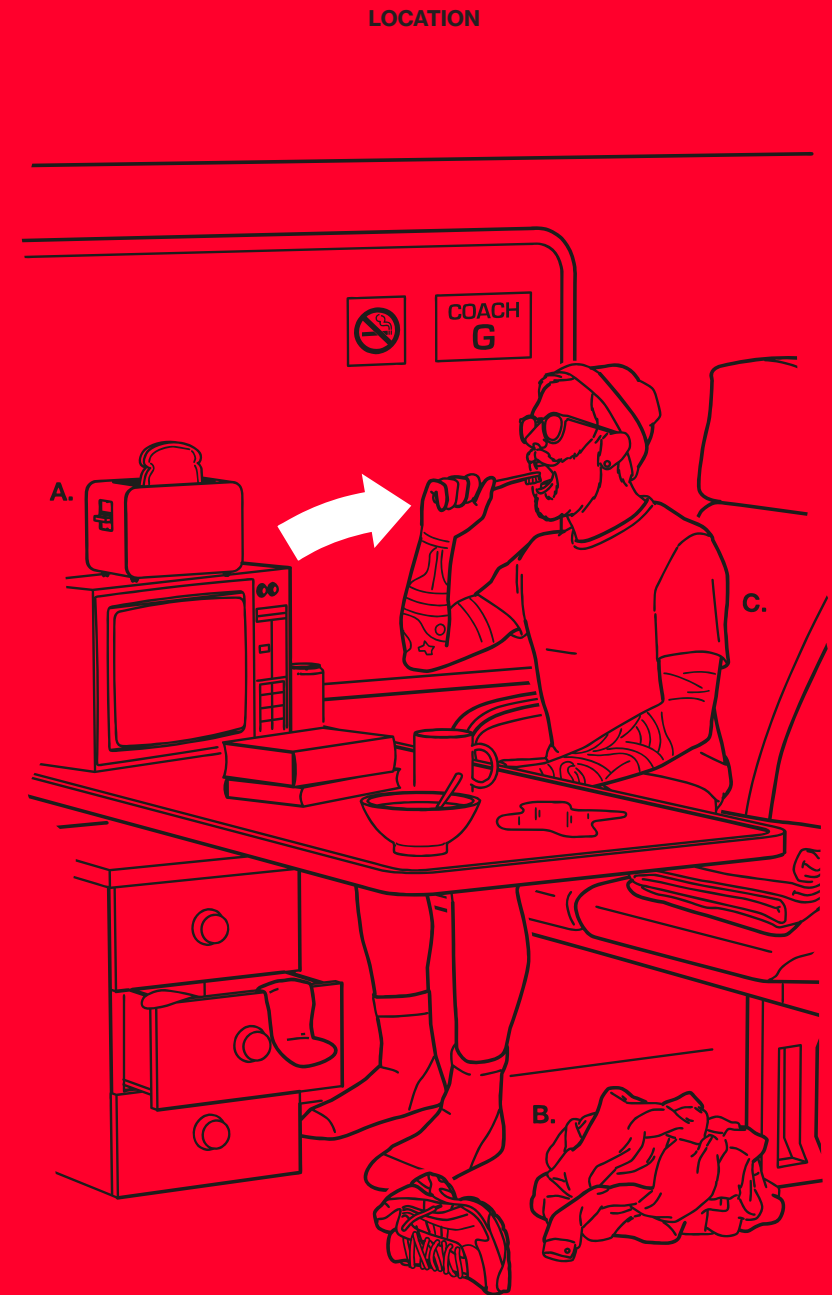
A good way to save money is by living outside London and commuting in.

But here's the thing: a train season ticket can cost as much as renting in zone 2.

So, embrace it and make yourself at home. *The trains have it all* – bathrooms, a trolley service and countryside views every 15 minutes or so.

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PEOPLE FROM PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS ARE THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY THAN THOSE FROM LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS TO BE ABLE TO MOVE TO OR LIVE IN LONDON.



# Office Life

'Fitting in' to an office is the single most important thing.

In fact, most workplaces hire on a basis of 'culture fit', rather than 'culture add'.

It's not about what new thinking and perspectives you can bring to work. That would be scary and challenging. Instead, be like the amoeba - you want to aim for homogenous goo. The nail that sticks out gets hammered down. But you can't hammer goo. It just sticks to the hammer.

This means: speak like everyone else. Look like everyone else. Think like everyone else.

You can do it. You can goo it.

Most important decisions aren't made in the meeting room. They're made in the pub.

So, it is imperative that you are a drinker. In fact, skip all meetings and sit in the pub all day.

Not a drinker? Then you're *not a team player*.

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ACCORDING TO A STUDY, TWO-FIFTHS (43%) OF YOUNG WORKING ADULTS THINK THAT NOT DRINKING ALCOHOL IS A BARRIER TO FITTING IN SOCIALLY AT WORK.



Due to a lack of careers advice at school and the industry's love of vague job titles, you may not actually know what your job entails when you start out.

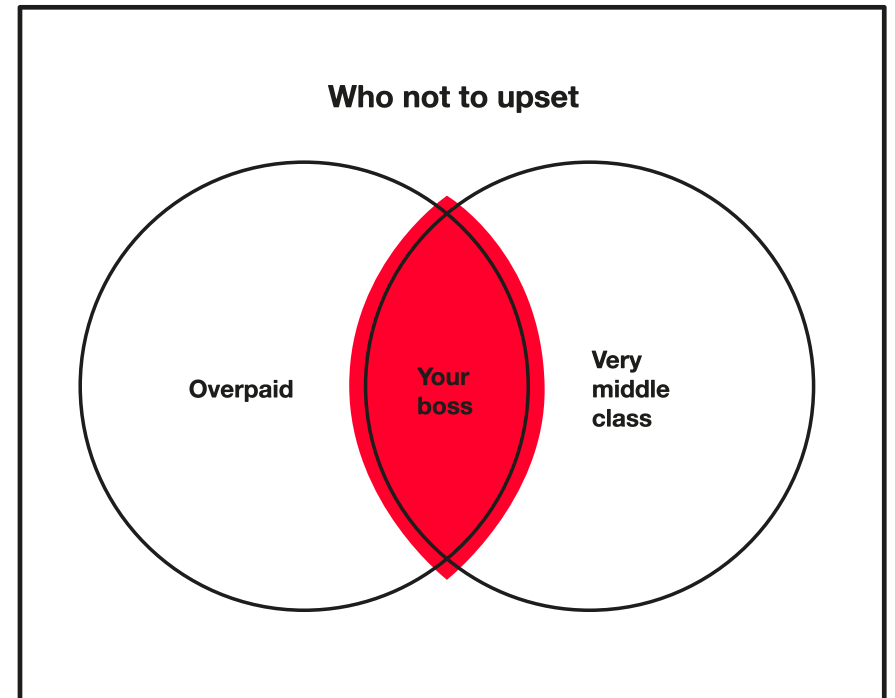
But it's easy to *look like you know what you're doing* if you learn these useful techniques, popular with your more experienced senior colleagues:

1. Walk purposefully around the office holding your laptop open, carrying a coffee. If you always look like you're on the way to a meeting, no-one can make you join a meeting.
2. Turn on your out-of-office email response. Ride it out for as long as you can.
3. Leave your desk and do 'wall work'. Get Post-its, print-outs, 'inspo' pics – really, any piece of paper you can find – and stick it to a wall. The more 'stuff' there is, the more it looks like you're in 'creative flow' and can't be interrupted.
4. Hide in the toilets.



Avoid workplace discussions about background and salary, as it makes the better-off and privileged *feel uncomfortable*.

A.



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THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE FROM LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY HAS MORE THAN HALVED SINCE THE 1970S – FALLING FROM 16.4 PER CENT TO JUST 7.9 PER CENT.



Have a dog - the uglier the better - and insist on bringing it to the office to defecate in front of colleagues and clients alike.

If you don't like dogs, *learn to like dogs.*



# Networking

Never doubt the truth of the old cliché, “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know”. It’s actually a mantra in the creative industry.

Looking for a job has never been easier. Don’t worry about your skills. Don’t bother creating a CV. A cover letter is a waste of time.

More important than any of these is the contents of your mobile’s contact list. Simply ask that friend you made in Val-d’Isère, the guy you met in Infernos or the movie-producing brother of your brother-in-law to get you into the office for a week of unpaid work experience and consider yourself employed thereafter.

It’s your birthright, after all.

Don't bother learning anyone's name. Nine times out of ten it will be either *Matt* or *Tom*.

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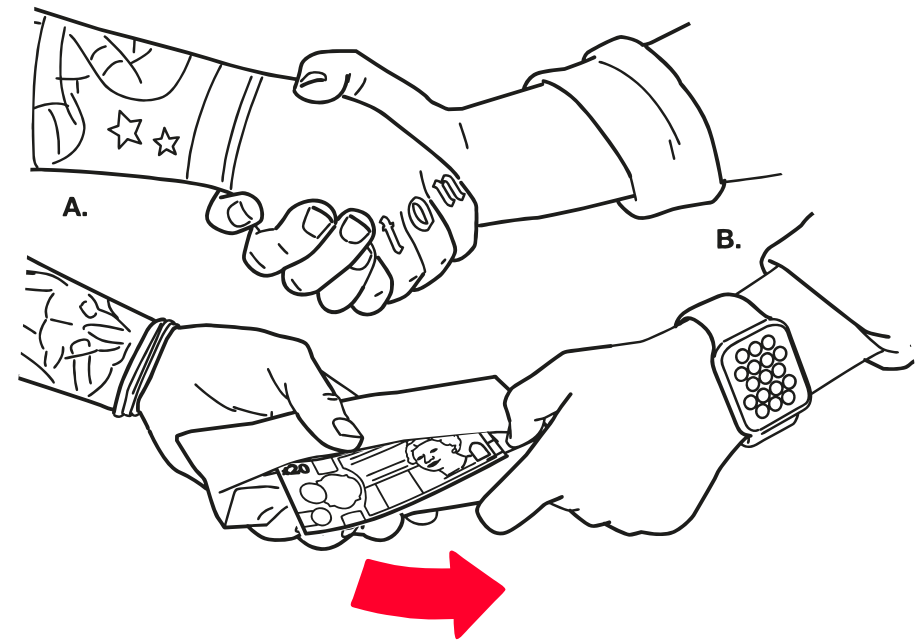
**THE WORLDS OF TV, FILM, MUSIC AND THE ARTS ARE DOMINATED BY STRAIGHT, ABLE-BODIED WHITE MEN LIVING IN LONDON, DESPITE THEM ONLY ACCOUNTING FOR 3.5% OF THE POPULATION.**

## NETWORKING



The creative industry likes to incentivise nepotism by offering referral bonuses when you suggest a friend for a job.

This can be so lucrative that you're better off spending *more time networking* than doing any actual work.



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**INFORMAL HIRING NETWORKS ARE COMMON IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY, WHICH MEANS THOSE WITHOUT CONNECTIONS CAN BE EXCLUDED. RESEARCH SUGGESTS 60% OF JOB VACANCIES ARE FILLED WITHOUT BEING ADVERTISED.**

# Education

It is a truth universally acknowledged that you can't be Prime Minister without going to Oxford and the same holds true for the creative industry. Depending on your sector, there will be a small handful of universities that are acceptable, and yes, they're all in London.

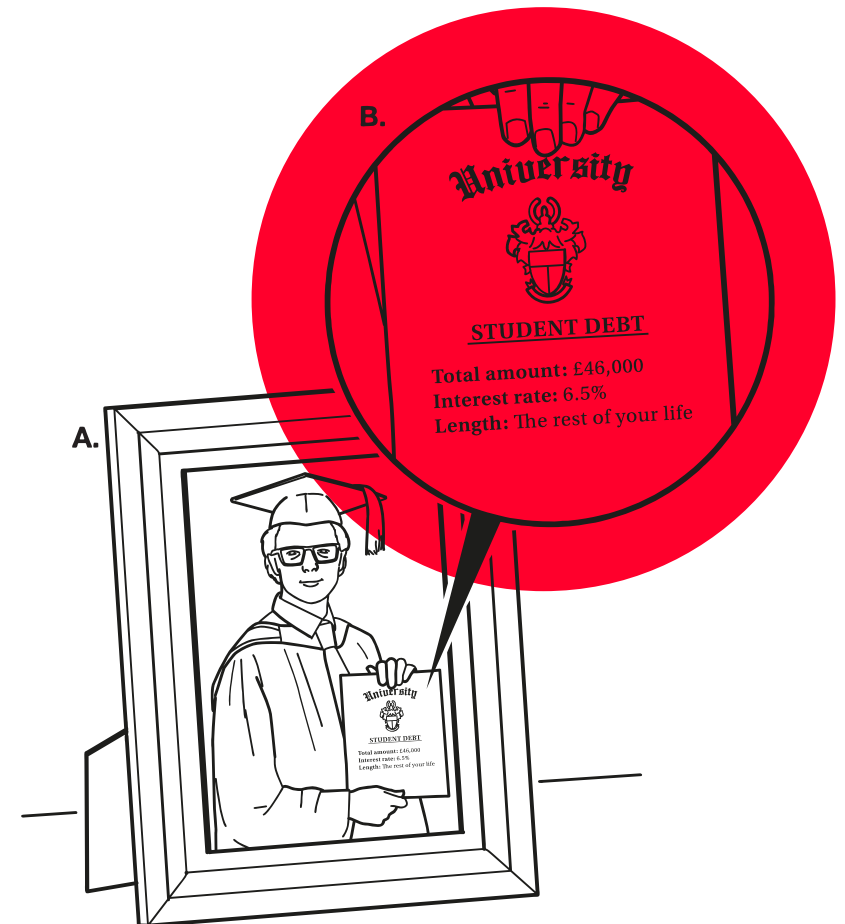
Crucially, the subject of your degree doesn't actually matter at all. What matters is that you know at least five of the same people as the person that interviews you. Even better if you both went to the same clubs. And you should aim to bring as little new to the job as possible.

While it's of the utmost importance that you have a degree, no-one will ever ask you anything about it. The subject is unimportant. Your passing grade doesn't matter. You could have studied Forestry and Arboriculture for all anyone cares.

No, the important thing is that you're burdened with debilitating debt, so that when you're asked to work for free you're *already used to having no money*.

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**UNIVERSITY GRADUATES FROM LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS TYPICALLY EARN £1700 LESS THAN GRADUATES WITH PARENTS FROM PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS.**



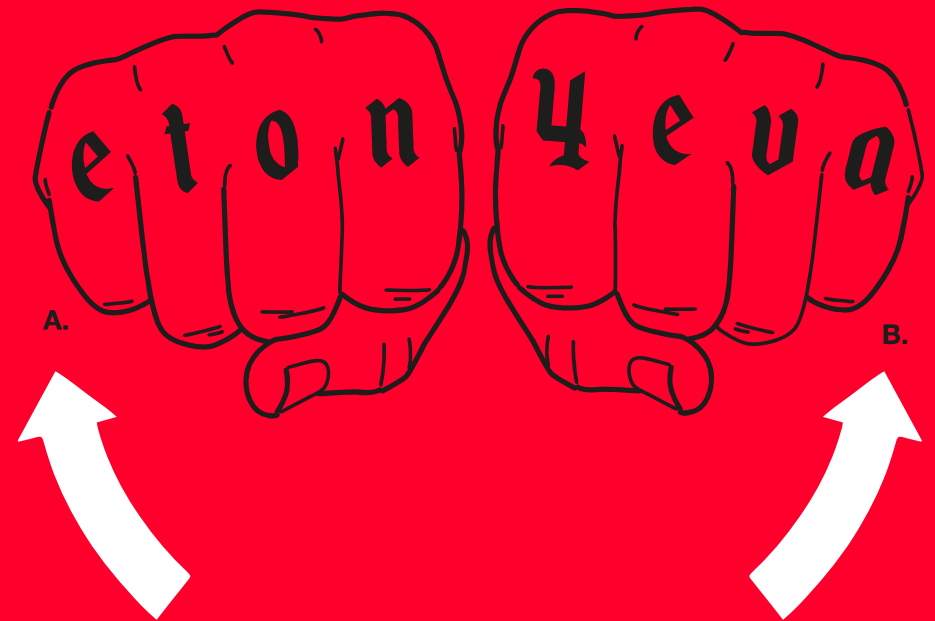
Attending a private school will give you an enormous advantage over others, so if it's not too late, then go to one.

However, under no circumstances should you *tell anyone* that you went to a private school.

Cover it up by adopting the slang, dress-sense and music tastes of your state-educated counterparts.

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THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY HAS AN INFLATED CONCENTRATION OF THOSE WHO WERE PRIVATELY EDUCATED. FOR EXAMPLE, 44% OF NEWSPAPER COLUMNISTS ATTENDED A PRIVATE SCHOOL. THIS IS OVER SEVEN TIMES THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK.



# Presenting Yourself

They say the best advice when starting a new job is just to 'be yourself'.

Disregard that advice because, in this industry, it's not about how creative you are. It's about how creative you look. Yes, you want to turn heads, but you also want to roll eyes. People should see you and then sigh from exasperation.

And it's not just about the clothes - everything from how you talk, how you get to work and what you eat for lunch should walk a fine balance between wildly expressing your originality in everything you do, while still blending in with everyone else.



Bagged an interview?  
*Dress as though you don't want  
the job.*

Suits are for people with  
'real' jobs. Jobs their parents  
understand.

Remember this: creative work  
needs creative clothing.



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**ACCORDING TO A STUDY, 61% OF EMPLOYEES BELIEVE THEY ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE WHEN THE DRESS CODE IS RELAXED. FEELING CONFIDENT AND COMFORTABLE INCREASES MORALE AND CREATIVITY.**

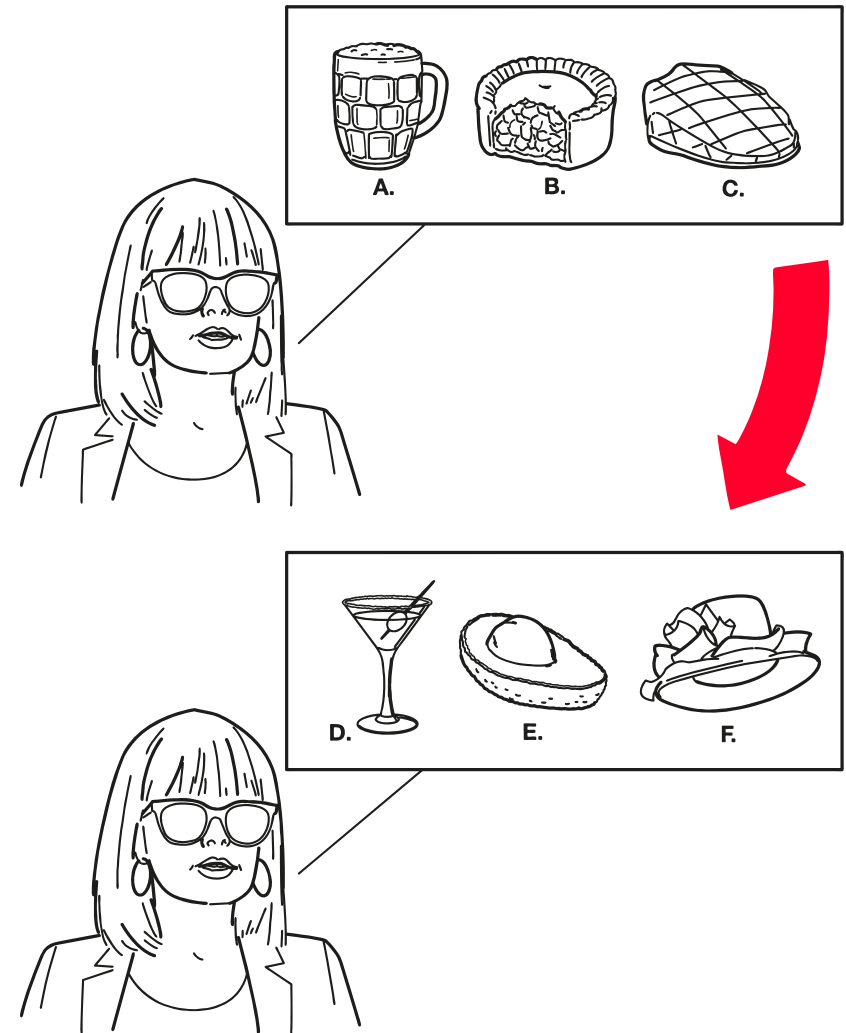
Wear a 'worker' jacket that costs £175 while being completely unaware of the *inherent irony* in doing so.



In the unlikely event that you have the same regional accent as someone else in the office, pick a different one. A ‘normal’ one.

There can’t be two, ‘the northern ones’.

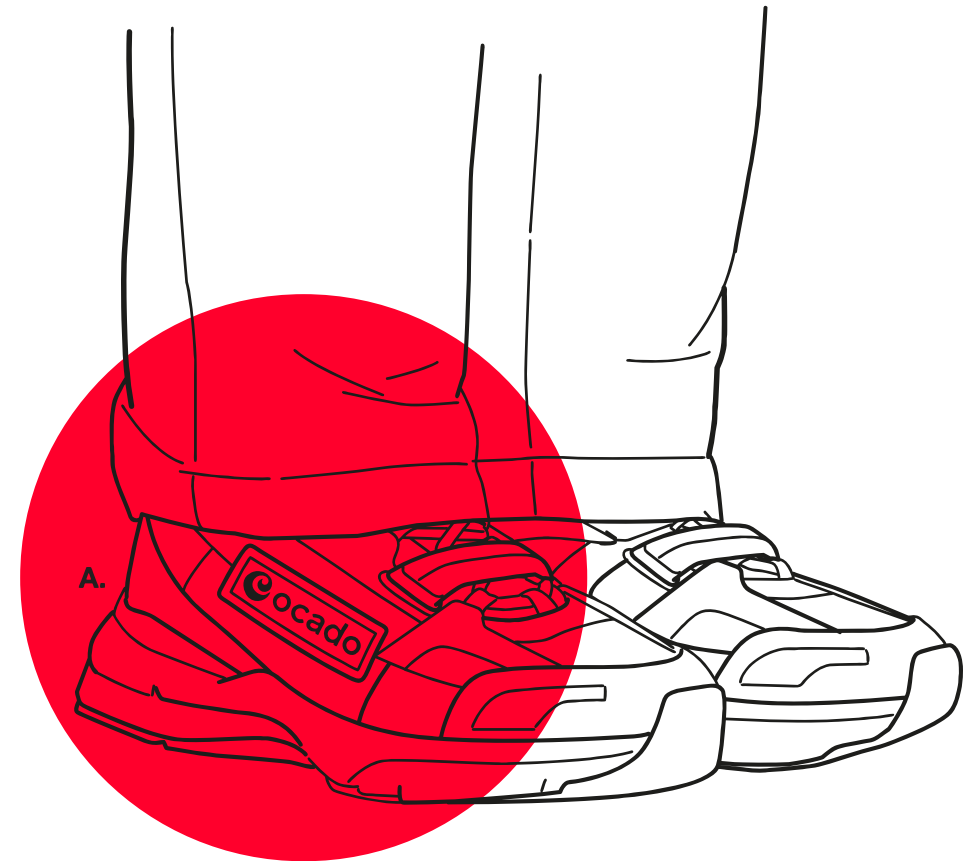
*It just doesn’t work.*



**IN A STUDY, 76% OF EMPLOYERS ADMITTED DISCRIMINATING AGAINST CANDIDATES BASED ON THEIR ACCENT DUE TO CLASS-BASED ASSUMPTIONS.**

Dressing down is totally acceptable in most creative environments. The trick is to do it in a way that is inaccessible to 95% of the population.

This means you can turn up to meetings in sportswear, *but only if it's a collab with a luxury brand.*



# A MESSAGE FROM CREATIVE MENTOR NETWORK

**Recognise yourself or your workplace in this book?**

**If the answer is a slightly uncomfortable yes, then we hope you'll agree it's time for change.**

**Making It In The Creative Industry: A Practical Guide was published by Creative Mentor Network. We're a charity dedicated to making the creative industry more accessible and inclusive so people can thrive regardless of their socio-economic background. Our aim is to change the industry so that the 'advice' in this book is no longer relatable to anyone.**

**And we need your help to do it. How? Become a CMN mentor and partner. We train professionals in mentoring and building inclusive cultures so that people like you can support young creatives from lower socio-economic backgrounds trying to enter the industry.**

**Visit [creativementornetwork.org](https://creativementornetwork.org) to find out how you can sign up to create a fairer, more inclusive industry today.**

# THE BARRIERS OUR MENTEES FACE

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THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT ARE HOLDING BACK BRILLIANT  
YOUNG CREATIVES.

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## THE INDUSTRY

### It's who you know

Many people are hired through connections they already have, or find out about jobs through people they know. But without this 'social capital', many young people are excluded from creative jobs even before they can submit an application.

### Working for free

While unpaid internships are illegal, many young people manage to get their foot in the door by doing work experience for free or taking an entry-level position on a very low wage. This is only accessible to people who can afford to do so.

### Culture fit vs culture add

Many companies focus on 'culture fit' at the expense of 'culture add'. Hiring with a focus on who will fit into a team easily can lead to homogeneity in workforces and the rejection of anyone who doesn't look and sound the same as the existing team.

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## EDUCATION

### Poor in-school careers services

Underfunded and outdated in-school careers services in state schools can't keep up with changing job roles and non-linear career trajectories in the creative industries. This can leave students ill-informed, confused and unmotivated.

### Narrow curriculum

In recent years, schools operate on a hierarchy that deprioritises art subjects in favour of more academic subjects. This limits options before young people have a chance to explore them.

### Focus on exam performance

School funding is strongly linked to exam performance. Because of this, there is a heightened focus on exam technique rather than skills that will be useful in later life, skills such as problem-solving, communication and resilience.

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## SOCIETAL

### Lack of industry perception

Many schools and parents believe jobs in the creative industry are a risky option, so discourage young people from pursuing a creative career.

### Cuts to arts funding

Government cuts to the arts in education and beyond make access to creative arts harder for many people.

### Degrees of disadvantage

While our core focus is on socio-economic diversity, we recognise there is a broad spectrum of intersectionality within our community. Young people who sit across multiple minority groups are likely to face double disadvantages.

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