

Overview of Role

The props master (PM) runs the property department which makes, stores and transports the props, and prepares the props for each day's shoot. They work with production designers (PD), set decorators (SD) and art directors (AD) to confirm the props that are needed. They carry out research and then draw up properties lists, deciding in consultation with the set decorator, which are to be hired and which are to be made. They create a dress and strike schedule to share with location and construction departments. Where props are to be made, the props master recruits the carpenters, artists and props makers, and manages the schedule for production. Where props are to be hired, the props master works in collaboration with the production buyers to source them. When shooting is finished, the props master returns all hired props and organises the sale or safe disposal of everything else.

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 / budget band / genre of the production.

1. Interpret the brief and prepare the props plan

- ☒ Create a props breakdown from the shooting script
- ☒ Establish lines of communication across the team
- ☒ Create a budget to cover costs of the props department and share with other relevant heads of department (HoD), including unit production manager (UPM) / line producer, supervising art director, set decorator (SD) and financial controller
- ☒ Create a dress and strike plan outlining all props crew requirements for dressing, running and striking all sets and locations
- ☒ Distribute the plan and schedule to relevant HoDs (supervising art director, UPM), team members, and revise in line with any schedule changes
- ☒ Liaise with the SD and PD to ascertain prop requirements, including practical props, props to be made, and any SFX equipment that is required
- ☒ Attend art department and technical recces to calculate props and personnel requirements for each shooting day
- ☒ Liaise with the art department, inputting information into the location intentions for the production, or ensuring props coordinator is undertaking this work
- ☒ In the absence of a SFX team and an armourer, work with production to identify responsibility for SFX and weapons
- ☒ Ensure that any required permits have been obtained for dressing and shooting on stages or in locations, such as hot work permits

2. Plan the activities of the props department

- ☒ Identify and arrange the set-up of a secure prop room with sufficient office, kitchen and storage space
- ☒ Create and provide a safe and appropriate environment for teams to work in
- ☒ Identify, source and buy sufficient consumables, kit and resources to meet the requirements of the production

- ☒ Ensure all team members have access to their own kit, and monitor consumable levels throughout the production
- ☒ Liaise with the stores team to ensure that sufficient transport and drivers are identified and allocated for the duration of the job within the agreed budget

3. Obtain props to meet production needs

- ☒ Consult with other art department heads to confirm which props are required and when, and confirm the schedule for any makes
- ☒ Liaise with the action props buyer (APB) and asset coordinator when working with product placement, and inform production of any cost implications
- ☒ Liaise with the SD around specific buying or hiring purchases as required, identifying impact to budgets and schedule
- ☒ Identify likely sources of hire / supply of props and negotiate with them as required and in consultation with decision makers
- ☒ Communicate with other departments on a regular basis to confirm that props will be available as per script and schedule requirements
- ☒ Ensure that costs for the purchase of tools, materials and consumables remain within budget. Liaise with the financial controller and production for sign off before expenditure
- ☒ Ensure all paperwork for props hire, purchase and delivery are accurate, recorded and maintained
- ☒ Liaise with APB and / or props coordinator to ensure any specific permissions have been identified, checked and acquired
- ☒ Present props to key production figures for sign off ahead of the shoot

4. Plan and monitor the manufacture of props

- ☒ Liaise with the PD and SD, to ascertain which props require making, how this will be achieved, and confirm budget and schedule requirements
- ☒ Liaise with other departments, suppliers or manufacturers to identify the prop requirements for each scene
- ☒ Consider requirements of the prop and identify the most appropriate approach to making
- ☒ Consult with the props modeller to prepare estimates of the materials, tools and equipment needed to manufacture props, and liaise with production when confirming budget
- ☒ Confirm the availability, safety, and security of manufacturing facilities
- ☒ Obtain materials and make supply arrangements, so that manufacturing can be completed to the agreed deadline
- ☒ Monitor, review and manage the prop making teams effectively to ensure work is completed to a high quality and in line with the budget and schedule
- ☒ Ensure that all details of specific makes are recorded and progress is communicated to all departments
- ☒ Identify factors affecting quality, output and the overall schedule and put contingencies in place

5. Prepare and maintain props

- ☒ Ensure that all props required for the shooting day are on the standby truck, and that all dressing is in place and signed off
- ☒ Handle and store props with care, ensuring that props are protected and ready for use, particularly those which have a high worth

- ☒ Check that props are in working order and safe condition for use to protect yourself and others from danger
- ☒ Recognise props that have been damaged or are malfunctioning, take action and consult with senior members of the team for guidance and sign off
- ☒ Liaise with the stores team to ensure all paperwork is amended to reflect revisions
- ☒ Ensure that any props not in use are ready to be dressed or used on set and are working, and appropriately stored until required
- ☒ Respond quickly, efficiently and safely to requests to modify or repair any props required on set
- ☒ Confirm the arrangements for modifications and repairs when these cannot be carried out on the set
- ☒ Handle and store consumable props in line with legislation, hygiene regulations and protocols
- ☒ Ensure that the props room and truck are kept clean, tidy and organised throughout the shoot
- ☒ Return props and other materials to suppliers, hirers, or storage in the agreed condition accompanied by the relevant documentation
- ☒ If there is no armourer on set, ensure the props teams understand and follow all protocols for using, transporting and storing weapons for the production
- ☒ Confirm procedural details with an armoury company to ensure protocols and legislation is complied with
- ☒ If there is not an armourer for the production, inform police authorities when transporting and using weapons on location

6. Oversee and strike dressed sets

- ☒ Monitor and update the dress and strike document to ensure there is sufficient crew and resources to meet the demands of the strike
- ☒ Liaise with other HoDs and departments around the scheduling of set strikes; adding any new information into plans and communicating to the wider team
- ☒ Obtain strike notices or clearances relevant to each set before commencing a strike
- ☒ Liaise with chargehands and the assistant props master to ensure that all required tasks have been allocated and clearly communicated
- ☒ Obtain packing materials, and arrange transport to meet strike deadlines
- ☒ Carry out the strike tasks in the correct sequence to ensure that the work is completed to strike deadlines
- ☒ Ensure all set dressing is removed, packed, labelled and made ready for pick-ups
- ☒ Work with the stores team to ensure that all props listed are present and returned
- ☒ Identify and separate items no longer needed from those still required on the production
- ☒ Confirm that the stores team have noted any damage to props and have liaised effectively with prop houses and owners as to whether they can be replaced or repaired
- ☒ Monitor the stores team to ensure all props are packed appropriately and ready to be moved as per the strike schedule
- ☒ Confirm that all props are labelled, packed and handed over to the props drivers for the most expedient, safe and secure drop offs
- ☒ Work with the props team and production to store items carefully in a secure environment as required
- ☒ Ensure all documentation is available to provide ease of access for future shoots
- ☒ Work with asset coordinator and the props team to identify which props can be recycled or disposed of, and ensure delivery to agreed organisations or places

7. Wrap sets when production is complete

- ☒ Check the strike and wrap schedule and make revisions to plans to accommodate any changes to the timeline
- ☒ Consult with other departments as required on strike schedule and obtain any pertinent information
- ☒ Liaise with production and the assets team to determine which items are to be returned, stored or sold at wrap
- ☒ Ensure there are photographic records of all items and liaise with stores to ensure that all documentation and assets are accurately catalogued
- ☒ Ensure dressing teams have access to sufficient and appropriate packing resources and are in budget
- ☒ Implement special arrangements for packaging and protecting high value and fragile items
- ☒ Ensure that those props no longer needed are separated and disposed of, returned or recycled
- ☒ Complete all wrap documentation on schedule
- ☒ Arrange for any assets not being kept (or deemed as lost or damaged), to be sold as required
- ☒ Monitor the storage of all props for future use to ensure their condition is maintained; providing information on where props are for future access
- ☒ Follow procedures for addressing malicious damage, theft and missing props and inform production at the earliest opportunity
- ☒ Ensure all permissions and requirements for carnets of props being shipped overseas are accurately completed in line with current regulations

8. Comply with health and safety requirements

- ☒ Work with the production's health and safety team to develop comprehensive risk assessments for working with props
- ☒ Follow manual handling lifting techniques and arrange suitable collection for large props
- ☒ Behave responsibly in hazardous working environments, such as prop making workshops, and follow procedures on set
- ☒ Work in compliance with health and safety legislation, regulations, and protocols and ensure the team complies

9. Manage the work of teams

- ☒ Identify crew requirements based on the scale of the production
- ☒ Identify and hire crew, liaising with the production team for contracting to be completed
- ☒ Negotiate rates for the team with the production manager or line producer and communicate when crewing up
- ☒ Liaise with the SD to agree line management responsibilities for additional teams, for example, action props buyers, drapes, home economists and florists
- ☒ Check that all members of the team understand the requirements and specific activities they are responsible for
- ☒ Supervise and manage the teams working within the props department
- ☒ Create and maintain a productive working environment
- ☒ Monitor and review the work of the stores, dressing, standby, action props, modelling, painters and props electrical teams, assistant props master and coordinator providing feedback as required

- ☒ Monitor crew and suppliers' performance to ensure that contract terms are being fulfilled
- ☒ Provide advice and guidance as appropriate to enable work to be completed
- ☒ Confirm any individual access, inclusivity or welfare needs within the team and be responsible for making sure those needs are met
- ☒ Allow team members to flag any challenges to the schedule in advance so as to allow possible changes to be made
- ☒ Ensure that timesheets, cost reports, contracts and other required documents are completed accurately and submitted to production as instructed and required

Role Specific Skills:

- ☒ Oversight of the props department and the day-to-day requirements of crew members, both from within the department, and those from other relevant departments such as set dressing, props manufacture and stores
- ☒ Script breakdown and interpreting the props requirements
- ☒ Negotiate with suppliers and makers to keep the budget in line and timelines on track
- ☒ Liaise with the PD and SD to provide props and materials for each set
- ☒ Create and nurture a productive department and a network of trusted dailies who can be bought in as the schedule requires

Transferable Skills:

- ☒ Communication: interpreting other's requirements and communicating requirements to other departments and colleagues
- ☒ Leadership and management: lead the props team, uphold ethics and maintain respect when dealing with others. Support and encourage junior members of the team
- ☒ Team-working: collaboration within own and with other departments, liaising with the set decoration team, suppliers, and stores teams
- ☒ Networking: investing time in networking activities, building a network of business contacts and establishing rapport with others quickly and effectively
- ☒ Problem-solving: contingency planning and resolving issues so that productions remain on schedule

Attributes:

- ☒ Resilience and enthusiasm: adapt positively to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met. Proactive and explores new ideas and non-standard 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 and has the flexibility to maintain high standards in a changing production environment