

be a news anchor

by Megan Cahn

1. Are you passionate about telling stories?
2. Do you want to be an advocate on important issues?
3. Are you curious and always wanting to know more?
4. Do you enjoy being in the spotlight?

If you answered yes to these questions, a career as a news anchor might be perfect for you!

WILL YOU LIKE IT?

PROS: You'll work in a fast-paced, exciting environment where everyone lives for what they do. You'll help the masses understand what is going on in the world and become an expert on something new every day.

CONS: You might be an expert on current affairs, but you may not have the time to talk to your friends and family about it. With extremely long hours and high-pressure situations, you may find that your BlackBerry is your new BFF.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

As a news anchor, you will start your day by reading all the papers and wires to find out everything that has happened in the past 24 hours. You will work with producers to plan and write your newscast — making necessary phone calls, sending e-mails, and, well, running around the newsroom to prepare. You can work 12-hour days, but will only actually be on the air for up to four hours. Some of the things you report on will be headline news, while others may be special segments and interviews that you've had more time to research. But with the news, you never know what will break — at a moment's notice there could be a plane crash, a natural disaster, or worse. You may spend your whole day researching what you thought were the top stories, and then the unexpected happens and the scripts are thrown away — this is when it gets tough and exciting!

PAY YOUR DUES

It's a tough road to becoming an anchor — you really have to want it. You should start as an intern, and then become a field reporter for a local news or cable access station. In smaller markets, you may have to carry your own equipment, shoot your own segments, and even edit your own film, in areas of the country where you usually would never go. But you need to know how to deal with events on a small scale before you take on the big stuff.

NEVER SAY NO

Once you've scored the internship, do everything that is asked of you and more. You have to do all the little gofer jobs and love doing them. If you are asked to log tapes or get coffee, you're on it!



JUST DO IT

Don't let your age, your gender, or anything else hold you back. You have to know what you want and do whatever you can to get those internships or field producing assignments. It's a very competitive field, but these first steps are absolutely vital.

WATCH

Just because you're running errands doesn't mean you can't learn. Take in your surroundings and always have your eyes on the actual anchors. Watch them with the teleprompter — you'll find that what may come out of her or his mouth is often very different from what it reads. Making this look so effortless and natural is an acquired skill, but you can learn through osmosis — just keep your eyes and ears open!

WHAT DOES IT PAY?

Anchors at the big-time networks can make millions of dollars a year, but when you start out you might barely make \$20,000. Salaries can vary in between these extremes, depending on the size of the market in which you work. A University of Missouri Journalism School study estimates anchors in the 25 biggest markets make an average of \$130,000 a year, while anchors in small markets make \$26,000 — the overall average is \$47,000.

ON THE JOB

"This is a competitive business — there are a lot of women who want these jobs, but experience, education, and smarts go a long way. I'm still figuring it out — I learn new things every day. Once you stop learning, you should get out of the business. It's just really about being hungry for more." —Nicole Lapin

Nicole is a news anchor for CNN.com Live — the network's live, multistream video service — who also appears on CNN Headline News and CNN International and has covered major events such as the Israel-Hezbollah conflict and the Virginia Tech massacre. She also hosts her own weekly interview series, "Young People Who Rock," which features people under 30 doing remarkable things. Only 24 years old herself, Nicole is certainly one of those people!