

A Guide to Becoming a Sports Commentator

By [Simon Burr](#)



What You Need to Know

1. Having a good knowledge of your favourite [sport](#) simply isn't enough to get you a job as a commentator; you need to be able to share this knowledge with others.
2. There are no formal qualification requirements for a career as a commentator. In fact, many top commentators left school at 16.
3. However, a degree in journalism, sports journalism, communications or PR may help you develop the skills you need to get your first break.
4. When it comes to pursuing a career as a sports commentator, experience is key. Not only will this allow you to build up a portfolio of your own work, it will give you vital contacts within the broadcasting industry.
5. Remember, you may have to start small. Many top commentators started their careers with a local radio station or newspaper, so follow their example.
6. Given the specialist nature of the role, very few sports commentary jobs are actually advertised. Again, it's often all about having the right contacts.
7. However, look out for special sports journalism training schemes, such as those offered by the BBC.

Having a good knowledge of your favourite sport simply isn't enough to get you a job as a commentator. Indeed, anyone can learn facts and figures, but very few people have what it takes to mix this information into a live commentary and manage to keep an audience both informed and entertained.

So, [according to John Motson](#), a BBC commentator with more than 30 years professional experience, a good commentator "must get excitement, passion and enthusiasm into their voice so that the viewer at home can get into a game and enjoy it to the full". Additionally, you will need to be able to research your subject thoroughly and have good elocution and the ability to pronounce tricky words. Moreover, it's also likely you'll need to be knowledgeable in more than one sport as you may be asked to commentate on athletics one day, tennis the next and football the one after that.

Aside from a natural passion for sport and the ability to share your enthusiasm, you'll also need a solid work experience record and a showreel to back this up with.

Formal Qualifications

There are no formal qualification requirements for a career as a commentator. In fact, some of the best-known commentators got their jobs without having any real qualifications to their name, instead relying on hard work, good networking skills and a fair bit of good fortune.

That said, there are a number of route you might consider taking if you want to get into this line of work.

For instance, a degree in journalism will demonstrate an enthusiasm for mass communication and give you the technical expertise prospective employers may look for. Several UK universities and colleges, including the University of the Arts in London, Leeds Trinity College and [Southampton Solent University](#) offer degree courses in sports journalism, enabling students to channel their enthusiasm into a professional context.

Similarly, a degree in communications or PR – for instance in sports PR – can also make you more attractive to prospective employers by giving you specialist, transferable skills.

However, formal qualifications on their own will not be enough to land you a job as a commentator. Instead, you need to have qualifications and some good work experience in the field.

Work Experience

When it comes to pursuing a career as a sports commentator, experience is key. Not only will this allow you to build up a portfolio of your own work, it will give you vital contacts within the broadcasting industry.

So, while your ultimate career goal may be commentating on the World Cup final, it's still wise to start small. For example, the British football commentator John Motson got his first job at the Barnet Press newspaper, from where he moved on to BBC Radio Sheffield and then finally onto the national stage with the **TV** show, Match of the Day. Follow his lead by asking local newspapers or radio stations for a week or two of work experience, and complement this by writing a blog, recording your own commentaries and proactively building up your network of contacts within the industry.

Carry on plugging away until you have enough experience to put together an impressive tape that you can send to the contacts you should have made through your work experience or studies.

Finding Sports Commentators Jobs

Given the specialist nature of the role, very few sports commentary jobs are actually advertised. Moreover, with broadcasters continuing to streamline their output and cut back on budgets, it's unlikely that the number of opportunities opening up to budding commentators will increase any time soon.

That said, there are some places you can look for new openings. For example, the BBC runs regular traineeship schemes for budding sports journalists, while the likes of Sky as well as the BBC will also post the occasional opening for an experienced sports journalist, or even commentator. However, as before, it's all about networking and building up a good network of contacts as many opportunities will never be advertised openly.

Further Reading

- You can find a whole host of vacancies for in a huge number of fields using our [online jobs listings](#).
- If you'd rather participate than just watch, read our [guide to joining a local football side](#).

Source: http://www.uknetguide.co.uk/sports/article/a_guide_to_becoming_a_sports_commentator-106380.html