

Your guide to onboarding Trainees

This is a training module from the ScreenSkills 'From Script to Screen' programme.

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Module content

This is a handy best practice guide for anyone asked to support a new entrant on their first placement.

This short guide is here to help ensure the placement goes smoothly for everyone involved. Whether you've done this before as a Supervisor or HOD – or if it's your first time – these tips can increase the chances of success for the Trainee and for the production.

First, your Trainee needs all the relevant information about the role, well before they arrive. We're talking about their pay, their working hours, where they'll be based, and so on.

Even if you weren't responsible for these arrangements and negotiations, make sure this information is clear to them. Supervisors should discuss access needs with them.

They'll also need to know where to go on day one – including pick up spots, if applicable – and who they'll meet when they arrive.

This is a good time to think about assigning an ally who can give them advice, especially during those intense first few weeks. That could be someone who's just stepped up from being in their position, who will have a better sense of what they need to know.

On their first day, the immediate supervisor should meet with them, in case that person isn't you. And if possible, they should meet with their department HOD too.

Make sure the team or department they'll be working with knows that they're coming, and that they understand the Trainee's role. It's also helpful to inform the Cast and Crew about the Trainee programme.

In that first meeting, aside from welcoming them, it's good to invite them to tell you about themselves and what they're most looking forward to in the role.

Tell them a little about the production – how it works, the hours, what a typical day is like – but you don't need to go into too much detail. They've got a lot to take in.

Perhaps the most important thing that you should convey on that first day is what their role is, what responsibilities they'll have, and what you expect from them.

Putting together a simple training plan with goals can be very helpful to both them and the team, so that everyone knows what to expect.

There's a short checklist with a basic template that may help. It's available in PDF table format from [this ScreenSkills web link](#), or you can [go to a text version in this document](#).

Being super-clear about expectations and responsibilities on both sides is the key to success.

And on day one, introduce them to the rest of the team – especially their assigned ally. That can be informal. If you don't have time to do everything yourself, then you can ask someone in your office or the Production Office team to get involved if they have the time.

If you have Production HR or a Trainee Supervisor on the production, they can be good support too.

Whoever's paired with the Trainee, they should encourage them to ask questions – and make sure they know how to get support from the wider department and you. There should be one supervisor in charge of them who helps ensure the success of the programme.

During the first few weeks, remember to set check-in meetings more frequently with your Trainee so you begin to develop a good working relationship.

And if possible, have a more formal meeting with them early on to check to see how they're doing and if they have any issues or concerns.

Keeping in touch with them through regular one-on-one meetings throughout the placement helps to fix any issues that might arise.

Each time you meet formally, you can revisit the training plan and note the Trainee's progress. During those meetings, it's useful to ask questions like...

- "How's it going?"
- "Are there any difficulties?"
- "What feedback are you getting?"
- "Do you have any feedback that you'd like to share?"
- "How are you working towards your goals?"
- "Do you need any additional support?"

Try to give them a chance to talk openly and to bring up anything they need to discuss. Aim to fix any issues they're having if possible.

Eventually, when the placement comes to an end, the two of you can evaluate results at a final meeting. Before you meet them when the placement is almost finished, it's good practice to ask for feedback from the team they worked with:

- What did they do well?
- How could they improve?

In that last meeting, you can discuss what they've achieved, if they've met the goals, and what feedback they might have for you. You can also advise them on possible paths to their next job or Trainee experience. This is the time to complete any final surveys and paperwork that may be needed.

Update the training plan, and give them a copy so they can evaluate their progress and continue to develop their skill set as they move on to their next job.

These best practices can help ensure that every placement is a constructive experience for both the Trainee and the production.

Hopefully, you've set them on a path to continue building their competency and skills.

This is the end of the content. Keep reading to find the basic onboarding checklist mentioned earlier.

Basic onboarding checklist

The points in this document are intended as a checklist for new Trainees. You can think about each of them and (where appropriate) consider whether the answer is “yes” or “no”.

These links are for navigating within the checklist:

- [Title: Basic onboarding checklist](#)
 - [Section A: Preparation prior to Trainee day 1](#)
 - [Section B: Day 1 for the Trainee](#)
 - [Training and development plan for placement](#)
 - [Section C: During the training programme](#)
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Section A: Preparation prior to Trainee day 1

As Supervisor, you may have looked after a Trainee before. You may also be the HOD and be looking after the whole department. This checklist is here to help ensure that key essentials are covered both before and during your Trainee’s placement. Use it as a guide; so that with clarity and communication, the Trainee can engage in their ongoing development and with time become an asset to your team and the production.

Ensure that you check with the team/production, that the Trainee has been sent all relevant information and started the documentation. (For example, details around pay, working hours, additional support for other expenses such as wet weather gear and where they will be based)

Check whether they have identified any particular access needs/accommodations.

Do they know where to go on day one and is someone there to meet them?

Schedule a meeting with them on their first day – as their immediate supervisor, this is vital. If you aren’t the HOD of the department yourself, it’s important to also fix an introduction between the Trainee and HOD.

Ensure the team/department they will be working with knows that they are coming and clarify their role within the department. It’s also helpful to inform the cast and crew about the Trainee programme in the production.

If possible/applicable, it's a good idea to invite a former Trainee who had the same role to act as an 'ally' and give them advice, especially in the first few weeks which are usually very intense.

Section B: Day 1 for the Trainee

It's recommended that as their immediate Supervisor, you host a meeting with them, welcome them, invite them to tell you about themselves and what they're looking forward to. Tell them a little about the production - how it works, hours, what a typical day should look like, but don't go into too much detail as this production is new to them.

Be clear about their role and responsibilities and what you expect from them during their placement. Don't forget this is a training initiative, so it's important to give them room to ask questions as well as make mistakes so that they can learn from them.

It is important to create a simple training plan with goals, so that you can measure their progress from the start of this programme. Below is a template you may wish to use - you can fill it in as you talk with the Trainee.

Ensure that you invite them to ask questions and make sure they know where/how to get support - both in regards to you, as well as the wider department/team.

Introduce them to the rest of the team/department, including their 'ally'.

Training and development plan for placement

Start of the programme: Outline the Trainee's skills and experience right now.

Identify any key areas to focus development and/or support: What does the Trainee hope to achieve/learn/experience? What do you as Supervisor hope they achieve/learn/experience?

During the programme: What feedback are you giving the Trainee?

During the programme: What feedback are they giving you about the programme?

During the programme: Are both of you meeting your initial expectations?

By the end of the programme: What are their goals/ what does success in this role mean for them?

By the end of the programme: What does success in this role look like for you as Supervisor?

What is the provisional date for your next catch up?

Section C: During the training programme

It's good practice to sit down formally with the Trainee to see how they are progressing and to check if there are any issues which need addressing. It's best to do this within the first or second week. Informally meet with your Trainee when you can so that you begin to develop a working relationship together. This could be as informal as having a coffee together.

Ensure that regular meetings are in the calendar throughout their placement. Make sure to get feedback from those they're working with most closely. During the meetings, revisit the training plan, to ensure that you can measure their progress, and make some notes. The conversation should include:

- How is it going from their perspective?
- Are there any difficulties?
- Constructive feedback from their supervisor and/or HOD?
- Encouraging feedback that the Trainee might want to give
- How are they working towards their goals/milestones?
- Anything else they/you wish to bring up
- Any additional support required

Section D: At the end of the training placement

When their programme comes to an end, you'll be able to evaluate the results. Before the final meeting, ensure you have feedback from the team that they worked with on what they did well and any areas of improvement.

Revisit the training plan you created, and use it to guide the conversation and update it accordingly:

- What have they achieved?
- Feedback from HOD (if not you)
- Have you both met the goals you set for the placement?
- Where is there room for improvement for any future placements they may secure?

- Would they be hired again in your view, or might they need some additional training before moving to the next step in their career path?
- Discuss potential further opportunities, what are their next steps careerwise
- Any final questions / feedback they wish to share

Complete any final surveys and paperwork, give them a copy of the final training plan, so they can evaluate for themselves, their progress and use this to continue to grow and develop their skill set.

This is the end of the checklist and the end of the document.