

Set etiquette

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

The text includes multiple choice questions for you to answer. Each question is identified with the words 'Multiple choice question' and finishes like this:

Question end

That's so you can stop and think. Each question end is followed by the correct answer or answers, and feedback.

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Section A: Introduction

So you got a chance to go on the set? Lucky you! I'm Najwa, and I'm your guide to set etiquette – or setiquette! Even if you think you'll never put a foot on the set, you actually might at some point. It's really exciting when you're on set, especially for the first time, and it's normal to have lots of questions about how to behave.

By the way, I'm a Production Runner, also known as a PA or Production Assistant, and if you want to ask about anything, then someone doing my role is a good place to start.

Remember, everyone on set is here to enable the Director to lead, and the cast to bring their scenes to life, to the highest standard possible. Just so you know, we all follow the same rules to get the best content we can. And that includes safety on the set.

Section B: Preparing yourself to go on set

Let's see how you get on in a few different example scenarios. In each case, pick the right thing to do.

Don't worry if you don't know an answer – this is an opportunity to practice so you'll have the right answer when you need it.

Multiple choice question. Let's start with your very own Pre-production. Which type of shoes are you going to wear?

- A. High heels
- B. Sneakers or trainers
- C. Open-toed sandals

Question end

Out of this list, the correct answer is B. Picking the right footwear will keep you safe. There are lots of cables, heavy objects, and trip hazards on set.

Always pay attention to safety instructions, and watch where you walk.

Think about your clothes as well – you need to dress flexibly and appropriately. Pay close attention to the weather!

Multiple choice question. You've been given a call time of 8 o'clock. That's when you're needed on set. What time do you arrive?

- A. 7:45
- B. 8:00

Question end

It's A. In our business, being on time means being early. Being late can impact the production in any number of ways. By arriving early you'll have even more chances to absorb everything that's happening. Plus, you'll make a great impression.

Multiple choice question. On set, which mode is the right one for your phone?

- A. Normal
- B. Silent
- C. Airplane
- D. Off

Question end

The correct answer is C or D. Turn it off or use airplane mode. As you learned in the last set of modules, so much time, effort, people, and money go into a shoot that you don't ever want to be the one to ruin it! Even silent mode can interfere with the sound on the set.

Section C: Where to go on set

Multiple choice question. You're outside the sound stage, and there's a red light flashing next to the door. Is it OK to go in?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Question end

The answer is B – no. You can't go in. If you're filming in a stage facility, often there will be a red light outside and a bell rung inside, meaning recording has begun. Wait until the light goes out before you set foot inside, or you might ruin a take.

If you're filming in places other than a sound stage, listen out for the 1st AD calling: "Picture's Up" or "Rolling". When you hear that, stand clear and wait to hear "cut" before doing anything.

Multiple choice question. The 3rd AD has asked you to look after a light so nobody trips on the stand or cables. You're out of view from everyone else. Is it OK to drink the coffee you picked up earlier?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Question end

The answer is B. No. Never! Don't do it. Yes, there's plenty of food and drink available while you're shooting, but it doesn't belong on the set. Liquid can wreck electrical equipment and food can stain props.

If you've got a job like this, where you're just out of shot, make sure you know where the edge of the frame is, so you don't end up in the shot.

Monitors on a hot set are for the Director, Producers, and HOD's, so don't hang out by the monitors or block the view of any of them.

Section D: Know who to talk to (and when not to)

It's best if you strive for the perfect balance of alertness, standing by, active listening and not getting in the way.

Multiple choice question. You need to speak to a member of your department on set. Is it OK to talk to them between takes?

- A. Yes
- B. Maybe
- C. No

Question end

The correct answer is B. Maybe. It depends on what's going on.

It's OK to ask questions within your department – “where should I put this?”, “can I help?” – but once the 1st AD is rehearsing with the cast and Director, you need to be quiet. It's very distracting for actors to work with conversations going on, and if you talk during a take, you will ruin the sound.

Also, remember that the boom mics are very sensitive. They'll pick up everything, even a whisper.

Multiple choice question. Whilst we're on the subject of talking, is it OK to talk to the cast?

- A. Yes
- B. Maybe
- C. No

Question end

It's C. No, you shouldn't talk to the cast. If they talk to you, be polite. Do your job and let the cast do theirs. And never ask for a photo or autograph.

Here's something else that's really important: NO SOCIAL MEDIA.

No taking or posting pictures, no video. NEVER! Everything on the set, and wherever you work for that matter, is confidential. That's in your contract.

The consequences of social media posting can be major. Massive disruption to the shoot. The project – or your involvement – could be terminated. Just don't do it! Really, it's not worth it.

And while we're on that subject, don't discuss your work with friends and family either. Confidential means CONFIDENTIAL!

Multiple choice question. Ok, you know we're nearing the end of my questions because this next one's about Post Production and VFX.

Imagine that you work in one of those departments. You're not normally on the set, but today you've been asked to visit to deliver a message to the DIT. How are you going to find them?

- A. Shout "where is the DIT?"
- B. Speak to an Assistant Director
- C. Wait quietly and hope someone notices you

Question end

The correct answer is B. Of course you need to remember everything I said earlier about talking – but the right choice is to speak to the on set AD.

If you're not sure who they are, they're usually very visible – look for someone with a radio and a clipboard. Ask the first person you meet and they'll point you in the right direction.

And if you're given a radio of your own, make sure that you know how to use it before you start pressing buttons. Obviously, don't swear or hog the channel. Talk to the on set runner or PA for a quick radio tutorial.

Multiple choice question. The take's finished, and we're turning around – that means repositioning the lights and cameras ready for the next set-up. Do you join in and help move everything?

- A. Yes, 100%
- B. Yes, if that's my job
- C. No

Question end

The correct answer is B. Be keen but cautious. As much as you'd like to help, don't touch anything unless you're instructed to. But never touch props or set dressing unless you're supposed to. They might break easily, and they often need to be left exactly as they are for continuity reasons.

Section E: Listen and be proactive

So, in conclusion, you can really stand out by LISTENING to what's going on and by being proactive. Be alert, stay aware of events, and have a can-do attitude. That's how to be as productive and helpful as possible without getting in the way.

And here's a pro tip. Make sure you look at the contact list, and always keep a copy of the callsheet on hand, so you know who's who and what's happening.

As you learned in the last set of modules, there are so many different skills, processes and equipment that come together on set to get content made. And of course, it's already taken a huge amount of Pre-production work to get everyone here. Each step has been meticulously planned. It's an amazing collaboration. And now you're a part of it!

That's everything for now. Trust me, you'll love the experience. And remember, it's always OK to ask questions, as long as you pay attention to what's happening and pick the right moment. So go and enjoy your time on set!

And that's the end of this module. This was created by ScreenSkills.