

Overview of Role

The first assistant director (1st AD) plans the practical elements required for filming on any given filming day, balancing the director's wishes and the production's resources. 1st ADs compile the shooting schedule, working with the director, producers and other heads of department to ensure an efficient shoot. In pre-production, they break down the script, analysing it for the requirements needed in terms of cast, supporting artists (SA), special requirements (eg SFX, Stunts), special equipment (eg cranes, Steadicam, etc.) and each department. They lead reces, going off to locations to assess how they will work practically and creatively for filming. They write the shooting schedule and work out how long each scene will take to film. During filming, 1st ADs manage the set, which leaves the directors free to focus on achieving the performances and the overall look they intend for the project.

Core Responsibilities:

These core responsibilities are provided as a guide and are not exhaustive. The exact responsibilities in a particular job will vary depending on the scale / period / budget band / genre of the production.

1. Production planning

- Allocate sufficient time to each stage in the production process to enable objectives to be met and for effective use of resources
- Identify the major responsibilities, sequences and likely duration of activities and tasks to deliver productions within budget and on schedule and to raise when this may not be met within the believed time
- Collaborate with other departments to determine the main elements and timescales required to meet the production's requirements
- Develop plans and schedules, using production planning methods appropriate for the type of production
- Identify factors which are likely to cause delays to production activities, making realistic contingency plans to deal with any delays which may arise
- Use appropriate tools to devise shooting schedules
- Check that production plans and schedules are accurate and contain essential information
- Present clear plans and schedules in appropriate formats
- Confirm with relevant colleagues that production plans are fit for purpose
- Suggest realistic solutions when difficulties in implementing plans are identified
- Confirm that schedules take into account health and safety of cast and crew
- Discuss and agree realistic alternatives with colleagues when proposed plans are likely to exceed budget, or when departmental requirements exceed artistic or technical limits
- Verify with appropriate people that necessary permissions and clearances have been obtained
- Record any problems or difficulties identified with the use of each location in line with production procedures
- Note any climatic, physical, environmental, access and health and safety factors likely to affect the use of locations
- Identify the number, types and sequence of locations required for productions

- Recommend contingency arrangements to cover extremes of weather or non-availability of certain locations
- Break scripts down to ascertain production needs
- Plan and schedule pre-production activities to meet production requirements
- Lead production meetings and technical recces to meet requirements
- Supervise the implementation of pre-production activities against plans

2. Health and safety

- Approve appropriate risk assessment documents in tandem with the producers
- Monitor the production's health and safety and ensure regulations are being followed
- Raise concerns and suggest alternatives where something is unsafe
- Ensure that appropriate measures are raised in risk assessments
- Be aware of the ongoing departmental risk assessments during production to meet production requirements

3. Select crew, suppliers and supporting artists for the production

- Provide advice to production teams regarding children's working and tutoring hours
- Communicate changes to scheduled activities to all relevant people without delay
- Interview and select proposed assistant directors (ADs) that have availability and suitability to meet the department's requirements
- Estimate the number and types of SAs needed for production with relevant people before the second assistant director (2nd AD) takes this over
- Identify the timing and duration of scenes and sequences from shooting scripts and schedules
- Negotiate and agree the final number of SAs you can have in line with the budget
- Monitor crew and suppliers' performance and put processes in place to improve performance where standards are not being met
- Establish communication systems which enable the efficient flow of information

4. Coordinate cast and crew during productions

- Coordinate relevant information for call sheets
- Maintain constant communication links with the production office in line with production requirements
- Negotiate with cast and crew about tasks above and beyond their regular duties in line with production requirements
- Prepare and implement plans to ensure that long-term scheduling needs are on target

5. Assist management of production filming

- Keep the production and relevant people informed of shot progress, and of any potential delays and changes to schedules
- Relay clear cues as directed to artists
- Make sure background action is set up as directed
- Coordinate other AD team members on set, giving instruction or delegating supervision of relevant tasks to meet production requirements
- Give relevant departments advance warning of location and set moves and wrap
- Ascertain in advance if crew need to be unobtrusive and plan how to ensure this happens

6. Manage daily shooting schedules on productions

- Plan the day's shoot to allow for contingencies and options
- Review arrangements and make adjustments to better meet production requirements
- Keep the production and relevant people informed of shot progress, and of any potential delays and changes to schedules
- Manage the shoot to ensure the best use of time
- Ensure that production targets and deadlines are met
- Communicate with all relevant departments on a regular basis
- Deal with urgent matters when they occur and in collaboration with appropriate production personnel
- Ensure that overtime is discussed with producers, line producers or production managers when it is likely to be incurred
- Confirm that all relevant information has been included in the call sheet and further revisions are passed onto cast and crew at appropriate times

7. Control shooting activities for productions

- Agree and confirm production goals with directors and heads of department at appropriate times
- Discuss and agree best methods to realise creative vision with director and heads of department
- Hold regular production meetings as needed, and manage recce discussions and outcomes to ensure creative vision is met
- Identify potential risks to cast and crew's health and safety and take appropriate measures
- Communicate all health and safety procedures to cast and crew at the start of each day to meet organisational requirements
- Document and distribute relevant risk assessments to all crew members before shooting commences
- Confirm smooth communication between all cast and crew
- Resolve technical problems as they occur, and achieve satisfactory results in collaboration with others
- Ensure that the director's requirements are met by delegating tasks to appropriate people during shooting
- Brief the production about on-set requirements for next day's call sheet at appropriate times
- Identify potential causes of delay to schedules, and suggest and organise viable solutions
- Monitor on-set activity to ensure the efficient use of resources
- Alert producers or production managers to any problems which may have serious implications to production schedule or budget

8. Monitor and control the progress of productions

- Agree with relevant people that planned schedules are realistic and achievable using information gained from technical recce
- Identify possible problems, and plan for identifiable contingencies
- Identify the reasons for, and suggest realistic solutions to, any discrepancies between actual and planned progress
- Notify appropriate colleagues of changes to production schedules without delay

- Respond to disputes or communication issues between cast members or crew and try to resolve them unless above-the-line intervention is needed
- Maintain an ongoing awareness of post-production schedules

Role Specific Skills:

- Plan the workflow in combination with other departments to develop a realistic shooting schedule
- Networking and liaising with other departments, working closely with heads of departments, 2nd and 3rd ADs
- Provide production personnel with up-to-date information on production activities
- Assist with management of the set, studio or location of the production

Other / Transferable Skills:

- Communication: interpreting other's requirements and communicating department requirements to staff and colleagues
- Teamworking: collaboration within own and with other departments
- Negotiation: balancing the various needs and working practices of all on the production and finding the way to collaborate effectively
- Research and analytical: planning practical requirements against brief breakdown and production vision
- Problem-solving: contingency planning and resolving issues so that productions remain on schedule
- IT skills: using Microsoft Office packages and bespoke production software, such as Movie Magic Scheduling

Attributes:

- Resilience: adapts to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met. Proactive and explores new ways of working which will enhance and deliver the best results for the production
- Productivity: organises work effectively and achieves required results within deadlines. Demonstrates the drive and energy to get things done in pressurised situations and escalates appropriately when necessary
- Ethics and integrity: honest and principled in all of their actions and interactions. Respectful and inclusive of others, and meets the ethical requirements of their profession
- Flexibility: willing to both listen and learn and to accept changing priorities and working requirements, while at all times maintaining high standards in a constantly changing production environment