

THE STUDENT ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S GUIDEBOOK

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Abstract

The goal of this Guidebook is to enable a university film student, with little to no previous experience as an Assistant Director, to fulfill the AD's role on any class project. On any film or TV show, the AD is the event manager of the production, responsible for scheduling, organizing and day-to-day supervision and leadership on the set. The AD is the project's prime communicator and coordinator as they strive to provide their Director, cast, and crew with the maximum resources available within the project's budget and time limitations. While crucial to any production, the craft of the Assistant Director is rarely taught in university film schools. There is no UA FTV course dedicated to teaching all of the skills needed to be an Assistant Director. Basic budgeting and scheduling are covered in the second semester of the producing course series, but this is an elective that not all students in the program will have the opportunity to take. This Guidebook is a tutorial for those without AD experience, and a reference tool for those looking to improve their performance.

Preface/Artist's Statement

While considering different film industry career paths during my sophomore year at the University of Arizona, I had the opportunity to attend a training seminar for Assistant Directors presented by now-retired DGA 1st AD, Craig Huston. I had been a lifelong film fan with an amateur's understanding and appreciation of directing and performance, but no real concept of the day-to-day logistics involved in making a movie. That seminar was both eye-opening and inspirational as it revealed a role in the film/tv world in which a person with analytical and organizational skills could shine in a creative setting while building a successful and rewarding career. Since then, I have crewed 13 short films; on six of them as the 1st AD.

Part of my success as a student AD was due to having joined the producing class-track as a sophomore, which is highly unusual, and part was due to having attended that AD training seminar. Even then, I would have benefitted further from having on hand a guide focused specifically toward ADs on student films, some of whose challenges can differ significantly from those on professional films. Thus, the idea for a Student Assistant Director's Guidebook was

born. Its purpose: to ensure that every student would have access to the resources needed to excel as an AD on a student film, regardless of whether they were able to attend a seminar or get into a class.

The advice and recommendations in this guidebook would be helpful to any AD, regardless of industry level, as they reflect both my personal experience as a student AD and the professional perspective of advisor Craig Huston, DGA. Some content is directed specifically toward student ADs at the U of A, based upon TFTV-approved procedures and restrictions, and including specific references to FTV Safety and Production Handbooks.

This has truly been a labor of love. I have been lucky enough during my time at the U of A to be able to mentor up-and-coming ADs. I hope this Guidebook, written by a person who's been there, will continue that mentorship in absentia long after I've graduated. Its goal is to inspire and instill confidence in my fellow student ADs, beginning even before day 1 of pre-production, so they can look forward to the experience without doubt or fear or the necessity to reinvent the wheel on every new project.

Finally, to all of you: good luck! While I can't be there to help you in person, I'll always try to remain available for consultation and advice. I'd love to get to know you via my contact info in the TFTV Alumni Directory.

Introduction

The 1st Assistant Director (AD) is a leadership position. “Without a good first AD, your movie falls to pieces. And they make the movie. Those are people who never, ever, ever get interviewed anywhere. You could probably run a set better with a good 1st AD and no Director than a good Director and no AD.” -Natalie Portman for IndieWire

The Assistant Director is the event manager of the production. As DGA member Craig Huston states in his AD Training Seminar materials, the AD, in broad strokes, “organizes, coordinates, and supervises tactical & logistical operations... keeps physical production on-schedule and on- or under-budget, and... maximizes efficiency and productivity.” Good ADs strive to provide their Director, cast, and crew with the maximum resources available within the

project's budget and time limitations. To accomplish this, the AD must be the prime **communicator** and **coordinator** for the set.

The goal of this Guidebook is to enable a university film student, with little to no previous experience as an Assistant Director, to fulfill the AD's role on any class project.

An Assistant Director's Job

On a student film, you will be working with your classmates. You will not have the benefit of Director's Guild membership to afford you a base level of automatic respect. If you're not comfortable telling your peers concisely and assertively where they need to be, when they need to be there, and what they need to be doing, then ADing may not be for you.

Success as an Assistant Director requires strong organizational and communication skills, as well as constant interaction with everyone involved in the film (crew and cast). While prior understanding of filmmaking logistics is helpful, someone with an agile mind and the ability to learn quickly can pick up those specifics as they work. Most importantly, a very close working relationship with the Director is required so the AD can communicate the Director's vision and desires to the crew, keeping everyone on the same page throughout pre-production and shooting. Additionally, the Assistant Director must display sensitivity to the needs of actors who require a calm, attentive environment where they feel safe to be creative. The AD sets the project's tone.

Specific AD Duties

So what specific duties does an Assistant Director have? From Craig Huston's AD Training Seminar materials, an Assistant Director:

1. Generates a detailed script breakdown including all elements of all scenes for all departments.
2. Prepares the shooting schedule within time and budget limitations, subject to availability of cast, locations and equipment.

3. Attends any location scouts to assess potential production problems, advantages, and disadvantages. If production is unable to scout the location prior to shooting, arrives early to the location to assess and fix potential problems.
4. Determines numbers and types of “background actors” (a.k.a., extras) for each scene to achieve the Director's artistic vision within budgetary and location constraints.
Coordinates casting & hiring of extras.
5. Creates & publishes the shooting schedule, detailed category lists, and call sheets.
6. Ensures notification and coordination of production requirements for all departments.
7. Schedules and leads production meetings and tech scout(s).
8. Schedules and coordinates pre-production cast rehearsals, camera tests, makeup/hair/wardrobe tests, photos for set dressing and/or props.
9. Determines, publishes, notifies and confirms daily call times for cast, crew & equipment.
10. Runs the set: Supervises cast & crew activities during filming, ensuring that everyone and everything is ready and in position when needed, if not before, and dismissed (i.e., “gotten off the clock”) ASAP when no longer needed.
11. Directs background action and supervises extras on/off set.
12. Creates and implements alternative plans when unforeseen problems arise. Keeps the production moving forward!
13. Is the go-to person for all cast, crew & location questions and issues.
14. Ensures, when applicable, that all guild and union rules are followed.
15. Is responsible for on-set **SAFETY** & security.

Script Breakdown

An AD's first responsibility is breaking down the script. This breakdown details every element needed to shoot each scene in the script. This includes scene numbers, INT or EXT, set name, day or night, page count, characters, extras, props, effects, among other categories as needed.

To accomplish this task, the AD will use pre-printed (or online) breakdown sheets . These are one-page summaries of the shooting needs for each scene. They are useful not only for listing elements currently contained in the script, but also for tracking changes to any and all elements as the script is revised. The elements listed in each category by the AD on these sheets will be cross-checked with breakdowns of required elements by each respective department head to prevent errors or omissions. Below is an example of a breakdown sheet.

PROJECT TITLE: Reporters **1**

INT/EXT: Int

SET: Newsroom Hallway/Andela’s Cubicle

DAY/NIGHT: Day

SCENE NO(s): 5

PAGE COUNT: 10/8

STORY DAY: 1

SYNOPSIS: Whitley and Kurt plan to expose Andela and take her article opportunity

CAST 2	EXTRAS 3	PROPS 4
Whitley Kurt Andela	Newspaper employees (?)	Script Blank notepad Makeup wipe
WARDROBE 5	MAKEUP/HAIR 6	SET DRESSING 7
	Lipstick (from last scene)	Andela’s desk Desk chair Metal organizer (?) Papers/files
SPECIAL EFFECTS 8	PICTURE VEHICLES 9	ANIMALS 10
SOUND/MUSIC 11	SPECIAL EQUIPMENT 12	STUNTS 13
Telephones ringing Bell chime		
PRODUCTION NOTES 14		

1- Scene Information: this is all the basic production and scene information. Usually, a new breakdown page is needed for each scene. However, if you have multiple scenes with continuous action in the same location, and you know that they will all be shot on the same day, you can put all those scenes on the same breakdown sheet. If you are not certain, keep them on separate sheets. You can always combine them later.

- Story Day: this refers to when chronologically *in the story* the scene takes place. For example, if scene 1 takes place in the present day, and scene 2 is a flashback, scene 2 would be story day 1 and scene 1 would be story day 2. This can be especially useful for continuity of makeup, hair and costumes if the scene 2 flashback is months or years prior to present day.

2- Cast: list each character specified as present in the scene. If you suspect the presence of other known, but unmentioned, cast in the scene (perhaps in the background), then make a note to ask the Director.

3- Extras: list any background talent needed for the scene (ex. restaurant customers, students, etc.). Later in pre-production, after you have visited (with the Director) the sets where you will need extras, you will create an Extras Breakdown for the entire film. This will consist of a day-by-day list of extras, which includes the number required and the scene and set where they will work, as well as a breakdown of any specifics required by the Director and/or the script, specifically with regard to gender, race, ages and size.

- For instance, a pro football locker room scene may require all males; mixed races; ages 23 to 40; mostly large and muscular, while a high-school prom scene will have a very different look.
- Once this Extras Breakdown has been completed (or as it is being completed), the extras information can then be added to the corresponding script breakdown sheets.

4- Props: list any pieces of small set dressing or objects that the actors will interact with during the scene (ex. phones, paper, books, blankets, remotes, kitchen utensils, etc.). Weapons should be listed under props because UA Safety Policy does not allow actual weapons on set for any reason. See UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 13 “Guns & Weapons” and Section 18 “Props” for more detailed information.

5- Wardrobe: list any special or specialized clothing items specifically mentioned in the script that the character(s) will be wearing (e.g., uniforms, protective wear, drag, etc.). Clothing being used as set dressing can be listed under props or wardrobe, depending on which department will be responsible for sourcing and keeping track of it.

- 6- Makeup/Hair: list any and all special or unusual makeup/hair looks the actors will have for the scene, by the actor.
- 7- Set Dressing: list any large set pieces needed for the scene (ex. bed, couch, table, etc.). Make sure to list prominent set pieces for each scene, regardless of if they are the same as a previous scene in the script.
- 8- Special effects: list any part of the scene that may require specialized crew or equipment to complete (ex. Fire, smoke or atmosphere haze, rain, wind, serious wounds, break-away furniture, etc.). See UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 15 “Special Effects” for more detailed information.
- 9- Picture Vehicles: list any vehicles that will be on screen in the scene, regardless of whether or not actors interact with them. See UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 12 “Motor Vehicles” for more detailed information.
- 10- Animals: list any animals that will be on screen in the scene, regardless of the type of animal (e.g., mammal, bird, fish, reptile, insect) and regardless whether or not actors interact with them. See also UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 19 “Working with Animals” for more detailed information.
- 11- Sound/Music: list any music that will need to be played specifically on set (not anything that will be added in post). If this requires live musicians or playback equipment, make sure to include those elements in their relevant categories.
- 12- Special Equipment: list any and all special equipment needed for the scene. This includes cranes, non-typical camera setups like a car rig, special lighting equipment like a skybox, any stunt-related equipment, etc. See UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 23 “Construction Zones & Special Equipment” for more detailed information.
- 13- Stunts: list any and all actions in the scene that could be considered stunts. This is not just fight choreography or intense acrobatic work. Anything that carries an elevated risk of an actor or crew member getting hurt could be considered a stunt (such as playing a sport, etc.). Don’t forget to include your stunt coordinator or other appropriate personnel. See UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 14 “Stunts” for more detailed information.

14- Production Notes: list any notes that do not fit neatly into any other category (ex. Filming permits, hand warmers, etc.).

Scheduling

After breakdown sheets, an AD's next responsibility is to put together a tentative schedule. The most efficient way to break down a script and schedule a film shoot is by using scheduling software such as MovieMagic Scheduling. A program such as this will meld breakdown sheets and the schedule together, which makes creating and revising your schedule incredibly easy.

However, on student sets, you may not have access to programs like MovieMagic Scheduling, or may not yet have had the opportunity to learn them. Still, a short shoot like a student film can be scheduled successfully with or without a computer program.

Scheduling with Software

Your first task when scheduling a shoot using software is to enter all the elements into the breakdown sheets that come with the program. This allows you to have all the information needed for scheduling (as well as other paperwork) at your fingertips. Have the program show the sheets reduced to your preferred strip board format. Then, following the principles listed in the "Scheduling Principles and Tips" section below, rearrange the strips into your shooting order, inserting day breaks as needed. Once this is complete, you can export the schedule to a PDF for printing, as well as generate other paperwork (such as an Extras Breakdown). Here is an example of what a program-generated schedule looks like:

Sheet #	Scenes	EXT/INT	Location	Day/Night	Page Count
Sheet # 1 2/8 pgs	1	EXT	beverly hills, ca	Day	1, 2
Sheet # 2 2/8 pgs	2	EXT	hollywood	Day	1
End of Shooting Day 1					
Sheet # 3 6/8 pgs	3	INT	apartment	Night	3
Sheet # 4 1/8 pgs	4	INT	basement apartment	Day	
End of Shooting Day 2					
Sheet # 6 5/8 pgs	6	INT	basement apartment	Day	
Sheet # 7 1 4/8 pgs	7	INT	apartment 6c	Day	3
Sheet # 8 2/8 pgs	8	INT	apartment	Night	
End of Shooting Day 3					
Sheet # 15 1 4/8 pgs	15	INT	living room	Night	2
End of Shooting Day 4					
Sheet # 16 1 5/8 pgs	16	INT	living room	Night	2
End of Shooting Day 5					
Sheet # 18 3 1/8 pgs	18	INT	main room	Night	2

Scheduling software provides a default stripboard format (as shown), including a default color format to indicate day or night, INT or EXT, which an AD can easily customize to suit their needs and preferences (i.e. a brief synopsis of action in each scene can be added to fill out the vacant space on right).

Scheduling Without Software

The actual mental process of scheduling is the same regardless of whether or not you are scheduling with software. However, if you are not using software, it can be difficult to visualize and keep track of your potential scene shooting order and day breaks. One way to solve this problem is by physically arranging your breakdown sheets. Another is by using breakdown cards.

Breakdown cards are a summarized version of breakdown sheets that have the most relevant information that an AD needs to inform their scheduling. This includes major elements like scene number, cast, page count, location, day/night, INT/EXT, special effects, and complex hair/makeup looks, as well as other special element information as needed. These cards provide a way to visualize scene organization and day breaks. They also make it easy to move scenes around during the scheduling process. Here is an example of a simple breakdown card:

Day/Night	Int/Ext
Scene #: Location	
Page Count	Characters

Scheduling Principles and Tips

As you gain more experience as an AD, you will figure out your preferred method of scheduling, as well as what works best for different types of projects. However, this section includes basic scheduling principles, as well as other things to take into account.

To put together a schedule, start by putting scenes together with similar elements (usually location, cast, day/night, INT/EXT). These particular elements will most affect when you can schedule scenes. It is in your best interest to schedule all scenes that take place at the same location on the same day if possible to minimize time consumed by crew moves. It is also important to ensure that scenes that take place at a specific time of day are scheduled so the light is correct, or to ensure that the light can be reliably faked at the time you are scheduled to shoot.

An important note: You must refer to the UA FTV Safety Handbook to schedule within TFTV guidelines for the total length of a shooting day, turn-around times and requirements for locations which are more than 45 miles outside of Tucson.

Other things to take into account:

- As much as you can, schedule EXT scenes early in the day. Weather can be unpredictable, so you want to get those done while the weather is cooperating.
- If your first scene of the day has shots that do not need actors and are not influenced by actors, get them done first while actors are with the glamor squad (wardrobe and hair/makeup) if possible. You want to be working concurrently, not consecutively!

- If an actor only has one scene, especially if it is scheduled last, schedule any shots that do not require them last. This way if the scene runs longer than expected, those non-actor shots can be grabbed once cast and non-essential crew have been dismissed, or the next day if you are in the same location.
- During scheduling, consult with department heads to get an estimate of the time needed between crew call and first shot up, as well as for any crew moves that will involve packing and unpacking equipment.
- If you are unsure about how long to give something in the schedule, err on the longer side whenever possible. It's always better to be running ahead of schedule!
- If you are working with stunts or prop weapons, talk to your props manager and the cast/specialty crew involved in the stunt. See how long they will need for set up, safety meeting, shooting. Build this time into your schedule, but remember that it is based on everyone's best estimate – and estimates can prove to be inaccurate as situations develop. You DO NOT want any shot that has risk involved to be rushed, so try to schedule an easily-shortened or delayed scene afterwards in order to provide a time cushion.
- If you have multiple setups and one will take longer to put together than the other (ex. dolly vs. tripod), start with the easy setup, and have your grips put together the other one while you are shooting (ex. Start with the tripod, set up the dolly while shooting). Do this AS LONG AS it does not interfere with the current shot (sound, placement, etc.). Again, work concurrently, not consecutively!

Tentative Schedule

Your first tentative draft of the schedule does not need to be very detailed, so it can be done directly after script breakdown, before location/tech scouts and receiving a shot list from the Director/DP. In this version of the schedule, the goal is to organize, arrange, and prioritize the filming of scenes in the most logical and efficient manner, realizing that the order may need to be rearranged due to script changes, location restrictions, actor availability, or other factors. This first version of the schedule should be finished as early as possible.

Shot-by-Shot Schedule

Professional ADs are rarely given a concrete shot list in pre-production, so it is not common to schedule shoots based off of a shot list. However, FTV professors frequently require student Directors to produce a concrete shot list during pre-production. This gives student ADs the option to produce a shot-by-shot schedule. Scheduling based on shots rather than scenes can be helpful for keeping Directors on track and progress-oriented, but it is not required.

If you choose to schedule this way, you will first want to meet with your Director and DP to optimize your shot list for efficiency when shooting (i.e. minimizing camera setup and position switches). Begin the optimization process by, within each scene, grouping shots together that will have the same lighting set-up (i.e. coverage and inserts for one character, where the lights will not need to be moved to be out of shot). Then, within these groups, you will want to organize your shots by camera set-up (i.e. tripod, dolly, etc.) and angle (i.e. close up, wide, etc.). Once you have your shots reorganized, you can start to reorder them. **IMPORTANT:** when optimizing the shoot order, do NOT change the shot names, just their order. You may want to start with the master shot of the scene, or the shot with the widest angle that captures the most of the scene. If you are dealing with multiple camera setups, the shots that use the same lighting setup as this master shot come next. You will also want to work from widest to closest shot, with inserts last (since they can usually be captured while the crew is working on transitioning setups/scenes). If working with multiple setups, order from wide to close for each setup. Once you have finished this process for each scene, you have an optimized shot list that you can then use to schedule.

Finalized Schedule

Your finalized schedule will be informed by your location scouts, tech scout, Director feedback, and your shot list (if it is provided to you prior to the shoot). Based on the new information that has been provided to you, take another look at your tentative schedule and breakdown sheets. Does it still make sense to shoot the scenes as ordered? Has there been a location, cast, special equipment, or other major element change that will affect when scenes

can be shot? Is there a scene that, based on your conversations with the Director and department heads, will take drastically more or less time than you anticipated? Think through everything again.

The finalized schedule should have a concrete call time, a “first shot up” time (i.e. when initial set up should be done), concrete meal times, and “done by” times for each scene (i.e. when you absolutely need to be finished in order to have enough time to shoot everything in the schedule). If you are making a shot-by-shot schedule, you will also want “done by” times for each shot. Here is an example of a finalized shooting schedule:

Day 1: Call time 10:30pm, First shot up 11:30pm				
Time	Description	Page Ct.	Characters	Special Notes
10:30-11:30	SET-UP			
11:30-12:45	Scene 1: Diner - 7010 E Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85710	3/4	C, LE	
12:45-2:15	Scene 2: Diner - 7010 E Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85710	1	C, LE, LA	
2:15-3:15	LUNCH			
3:15-4:45	Scene 5: Diner (nosebleed) - 7010 E Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85710	1 1/8	C, LE, EX	
4:45-5:30	Scene 6: Diner Bathroom - 7010 E Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85710	1/8	C	
5:30-6:00	TAKE-DOWN			Total Pages: 3

Day 2: Call time 10:30pm, First shot up 11:20pm				
Time	Description	Page Ct.	Characters	Special Notes
10:30-11:20	SET-UP			
11:20-12:35	Scene 9: Diner (end) - 7010 E Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85710	1 1/8	C, LE, EX	
12:35-3:15	Scene 8: Diner (stunts) - 7010 E Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85710	1	C, LA	
3:35-4:00	TAKE-DOWN			Total Pages: 2 1/8

Day 3: Call time 2:00pm, First shot up 3:00pm				
Time	Description	Page Ct.	Characters	Special Notes
2:00-3:00	SET-UP			
3:00-4:15	Scene 3: Sybil's Store - 127 E Congress St, Tucson, AZ 85701	1 1/8	C, S	
4:15-5:30	Scene 7: Sybil's Store - 127 E Congress St, Tucson, AZ 85701	1 1/4	C, S, EX (1)	
5:30-6:15	CREW MOVE			
6:15-7:15	LUNCH			
7:15-10:00	Scene 4: Celeste's House - 49 E Adams St, Tucson, AZ 85719	7/8	C	
10:00-10:45	TAKE-DOWN			Total Pages: 3 1/4

Tech Scout

Tech scouts are immensely helpful to having a smooth set. The tech scout is where the production department heads (and 2nd AD if you have one), visit all shooting locations to discuss on-site, in advance, the equipment and personnel required for each scene to be shot there. This scout should take place about a week or so before the shoot, after initial location scout(s). The AD is expected to lead the tech scout with the Director (or sometimes without the Director, but with the DP), since they will have been on all previous location scouts and have discussed the project vision extensively with the Director. At each location, describe the action to be filmed and have the Director describe their plan for how they will shoot it, as this description often reveals technical issues not yet considered. If the Director is not present, make sure you and the DP have discussed with them how they plan to shoot, so you and the DP can convey that information to the crew. Also go through any notes you have from previous location scouts, as well as questions the crew will have about staging and setting up equipment. Each location will have its own specific conditions to consider. However, a list of basic questions to consider at any tech scout can be found in the Tech Scout section in the Appendices.

Production Meeting

As soon as possible after the Tech Scout, usually in the beginning of the week leading up to your project's shoot, a final production meeting should be scheduled. In attendance should be: the Director, Producer(s), ADs, DP, all department heads, and any other crew member who wishes to attend. The 1st AD will handle scheduling, communication, and lead the production meeting, since by now they know more about the show and filming logistics than anyone else. They have discussed the script in detail with the Director, gaining insight into their vision for the picture, created the pre-production and shooting schedules, and visited and inspected all locations. In the process, they communicated a massive amount of information to the crew. Now, it's time to go through the script and schedule in one final burst of double-checking to show the Director how ready everyone really is. To prepare for a production meeting, you will want to compile a slide deck with all relevant shoot information. Examples of completed

production meeting slide decks can be found on the Production Resources D2L site. This is the bare minimum information you should cover in the meeting:

- Introductions (around the table or room, confined to name and position on crew)
- Shooting Schedule
 - Dates and Call/Wrap times
- Breakfast
 - Whether or not it will be served
 - If no, make sure this is explicitly stated so crew does not show up to work without having eaten
 - At what time it will be served (minimum of 30 minutes before crew call, usually 45 min before call), remind that it is optional
 - Make clear that general crew call is the “go-to-work” call (unless specific crew is called earlier)
 - **Crew should not expect to show up at or after crew call and be able to sit around and eat breakfast**
- Location Details
 - When you will be there (days)
 - Rough location (cross streets is fine)
 - Optional: how far away from campus
 - Available parking
 - Carpooling (i.e. “reach out if you need a ride to set”)
- Health and Safety Reminders
 - Staying hydrated/bringing a reusable water bottle (especially with AZ heat)
 - Weather: if people need to bring something like sunscreen or jackets
 - Dietary restrictions: make sure production team knows about them
- Department check-ins
 - Status of shoot preparations for each department
 - Keep it short and sweet, if anything needs a long discussion, table it for after the meeting unless it affects the majority of those in attendance

- Any notes from the tech scout that need to be discussed
 - Encourage crew questions from the beginning of the meeting
 - Questions should be answered as quickly and concisely as possible. If you don't know the answer, and no one else at the table does either, then make a note of it and promise to get an answer and report to the questioner ASAP after the meeting
 - Again, if the question is highly specific to that person's job and may require significant time to discuss and answer, then table the question for after the meeting

You will want to share your slides with your Director/Producer beforehand so they can add any information they feel is important. Also make sure to test any and all equipment being used for the meeting in the specific meeting room ahead of time to eliminate set up problems that can eat into meeting time.

Call Sheets

The call sheet is the basic, "Plan-of-the-Day" document for each and every day of your shoot, regardless of whether it is 1st unit, 2nd unit, re-shoots, or scenes added in post. It is recommended, though not required, that you use the standardized call sheet template provided within this guidebook. The call sheet includes:

- Every person among the cast and crew needed for that day, plus every piece of equipment that isn't part of the normal filmmaking package (i.e. picture vehicles, jib-arm, special props, weapons, music playback, etc.)
- Specific times at which every person should report for work (which may be different than the general crew call for some individuals)
- The day's scenes in order, including set names, and the cast appearing in each scene
- Physical location data (i.e. address & contact information) for each set and scene
- A weather forecast from a reliable source, plus sunrise/sunset times

- A list of any extras (i.e. background artists and/or stand-ins) who will be needed that day, what time they should report, and where
- The nearest 24-hour emergency medical facility (not just the nearest doctor's office) for each filming location
- Breakfast start time (if being provided)
 - This should always be ready to serve 30-45 min before general crew call
- Scheduled crew lunch-break time, plus head-count if catered
- A timeline for the day's work (if required by the instructor) indicating by what time each scene needs to be finished in order to complete the day's filming within the allotted time frame. Otherwise this info is fine only being on the schedule
- A map for each location, physically verified by a production staff member prior to publication

The call sheet is usually drafted and distributed by the 2nd AD, with input from the 1st AD to decide call times. However, if the production only has a 1st AD, then they are responsible for drafting and distributing call sheets. The typical call sheet timeline for a production with both a 1st and 2nd AD is as follows:

- Each night, beginning two nights before the start of filming and continuing each night afterwards, the 2nd AD prepares the initial draft of the call sheet that will be finalized and distributed the following day, for work on the day after.
 - For instance, the draft for Wednesday's call sheet is created on Monday night for revisions and distribution on Tuesday.
 - This initial draft includes all elements except call times
- The next morning, 2nd AD takes the draft for the following day to the 1st AD, who reviews the work for accuracy, then decides and informs the 2nd AD of general crew call time, as well as "ready-on-set" times for actors in all scenes over the course of the following day.
- 2nd AD then consults and coordinates with Glamour Squad (hair/makeup/wardrobe) to determine what "report" time each actor should be given in order to be ready when required on set.

- Staggered report times may be required if multiple actors must be ready at the same time.
- Next, 2nd AD consults with gaffer and key grip or their “best boys” (i.e. second-in-command) to determine whether any of their crew will need a call time earlier than the general crew call time in order to accomplish major load-in or pre-rigging.
 - 2nd AD should also consult with the 1st AC in case special camera equipment will be used that requires extra assembly time.
- If breakfast is being provided on set, 2nd AD should consult with craft services (or other person in charge of catering that meal) to determine what their call time should be so that breakfast is ready to be served starting 30-45 minutes before crew call.
- Once this information has been gathered, the 2nd AD completes and resubmits the call sheet to the 1st AD for final approval.
- Approval might be withheld until later in the day if production is running behind (since there is the possibility of the next day's call-times being pushed later if today's work is not completed on time to achieve minimum turn-around).

Call Sheet Distribution

Call sheets can be distributed to crew via email or handout at the end of the day, or earlier if the 1st AD approves, as this gives crew an earlier preview of the next day's work. Actor call times need to be distributed more carefully. The worst thing that can happen on any film is for an actor not to receive their call time, not show up, and cause a production halt (as well as general panic). If you have a 2nd AD, it is their responsibility to ensure that all actors have their call times. If you do not have a 2nd AD, then that responsibility falls to you as the 1st AD. The AD (1st or 2nd) must receive confirmation from each actor that they have received and thus know their call time for the following day. This confirmation can be via a reply to an email, talking to the actor on the phone (not just leaving a voicemail), or by confirmation when the sheet is physically handed to them (not left on their chair or in their dressing area). If you are handing paper call sheets to actors, make a note of where and when it was given to them. Actors

sometimes lose or misplace pieces of paper and then claim to the Director that they were never notified.

An AD's Job on Set

As an AD, you (and anyone you may have in your department) are responsible for ensuring that everyone is where they need to be, doing what they need to do, when they need to be there doing it. Your goal is to ensure that the set stays as close to schedule as possible (and figure out rescheduling if something unexpected comes up during the day). Periodically check in with each department during set-up times: make sure they will be ready to shoot when you are supposed to go up for each shot and solve problems if they need more time. Don't be afraid to tell people they need to move faster, especially if they seem distracted. You need to find the best way to communicate with each Director with whom you work, but do not be afraid to tell the Director that they need to move on if they're going to get everything that's scheduled to be shot.

The AD can help move the set a lot quicker by making sure that the crew (except for the DP) leaves the Director alone so that the Director can concentrate on fine-tuning cast performances and planning their next moves. All cast & crew questions not requiring an artistic decision by the Director should go through the AD.

2nd Assistant Directors

2nd Assistant Directors are a 1st AD's best friend. Just as a good 1st AD will anticipate the needs of the Director and department heads, a good 2nd AD will anticipate the needs of the 1st AD. They are there as an assistant to the AD, acting as their eyes and ears away from the camera, and their legs everywhere. They keep the 1st AD informed about everything that is in progress but away from their line of sight, especially actor arrivals and preparations, dolly track being laid, getting actors prepared for stunts (such as driving a picture vehicle), etc. The 2nd AD is also in charge of drafting and distributing call sheets as described in the Call Sheets section above.

Other AD Set Responsibilities

Working with Extras

While student sets tend not to use extras because of the additional logistical responsibilities, they can add much-needed life to scenes that, story-wise, would take place in populated places. While the Director stages and works with actors who have speaking parts, the AD is in charge of staging everyone else. Hiring extras is not difficult as a professional AD, when you can simply call Central Casting (or similar agency) and request how many of what type of extras you need. However, student filmmakers lack the funds to pay extras or agency fees, so their unpaid extras must be recruited. Many times, extras will be friends of the cast and crew. And while free labor is always a plus, the AD must stay on top of who is being recruited. Get pictures and ensure that all the extras fit the look of the project in accordance with the Extras Breakdown created and described in the “Breakdown Sheets” section above. Make sure that you have contact info for any and all extras. Remember: ADs are responsible for everyone receiving their call time. Yes, even the extras.

Once extras have reported to location, but before they appear on camera (or before the shoot if possible) make sure you get photo releases signed. Make sure that all extras are kept informed once they land on set. It is important that they are told exactly where to go when, when lunch will be (if they are there for that long), where the restrooms are, where their holding area is (if provided), and that they cannot leave without telling someone. Otherwise, you may lose valuable time looking for them when it is time to stage their action and shoot.

It is crucial throughout the entire process of working with extras that they be treated with respect. Remember, they are not inferior to the cast/crew. Do not treat them as such. Also, as frustrating as it can be to organize a big group of people, refrain from yelling at your extras. If the set is so large that you need to shout to be heard, then get a megaphone and speak normally into it. This is not only the decent thing to do, it will give you better performances and make organizing them much easier.

If you are dealing with brand new extras, as is the case in most student films, you will have to walk them through the process of filming a scene, and their specific job. Let extras know

that in order to get clean sound from the actors, they will need to pantomime their speech if apparent conversation is part of their assigned action. However, remember to get a wild soundtrack of the extras just talking at different levels (low level, mid, and loud) so that it can be added to the background in post. Make sure that the extras are aware of set commands, specifically what is and is not for them, as well as that the scene is not over until the Director calls cut (so they need to keep acting).

Working with Children

Many film professors warn students away from working with children because of the restrictions on the length of their workdays. You cannot schedule children just whenever. Their work hours are strictly controlled, especially at night. See the UA FTV Safety Handbook, Section 20 “Working with Children and Minors” for specifics, but children are generally not allowed to work more than 8 hours in a day, and often even fewer. It is also strongly recommended that children are scheduled on weekends to avoid having to get written parental permission to skip school.

Minors under 18 must have a parent or guardian on set with them at all times. It does not matter if they can legally drive themselves or if the parent is comfortable leaving them by themselves. As the AD, it is your responsibility to ensure that the child does not work without the parent or guardian present, and that all rules regarding child actors are followed.

Working with Animals

Animals present both interesting opportunities and on set challenges. As rare as working with animals on student sets may be, it is important to know how to handle them in the event that a script you are working on calls for one. If you have the budget for it, trained animal actors will give you a better performance than a random cast or crew member’s pet. As with child actors, the FTV Safety Handbook, Section 19 “Working with Animals” will have more in depth procedures for using animals, but a couple basics to keep in mind:

- Keep all cast/crew except the animal handler and any actors that interact with the animal away from the animal at all times.
- Most animals are easily distracted, so minimize as much as possible the number of people on set.
- Always contact the American Humane Association, ideally before production begins, to describe the animal action, send a script if required, and request approval. AHA may, or may not, insist on having a representative on set during filming. Either way, their approval must be obtained before the animal(s) can work. While it is not the AD's job to contact AHA, it is their responsibility to make sure contact has been made (usually by the Producer), and to coordinate logistics if an AHA rep takes the opportunity to visit the set.

Set Safety

Set safety is a huge part of an AD's job as the 1st AD bears ultimate responsibility at all times for the safety of everyone on the set. Whether it is union contracts or, in this case, the University of Arizona's FTV Production Handbook and Safety Handbook, ADs will always have safety guidelines they are required to follow and enforce when dealing with scheduling and set conditions. However, since not every potential hazard or unsafe action can possibly be anticipated and included among any set of safety guidelines, a common-sense approach to safe practices must be required of everyone at all times. If you think it could be unsafe, it probably is, and should be treated as such.

Safety Meetings

One of the first things that should happen on any set day is the safety meeting, which is led by the AD, along with the Health and Safety Supervisor. This meeting should include ALL cast and crew that are called at the beginning of the day. You (or someone else you assign) will need to check in individually with any cast/crew that are called later than the general crew call. This first safety meeting should include:

- Known safety hazards inherent to the location (if there are any)
- Location of fire extinguishers and exits in case of evacuation
- Location of the meeting spot in case of evacuation (needs to be easily-identifiable)
- Any stunts or effects that will be involved in the first scene
 - stunts/effects not in the first scene will be addressed when you get to their scene(s)
- Questions

Successive safety meetings may be required later in the day if your crew moves to a different location, or if there are scenes later in the day with stunts or effects that will affect set safety. Each of these meetings should be led by the 1st AD. An appropriate crew member (i.e. stunt coordinator, props manager) will co-lead stunt- or effects-specific safety meetings to provide details based on their expertise.

Safe Scheduling Guidelines

While safety meetings and mitigation of specific hazards are important, the more general safety issues of cast and crew welfare deserve equal consideration. It is very important that any guidelines you are given are met or exceeded when creating shooting schedules and issuing call sheets. The last thing you need as an AD is an exhausted and overworked crew. Specific and more detailed guidelines can be found in the UA FTV Safety Handbook (linked above), but a few basics to keep in mind include:

- Total shoot time in any work day may not exceed 12 hours, and the total work day, including meal breaks, may not be more than 14 hours from the earliest time crew members are required to report until the latest time crew members are dismissed.
- There must be a minimum of 10 hours between the time a crew member is dismissed for the day and the time they are required to report the next day, although a 12-hour turnaround is strongly recommended.
- Productions filming on location more than 45 miles from campus are required to provide overnight lodging for all crew, and crew members are required to stay in the production-provided lodging.

There can, and most likely will, be times where other students will feel like the production guidelines need to be bent or broken in order to complete the project. Do NOT let this affect your scheduling or your supervision of the set. Remember, you are responsible for cast and crew safety. While the completion of the project to the best of your abilities is important, it never supersedes ensuring a safe on-set environment for your crew. Don't be afraid to put your foot down, even to student Directors or Producers, about matters concerning set safety.

Health and Safety Supervisor (HSS)

The HSS is in charge of making sure that everyone on set is following health and safety guidelines and is generally taking care of themselves, and works closely with the 1st AD to ensure that the cast and crew are balancing efficiency with safety. The HSS is not a medic, but they are often in charge of ensuring that the cast and crew have easy access to health materials like a first aid kit, masks, hand sanitizer, etc. On set, the 2nd AD or Producer is often assigned as the HSS. The 1st AD is not permitted to fulfill the role of HSS.

Appendices

Tech Scout Questions

- Location of power: outlets, breaker box, how many amps the circuit breaker can handle, who is in charge of breaker maintenance (just in case! Film equipment takes a lot of power)
- Which way the location is facing: this affects where natural light will be at different times of day
- Room dimensions (if shooting inside): how you set up lights and the boom mic will be affected by how much space you have in the room. You may need specialized equipment depending on these measurements

- Parking and staging areas for crew and equipment: people need to know where they can set up so the beginning of the day is less chaotic
- Fire control systems: what type of system is in use (including the type of smoke detectors), locations of fire extinguishers. This is especially important if production is planning on using things like haze or atmosphere spray that could potentially set the detectors off
- Cell reception: student sets can often get away with not using radios because of the size of their sets. However, if the location does not have reliable cellular reception, radios will need to be checked out and used. This can also affect communication with professors while on set
- Water: does the location have water refill stations or will additional water jugs/ water bottles need to be provided?
- Plan for inclement weather (if shooting outside)
- Any ambient sound that could affect shooting, and the plan for working around it (ex. Turning off AC system because it's loud)
- Where craft services will be set up
- "Green Room": where the actors (and extras if present) will relax between set-ups
- Location time restrictions (especially when shooting in a working business establishment)
- Traffic: where it is (street and walking/hallway depending on location), can it be controlled
- Maintenance: will there be someone on hand in case of problems with anything not functioning properly (lights, doors, etc.)

Useful Set Terms

Points: said when a crew member is carrying something that is pointy or otherwise hazardous if someone were to run into it

10-4: a term of acknowledgment to something that is said. Used most often with radios/walkie-talkies

10-1 or 103: alternate terms crew will use to refer to a bathroom break/run

51: said when a crew member is on their way (ex. I'm 51 to your location). Used most often with radios/walkie-talkies

Audition (something): switch between having a piece of equipment on or off (or there/not there) to decide whether or not it should be used in the shot

Hollywood (something): to have a crew member hold a piece of equipment by hand instead of placing it on a stand. Usually called for when the equipment has to move during the scene or when the placement of the equipment cannot be accomplished without someone holding it

Blank Resources

All paperwork shown in this guidebook is FTV standard. Blank, editable versions of all paperwork (mentioned or shown) can be found on the FTV Production Resources D2L site.