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# The Production Assistant's Pocket Handbook

Because nobody has time to tell you  
what you need to know

By Caleb Clark



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## **Dedicated to all kick-ass P.A.s**

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## INTRODUCTION

Think of it, to try and make movie. What a crazy idea! This handbook is designed to give new Production Assistants (P.A.s) an edge in the insane world of movie making.

Some of the advice you are about to read may sound a bit crazy, but keep in mind what is supposed to be accomplished in the production of a movie. Think of hundreds of people working double shift days, six days a week, for several months to gather enough content for editors to take yet more months to cut down to less than a couple of hours of finished content!

Like a painting, a movie is a single piece of creative work, but while a painter holds his brush with one hand, the director of a movie must sit back and paint his picture with a hundred-plus people holding the brush. Passionate artists, dedicated craftsmen and money-minded business people are thrown together into a pressure cooker of profit motives and rushed production! It's a crazy idea from the get go. But it's also a wonderful idea and after 100 years or so of trying, it seems to be the only way to make most kinds of big movies, not to mention big computer games.

Over time, trial, and error, the incredibly complicated nature of this kind of creative teamwork has resulted in new, and sometimes unusual, ways of getting work done. There are new words to learn, and strange ways of working together that can seem like a cross between a military campaign and group art therapy.

The rarified nature of movie production makes it very hard for people to teach newcomers how things are done. There just isn't time or money for apprenticeships, or practice. You've got to learn on the job, and literally, on your feet.

When I was a P.A. I remembered thinking that someone should take some notes so new P.A.s could get up to speed quicker with fewer stupid questions and mistakes. To be sure, many things can't be taught from a book, but some things can.

I took notes as I worked on several big location shoots, some low budget movies, and commercials. I used the notes as a foundation for this handbook and let friends in the business read drafts to make sure I wasn't out of my mind. I've also updated the handbook every few years with feedback from people in the trenches.

The creative process is wondrous for me, especially with more than one person. Imagine trying to tell a story in a huge group! If you're a P.A. that's what you are helping to do, and storytelling is not trivial work. Storytelling is a vital part of how we humans learn. It has been around for a long, long time, and we will always need good stories to learn by. So good luck out there! I hope you help tell good stories and have a lot of fun.

## THE BASIC IDEA IN LOTS OF WORDS

P.A.s do everything nobody else wants to do. It is an entry-level job, in other words – You're in the proverbial mailroom, digging ditches, washing dishes, making copies, and entering data. So don't kid yourself, you're at the bottom, baby! But the good thing about the bottom is that there's only one way to go from there: up!

Like all entry-level jobs, the object of being a P.A. is to work yourself out of the job by making yourself too valuable to be kept in the entry-level position. Being a P.A. is also a weird test with only one question; Are you willing to become the best P.A. you can, even though you know that you won't be a P.A. for long? The logic behind this is that the people above you have paid their dues and proved their passion, (to themselves, not just to others) and they expect you to do the same.

The other side of the coin is that a good P.A. is very valuable because there is *nobody* else to do the job. Therefore, take pride in all the little demeaning tasks you will have to do. Take the job *seriously*. Be honored and happy to get coffee, and remember who likes three sugars. If you are an exceptional P.A., you will get promoted very quickly, and the coffee will come to you.

Work like you are at the top. You are an indispensable part of the production team. If you ever want to

become a rabble-rouser and prove this to yourself, just get all the P.A.s on a production to suddenly disappear and watch as everybody panics! Or maybe just think about it, rather than doing it, so you do get promoted.

But promoted where? The production department is the logical answer, the place where production coordinators, assistant directors, producers and executive producers hang out. However, being a P.A. is a great way to see what all the different people do on a film crew and find your place. To do this, keep your eyes open for what specialty you were made for by monitoring what you do well naturally, and want to do more of.

Movie production teams are made of (mostly) specialists; this is where the most jobs are. As a friend of mine once said, find out what you love to do, get really, really good at it, and work with others who've done the same.

## THE BASIC IDEA IN FOUR WORDS

These letters conveniently spell “**S.T.A.R.**” Fitting for the business. I know it's cheesy, but so are some of my favorite movies.

**SWIFT:** Traversing space or performing movements in a brief period of time. Acting with readiness.

Prompt. In other words, boogie. Run to your car. If someone asks for a 3/8-inch bolt, say "No problem," and leave at a brisk gallop. Don't ask what it's for, or what it is, or where to get it. Just leave and find a Grip to help you.

**TACTFUL:** A quick or intuitive appreciation of what is fit, proper, or right. Skill in avoiding what would offend or disturb. Considerate. Basically knowing when to keep your mouth shut and smile, and when to add a bit of valuable input. When to be where you're needed, and when to leave when you're in the way.

**AWARE:** Conscious. Cognizant. Alert and informed. Always pay close attention to how you are affecting others. Read the call sheets so you know what is supposed to be happening. When things get hectic, take a deep breath and don't panic.

**RESOURCEFUL:** Capacity for finding or adapting. Skill or ingenuity in meeting any situation. Versatile, and devious. Try to think of solutions to problems, even if they are not yours. Carry a Swiss Army knife, have a good hat, backup power and a rain slicker.

## SET ETIQUETTE 101

Never.  
Sit.  
Down.

P.A.s can't sit down because your job is to be ready to help anyone and everyone do anything, all the time. In the rare times you are unoccupied, you should stand, alert, with good posture, hands out of pockets, looking for something to do.

If you're not immortal, and you have to rest now and then, make sure to do it in a quiet out-of-the-way place that's within earshot/radio, but not eyeshot, of those who will call you.

Pick a time when you know that the chances of your being called are the slimmest, then check your radio if you have one, and relax. Someone will call you within 98 seconds; it never fails. So it's best to learn how to stand up and look alert while you're really relaxing.

## SET ETIQUETTE 102

### Communication

### Communication

### Communication

Good communication skills are the most powerful skill in the world of production. Learning how to use language in-person, on the phone, and online is a foundation skill for becoming a great P.A. In general, *be aware of how you sound, be careful, and don't assume.*

Good communication is hard. Bad is easy. It's easy to irritate other people when you are stressed out, go beyond your jurisdiction, or assume someone might not have understood you.

You will have to communicate in order to do all manner of strange tasks. Once I was suddenly told to quickly find a two-foot slab of fresh flank steak. "Well, that's interesting," I thought. "What in blue blazes *is* a flank steak!?" It turns out that flank steak is a piece of meat that is cut so that it is great for simulating muscle tissue, which makes it perfect for simulating flesh being stabbed in a horror movie. I called a local supermarket, worked my way politely and politically through to the meat counter, and told my story well. The butcher hooked me up with a huge flank steak that was wrapped and priced by the time I got there.

You may also have to schmooze the local business owners on new locations. Whenever you contact new businesses, locations, or groups, etc. make sure to *get the names of the people you contact*, and give them your name. Then write them down. This saves time when you or someone else calls them back and gets your name out there as the go-to person.

You also might have to find famous/obscure people by surfing the Net and working the phone, or locate people in the town in which you are shooting. For these tasks remember that before the Web, computers and cell phones, people managed to make movies and do all manner of other cool things. Remember that there still might be phone books around (gasp!) in print. And maybe even phone/operator information could help. Then there's always a trip to the local café, bar, local market bulletin board. There are cops, mail carriers, hair stylists, and bums who know the town.

Sometimes it's a good idea to chat up locals and give them some interesting (and cleared by the production office) information and stories about the shoot. It's exciting for some people when a movie comes to town, and if they have some inside scoop, they will be more likely to help you when you need it later on.

Here are some tips. For fun, I'm going to use Hollywood script format for dialog from now on.

## CHATTY P.A.

Hello, my name is Caleb Clark. I'm a production assistant on a movie we're making in town and I was wondering if you could help me?

So what? Sounds simple. But notice that you've given your name *first*, and not asked for their name, which is a common mistake people make. If you've stated who you are, what you do, and asked for help; you've shown them respect and empowered them.

Be polite above all. You're on their turf and they have what you need. Movie folk can easily be perceived as snobbish, holier than thou, and too cool for school. Don't run into a market all hyped up and interrupt the cashier. Walk in, wait your turn, buy something, then ask your question. The same goes for a local dive bar, where some of the best information is often known. You can dash in and ask, but it's better to walk in, buy a something, and then ask, chat, leave a tip, and bolt. You will get better information, and the ability to get more information later.

I have found that people at small businesses tend to help you more than employees at the big chains, who often commute and don't know the town they are in, or where anything else in the area is, and don't care. Small businesses, on the other hand, survive on their own merit and are totally dependent on every local customer. If the big stores don't have a 3.5-gigawatt phase two-turbo infusion pump, call Joe's Hardware

and humbly ask for help. You'll find that they might have one, get one, or tell you where to find one.

## **THE UNIVERSAL RESPONSE**

I once worked with a seasoned First Camera Assistant (the person who focuses the camera or "focus puller") nicknamed "J-Gor." J-Gor was the kind of guy who would drink all night, make every morning call, and be able to gauge distance to within half an inch at 100 feet. One late night on some errand I found him at the hotel bar hamming it up with the locals. He spied me leaving and waved me over.

SLURRY JGOR

Caleb! Sit. Drink this.  
Don't mind these other  
people; I have something to  
tell you. Do you know what  
the universal response is to  
any human utterance?

CALEB

Um...

BLURRY JGOR

Nope, it's not "um."

A great Dolly Grip told me what I'm about to impart to your young, and probably undeserving ears, and I'm going to tell you because I like you.

(puts hand on Caleb's shoulder, stares intently)  
Are you ready? Wait. Drink this.

CALEB

(wincing)  
What was in that!?

MAGNANIMOUS JGOR

The universal response to any human utterance is, "I understand." It works anytime, like right now for instance. Try it!

CALEB

I understand.

RANTING JGOR

Yes! Ok, lets test it and you'll see. Try with a soft tone this time. Caleb, I think I love you.

CALEB

I understand.

SERIOUS JGOR  
OK, with competent gusto.  
Caleb, why don't you direct  
this shot?

CALEB  
I understand!

Test it out for yourself. I haven't found any other two words that cover as many situations.

One last communication tip: always call the production office before you return from an errand to make sure nothing else is needed.

### **COPY?**

Never assume that a message has been received. The author George Bernard Shaw said, "The problem with communication is the assumption it has been accomplished."

Communication on the set is as crucial as in a war. In fact you'll notice a lot of similarities between a set and a military camp (except the death, guns and bad food.) In both there is a very specific management hierarchy, heavy stress, everything is mobile, there are lots of walkie-talkies, strange language, vehicles, technology, travel, long hours in alien territory, people you don't like but have to rely on, and the food is cooked for you.

When people ask for something, make sure you understand or can find out exactly what it is they want.

It must be understood by person X that it is understood by person Y, so that both parties understand that both parties understand. Copy? When someone asks for a small flying saucer with one fake blue alien, repeat it to him or her, in full, every word while you make eye contact. It sounds silly. It feels silly. But it works.

### **THE CAMERA**

Treat it like a loaded gun. Never walk in front of it, even if it's not rolling. And if it's not even turned on or crewed up, stop before you walk in front of it and take a close look around to make sure it's not being remotely used.

Never touch the camera. In fact, don't even go near it without permission. Treat it like a very angry and hungry lion that has a loaded gun.

### **REMEMBER PEOPLES' NAMES**

Not only the key to politics! It's an important part of being a good P.A. One way to remember people's names is to immediately repeat their name out loud back to them when they introduce themselves. This helps you get used to saying it and confirms that you got the pronunciation right.

Carry a crew list, or ask other people what someone's name is before you call someone "dude" in a weak attempt to hide the fact that you have no idea what their name is.

Write down the names of people you might deal with again on a 3x5 card you keep in your back pocket.

Production is about interacting with people. Remembering names lets people know that you respect them, and that they are memorable.

### **ANTICIPATE**

Anticipating what people will need can save you a lot of energy. It's the difference between figuring out what someone is sure to ask for and going to get it at your own pace, or suddenly being told to run and get it as soon as possible.

### **RUN IF ANYBODY IS WAITING**

It's fine to walk briskly if nobody is waiting for you and you aren't supposed to be doing anything else, and it's a nice sunny day, and you're relaxed, and the shoot is going as smooth as glass. Yeah, that'll be the day! And notice I said, "walk briskly." You never amble, cruise, saunter, lollygag, or stroll. Ever. If people are waiting for you make sure to hustle. On a set, you don't want to actually run—there are too many things to knock or trip over and it stresses people out—but you do want to *jog carefully* if people are waiting.

### **NEVER SPEND YOUR OWN MONEY**

You should never have to spend your own money for anything the production needs, even if the company

says it will refund you later. If you are asked to do this, say that you don't have any money on you. The only exception would be if you judge the situation to be an emergency and you trust that the production company will pay you back.

### **SAVE ALL RECEIPTS**

Save receipts or anything remotely connected to the production, such as gas and supplies.

### **ASK**

Always ask before touching someone else's personal equipment. Err on the side of asking if you feel even the slightest tickle of an instinct that you should.

### **MEALS**

A film crew works on its stomach. Films usually have good healthy food, if they're smart. But you are low on the hierarchy, and low in line rights for this food. Don't panic. You have rights to eat and you will, just not first. Do not cut in front of crew. Let them in front of you if you already in line. There will be plenty of food. Some productions may not follow this etiquette, but the most diplomatic way to find out is to follow it until told otherwise.

## SECURITY

You may be asked to watch valuable equipment, sets, vehicles, or other gear. Your job is simple.

1. Never leave your post unmanned, not even for a nanosecond.
2. Do not fall asleep.
3. If anything happens, *do not try and be a hero*, just follow Set Etiquette 102 and communicate using your radio or your phone depending on the situation.

For example, say you're watching huge grip trucks and it starts to rain, but you can't reach the truck doors to close them. You'd jump on the radio and ask what to do. If an armed gang surrounds the truck, resist the temptation to fight them off with a C-stand and just call 911. Remember: you're working *on* a movie; you're not *in* a movie.

At mealtime P.A.s are sometimes asked to cover for regular security or drivers while they eat. Your food will be brought to you, you guessed it, by a P.A. Or a P.A. friend of yours may need food brought to them. It's a good idea to volunteer to bring food to P.A.s guarding stuff because it is a great way to build solidarity and friendship with other P.A.s.

## **RESPECT**

Respect other departments' contributions to the production. There's nothing worse than a pompous P.A. who thinks that because he/she is in the production department he/she is better than other crew.

You may run into Teamsters, for example. The Teamsters is a union, and Teamsters are involved in some productions, most often as drivers. They may tease you, in a sporting, initiation kind of way. However, as with everyone, *do not* disrespect them. Stand up straight, be humble, ask a few questions, and generally keep your mouth shut until you get to know them. Most often their bark is worse than their bite.

## **DON'T GET INVOLVED**

Stay away from set soap operas, politics, and gossip. These things are dangerous and can get you fired no matter how good a worker you are. It's best to listen to everything and tell nothing. Besides, if people know you keep things to yourself, you will get to hear all the juiciest secrets.

## **NEVER BECOME COMPLACENT**

People will not usually tell you if you are doing a mediocre job, they will just never hire you again. This is why it's a good idea to ask your superiors if they are happy with your work and if there is anything that you can do better. Always try to do things better and faster

than the last time. Try new ways to do your job, and learn about other jobs.

### **HELP THOSE IN NEED**

Never stand by idly while somebody is doing anything, anywhere. Offer help. Stand by. Look sharp.

### **THE NEAREST HOSPITAL?**

The Production Coordinator should know this, but if you know, it will save time if someone gets hurt. In addition you should know where the nearest grocery store, hardware store, gas station, and print shops are located.

### **CARRY BACK-UP CONTACT INFO.**

Carry the key names and contact info of the cast and crew. You may lose your phone, far from home, when alone, on the roam, and have to use another's phone. As Yoda might have said, "if you have backup numbers, resourceful and prepared you will be known as."

### **CHECK IN OFTEN**

When you are off the set for any length of time, check in often. Calling every 30 minutes is a good rule of thumb. When you return from a run it is sometimes good to check in and see if anyone needs anything

else. This prevents the acute paranoia syndrome that sets in when people can't find a P.A.

## **RADIO ETIQUETTE**

You may be given a radio. After you have learned to make machine gun and ocean sounds with it by cupping your hand around the speaker and distorting the static, after you have done several cop and military impersonations and learned to quick draw it off your belt, and after you have approved how your ear piece looks in the mirror...you're going to have to actually talk to people with it. And not only that, you're going to have to communicate clearly.

The most important thing to understand is that radios are not telephones. When you talk on the telephone you can hear both people talk if they talk at the same time. The radio, on the other hand, will block out one person if both talk simultaneously. This means that one could say, "Rolling," and if you called at the same time you would not hear him/her and he/she might think that you had, which could get sticky. This is why radio users have developed strange protocols such as "Roger" and "Copy" and have to take a lot of deep breaths.

Radios usually use rechargeable batteries that clip onto the bottom of the radio and have a headset or ear bud of some sort. Make sure that you have a fresh battery or that you know where the extra batteries are.

Batteries should be drained before they are charged and they should be charged every night.

If you are within earshot of the Assistant Director (A.D.) so you can hear him call that the take is over, turn off your radio while the camera is rolling. It is very embarrassing to ruin a shot, especially if the set is locked down and you were the one who told everyone to be quiet! However, make sure to turn equipment back on after the shot ends, because it's just as embarrassing to have to say, "Well, I guess I must have been walking around with my radio off." On remote lock downs in the hinterlands of outer-bumble land, leave your radio on so you know when the take is over, when lunch is, and if the crew forgot you and headed home.

Try to think of yourself as something between a truck driver and an air traffic controller. Here are a few of the most common examples. Responding to calls using your name

Always respond with, "Go for (your first name)." If you say something like, "Yeah, here," you could be anybody with a radio.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Steve!

EXCELLENT P.A.  
Go for Steve.

## RESPONDING TO COMMANDS

"Copy" is used to make sure people know that you heard and *understood* them. Silence just makes everybody nervous.

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR  
If you make it out of that  
town alive with our lunches,  
radio in about a quarter of  
a mile out.

EXCELLENT P.A.  
Copy.

## CHANNELS

Radios have several channels. The A.D.s will usually determine which department is to use which channel. For example: Production staff on Ch.1. Transportation on Ch.2. You should always be on the same channel as the Production staff unless otherwise instructed.

On the main channel for production-related communication, keep it short. Often you will hear something like:

OBSESSIVE A.D.  
Come in Sharon?

SHARON  
Go for Sharon.

OBSESSIVE A.D.

Go to 6.

SHARON

Copy.

A.D. and P.A. change their radios to channel 6.

OBSESSIVE A.D.

Sharon?

SHARON

Go for Sharon.

OBSESSIVE A.D.

Blah, yadda, nit, pick, hem, haw, nag, banter, repeat.

*Make sure* you switch back to the channel people expect you to be on when you're done. Trust me. I've done you the favor of testing this theory out. Hanging out on channel 6 all day would be a bad, bad thing to do.

## **RADIO CHECKS**

The radio check can be helpful if, for example, you were told to guard a generator from the local wood nymphs. Say you've been standing by the generator for two or three days, looking sexy like only a P.A. can as you wait for a wood nymph to show up. Suddenly it occurs to you that you've not heard any radio traffic for a while. This would be the time for a radio check.

It's much more dignified than saying, "Is anybody out there?"

SEXY P.A.

Steve here, I need a radio check.

RANDOM CREW

Copy on that Steve.

## **BATTERIES**

Also called "bricks," because of their size and weight. There will usually be a P.A. who is chosen to be in charge of bricks. They will make sure they are all charged at night and that there are charged bricks on set. Try to become this P.A. It's a step up in responsibility. But either way, it's a very good idea to carry around a few charged bricks so you have them when someone runs out.

## **"10" RADIO LINGO**

You'll run into radio lingo on the set based on the "10" lingo from Citizen Band (CB) lingo used by truckers. The best-known example is "10-4," which is the same as "copy."

Another popular bastardization on the set is "20" from "10-20," which is related to location, as in, "What's your 20?" "My 20 is..." and, "Anybody have a 20 on?" You may also hear people use "10-1" or "10-100" for a bathroom break. Hopefully, "10-200" is obvious...

Each show will have a different radio language, so you will have to adapt as you go. Remember the basics above and you will never—OK rarely—sound like an idiot.

## **LOCK - DOWNS**

Lock-downs are a common P.A. job. Your mission will be to guard the perimeter of the set from interruptions that would ruin the shot. Usually you will be given a radio, some water and 2 days' worth of food. You will then be sent to a position near some kind of entrance to the set. You are to report back to your A.D. when you arrive in position. Then wait for the cue, "Rolling!" and yell it out loud and clear, making sure that anybody in your area can hear you. Now you are "Locked Down."

Once you're locked down and the camera is rolling, use the hand signal for rolling to tell any approaching people to stop, be quiet, and refrain from passing gas loudly. The signal for rolling is pointing your index finger straight up and twirling it.

This signal will work for crew. For 99.9% of the rest of the world you will just look like a sleep deprived crazy person twirling their finger in the air. If you're locking down with public nearby, such as a city street, try tiptoeing at a gallop to the offending philistine and tackling them. If you can't tiptoe at a gallop, try

waving at them to get their attention and then "shushing" like a librarian, or pray really hard.

When the take is done, the A.D. will yell, "Cut," and maybe "Going again real soon," or "Break for 5," etc. Repeat what you hear loud and clear so people know what is going on.

### **STUNT/STAR CROWD CONTROL**

During big stunts, or if a star needs room to work when there's a big crowd, you may be asked to help with crowd control. You will probably be told to stand in a line with other P.A.s or block a sidewalk or the like. I have a P.A. friend whose first stunt control duty was during a very cool car chase scene. During one of the takes he glanced over his shoulder to try and catch a glimpse of the action. The A.D. saw him do it and he got a quick and angry talking to. The main thing to remember when you are assigned to crowd control is that no matter how cool the stunt, or attractive the actor, do not look at them. Stay focused on the crowd and keep people from sneaking or wandering across line you are holding.

## TALKING TO THE PUBLIC

When you are on location, interactions with people who aren't part of the production can get strained. You will be dealing with people who, strangely enough, might not care that you're making a movie. For example, they might not like being told to be quiet. *Be polite.* Ask them if they wouldn't mind being quiet for a few minutes; explain why. In this case, getting into a noisy confrontation would defeat the purpose of your mission. In general avoid arguments by taking a deep breath and asking for a minute to talk to your boss.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

Loose lips sink ships. The Hollywood-smitten public will ask you all kinds of questions. Refrain from what might be your gut instinct, such as:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY – WEST VILLAGE –  
NIGHT

3am and Bleeker Street is lit up to look like daylight by huge movie lights on cranes four stories high. Tired set P.A.s guard the block ends. People in the city that never sleeps walk by, stop, and look.

CURIOUS PERSON  
You shooting a movie?

TIRED P.A.

(to self)

No, we just like to play  
with huge lights at 3am you  
idiot!

(out loud)

Yes.

CURIOUS PERSON

Cool! What's it called?  
Who's in it?

Now here's where you've got to be smart. You've GOT to have asked your bosses what you can tell the public before this moment (they should have told you anyway.) If they didn't, do not say ANYTHING, except something polite like, "I can't really say, or I'll get fired." Or "I might be able to get you a phone number to find out."

## **TALKING TO THE PRESS**

DON'T. Do Not. No. Shhhhhhh. Mum. Zip it. Run Away! And be wary of tricky press folks who may seem like the public. They've been known to hit up deliriously tired P.A.s and trick details out of them.

## **RUNNING TALENT**

"Running talent," means shadowing cast members (sometimes including even the elusive Hollywood Star!) and knowing where they are and what they are

doing so people can use you as a middleman to communicate with them. The first step is to find them and introduce yourself; tell them who you are and that they should find you if they need anything. I know this sounds like chaperoning, and in a sense it is. The actors' state of mind is very important to the production. They need to stay focused and be kept calm, and that means sending a *neutral* P.A. to relay information.

When running talent or dealing with them in any way, it is your responsibility to make sure that they are content (within reason). If actors get pissed off they will waste incredible amounts of time and money. If production people find out that a P.A. pissed the actor off, they will descend upon that P.A. wrathfully.

Fortunately, there is the 5th amendment of the P.A. constitution, otherwise known as the "don't kill the messenger" amendment. Take the P.A. 5th whenever things get tense with an actor. It will put you and the actor on the same side, both being enslaved by the evil unorganized production people. Both of you are in utter disbelief that they want *another* take, O the incompetence!

## **GRIPS AND GAFFERS**

You might be asked to help the Grips (construction-ish folks) or Gaffers (electrician-ish folks) out. You will most likely pick up heavy stuff, haul it, and put it down. Or you will coil large, heavy, dirty, electrical

cables that were, in a past life, mal-adjusted Anaconda snakes. As soon as you start these chores you are under the Grip or Gaffer's rule. This area of film production has the sharpest tools and highest amperage (the type of electricity that will kill you) equipment.

Listen to your new bosses; do things exactly the way they tell you to. There are reasons you may not understand at first for the way things are done, so just do what they tell you and figure out why later.

Use gloves if you have to, but don't keep them unless you want to be a Grip or Gaffer! I remember the first time a Gaffer asked me to help coil cable. I was handed a pair of leather gloves, and the end of a huge cable that seemed to disappear over the horizon. I was then shown how to coil it properly (not as easy as it sounds) and left for dead. After eventually winning my battle with only minor injuries, the Gaffer came back and inspected my work.

GRIP

Pretty good. Why don't you keep those gloves, you earned them.

SUCKER P.A.

(chirping naively)  
Gee, thanks!

I proudly put the gloves in my back pocket for all to see and sped on through the set.

I'd walked about two feet when another Grip asked me to help haul a million pound light. When I was done with that a Gaffer had me wrangle 387 C-stands. I barely made it back to the production department by dinner.

At dinner outside in the beautiful desert of New Mexico where we were shooting, I told my story to the crew at the table. When I was done the experienced crew laughed and told me that the gloves were a trap! Grips, Gaffers, and anyone in need of work that required gloves could see my gloves sticking out of my pocket a mile away! It was like having an "I love hauling really heavy stuff and cable wrapping" sticker on my back. The next day I gave my gloves to a fresh P.A. who said "Gee, thanks!" and proudly put them in their pocket for all to see.

## **MISTAKES**

You *will* screw up. What's important is how you handle yourself after it happens. A parable if you will: Once upon a time deep in the woods of New England I was up to my thighs on a big location shoot. My proud mission was to catch plastic rats as they floated out of the frame line. More importantly though, three other P.A.s and myself were told to act as Rat Life Guards for the four real rats that were also floating down stream past the camera on each take. The animal control people were watching to make sure we didn't lose a rat downriver. The rat wranglers (who also did the rat makeup to make them look dirty—got

to love Hollywood) were the first line of defense, and we valiant P.A.s were the last.

I was tired (excuse), the bugs were thick (excuse), and I was watching the shot because rats swimming in a river are a funny sight (excuse). While we were rolling I mistook a plastic rat for a real one and jumped into the shot!

The director screamed so loud I fell into the river trying to jump back. Later, when they had the take they liked, I went straight to the director, dripping wet, to be fired. I figured since I was definitely out of a job, I might as well be honest and brief.

WET P.A.

I'm sorry I spoiled your shot. I'll be leaving now.

DIRECTOR

(laughing)

It's OK, we got the shot on another take. You don't have to leave, just don't do it again.

I was lucky he was in a good mood. But mostly, I was lucky I took full responsibility with no back talk and excuses.

The first time that I got to temporarily direct a 2nd unit shoot we were doing insert shots with an anamorphic lens. On one of the shots the First Assistant Camera (First AC) forgot to do a crucial effect with the lens. This was of course discovered

months later while we were editing. After seeing that every take was useless the director looked at me and said, "What happened?" I immediately blamed the First A.C.; after all he made the mistake. The director just shook his head and waited, staring at me. I then said that I was sorry. I meant to say that it was *my* fault. This brought a smile to the director's face, and he said that it was fine, he could work around it.

What I learned from these two experiences is that you *never make excuses* when you screw up. Look everyone in the eye and take full responsibility.

And as you climb the ladder and get more responsibility, you have to take the heat for mistakes that the people *below* you make. Remember, it is your fault if you were the leader, so take full responsibility and apologize. It is a signal to those above you that you can handle responsibility.

## **DRIVING**

You should be able to drive all types of cars, light trucks and big vans (at the very least). When you drive on runs, get to your destination as fast as you can without endangering your license and job or your life and the lives of others.

When you drive, the key is to drive *smoothly*. Braking and acceleration should be like butter. Jolts and chaos make people nervous and that's not good on top of the general anxiety any film production naturally

produces. When driving cast or director/producer bigwig types, pretend you are a professional limo driver. Drive as if all your passengers are drinking full glasses of gin and tonic. That means smoothly accelerating, smoothly cruising, smoothly stopping. The big cheeses are often on edge all day, and the last thing they need is for some P.A. to do things that make them nervous.

Be sensitive. Your passengers might need to think in silence, read, talk on the phone, or want to talk. *Don't talk unless they start it*, and be brief. It's a nice touch to get to know the car's stereo system, so you can call up any kind of music they may want to hear.

Driving with production people is crucial, since they will be evaluating you for future driving missions. When the big stars or directors need a ride, they will pick the P.A.s to do it; and that will put those P.A.s in contact with people who can quickly promote them.

It may sound like we're getting trivial, but I have witnessed people being slowly pushed out of the business for little trivial things like braking too hard repeatedly. People won't tell you that you stab the brakes too much; they will just never give you driving jobs. When done wrong the little things are like bees: one is hardly a bother, but a hundred can kill you.

## **GETTING A JOB**

The business, by its very nature, is a catch 22: you can't get a job without experience, and you can't get experience without a job. Therefore the only way to break into the business as a P.A. is to get somebody to give you a chance to prove your abilities. The positive side of trying to find a P.A. job is that usually good P.A.s get promoted quickly and bad P.A.s get fired, so often there are a lot of open positions during the entire making of a film.

## 1. FIND A PRODUCTION

*Variety*, *Backstage.com*, and the *Hollywood Reporter* all have sections on current and/or future productions. Your state film commissions have Web sites that usually list what productions are coming to town and when, as does sites such as *TheFutonCritic.com*. There are also job boards online such as: *Media-match.com*, *FilmStaff.com*, *ProductionHub.com*, and *EntertainmentJobs.com*. These sites are sure to come and go over time, but by searching the Web for discussions and links on the subject, you should always be able to find reputable sites to use.

While the Web can be a powerful tool in finding productions, in-person communication is the most powerful and memorable way to make an impression on a production whenever you are able.

## 2. MAKE FIRST CONTACT

Drop by the production office in person if you can, you don't need an appointment or clearance usually. Production offices usually are set up well in advance of shooting and don't mind people stopping by to drop off resumes. Bring a hard copy of your resume and walk into the office. Now the walk into the office is a little more complex than one might think. If I had to use one word, it would be "gently" but what does that mean? It means to me that you take a moment to scope out the office from the parking lot – is it busy? Is the front door chaotic? Then you walk up slowly

and confidently, keeping to a safe side of any hallways so as not to bump anyone. You listen for arguments or chaos and wait for it to pass if you hear it ahead. You enter the production office with resume in hand, back straight, bright eyed and bushy-tailed, but nobody's fool. Wait to be noticed, keeping out of the way of traffic and work. If you see anyone struggling with a task, you now know what to do! Offer to help. When they ask you why you are there, simple say you want to be a P.A. and help them make a great movie, or something catchy like that.

The production office usually acts as a home base for a production. The set, meanwhile, often moves around to different locations. Sometimes you can also find out where productions are shooting and stop by the set. This is sketchier than going to the office, so be careful. Security may stop you. If they do, just tell the truth and they may take your resume and pass it on. If you get on a set, ask around and try to find an A.D., a Unit Production Manager, or the Production Coordinator or Production Office. Production people *always* need help. If you can get your name and offer out before they cut you off, you might start working before you can finish the sentence. If this happens, don't ask any questions; just work hard and wait until the end of the day to see if you're really hired and what the pay is.

If you're far away from the production you want to work on, get a contact person's name, number, and email. Then draft a short email with your resume—both in plain text in the body of the email, and as an

attachment (to make *sure* they can read it). Send the email, and then call to notify them that you sent it.

### **3 . BE PERSISTENT**

Productions usually accept unsolicited resumes, but that will probably not be enough to get you hired. If you wait for someone to call or email you back, you will go insane and those around you will get tired of you paying more attention to the phone than to them. Call the production company often. Push it to the edge of harassment. A once a day, "Just checking on that job, sorry to bother you," will work. Keep it up until you sense annoyance in their voices, and then lay off for a couple of days. Keep calling and asking politely until you get a "Yes" or a "No!" answer.

Offering to work for a week for free on your first shoot is a move that some will debate. I think it's a great move if at all possible. The money you lose will be offset by the increased chances to get a paying job. Offering to work for free shows dedication not related to money, and there's a good chance you will get paid soon after you start working. Sometimes production companies just want to see if you're good before you add to their paper work by signing a contract. Besides, you always get good food and it's hard to spend any money when you're busy 90 hours a week.

### **4 . LOOK THE PART**

Prepare before you go near a set or production office. Wear clothes that make you look like you already work

in the job you want. If you want to be a set P.A. you'll be doing everything, so try to look like you can do *everything*, from picking a big star up at the airport, to picking up branches in the woods. Try clean jeans or shorts, running shoes or day hikers, a nice clean T-shirt, a rugged jacket, a backpack or metal clip board with your resumes in it, a hat or slicker for the sun and rain, etc. Look low maintenance and prepared for blizzards, droughts and cocktail parties. (See the checklist near the end of this handbook for other essential tools of the trade.)

## **TYPES OF P.A.S**

However, not all P.A.s dress or even act alike. And while all P.A.s relay information, help wherever needed, run errands, drive, organize, lock down, etc. On a big shoot there are subcategories.

- **Art Department:** Props and set dressing. Are you a Prop Tart? Look it up.
- **Location:** Assists in management of locations, including scouting (fun!), securing, mapping, photographing, etc. Dress: Rugged clean out doors and ready to schmooze public.
- **Office:** In the production office. Feel the power! Rise quickly and follow the money. Miss all the grueling fun on the set. Avoid the bugs. Dress: Not as rugged as the set, but still ready to get hands dirty.
- **Paper.** Call sheets are your friends. Scripts, shot sheets, invoices, you do it all. You will compile, copy, check, distribute, take down, and never be

seen wincing from a paper cut or fumbling for a copy. Dress: Not as rugged as the set, but still ready to get hands dirty.

- Second Unit. Can be a great gig! Often get to travel and do higher-level jobs due to the much smaller crew size and mobile nature of 2<sup>nd</sup> units.
- Set: Does it all on the set, baby! Where the action is. The few, the proud, the sore heeled. Best job for seeing how a movie is made and where your place is. Carpe officium! Dress: Ready for anything.
- Studio: Works on a TV or film studio set. Pale skin, hot head from the lights, clipboard cramped hand. You do not bolt for the sun and clean air until the tapings done. Dress: Urban warrior ready for chills and with good walking shoes.
- Transportation: Drive, wait and read, drive. Repeat. Dress: Rugged trucker and good for long sits. Wardrobe: Costumes are your comrades. Dress: Rugged with a fashion flair.

## **A FASHIONABLE TALE**

Don't make the mistake a friend of mine made. We were in competition for the same P.A. job, the first for both of us.

She had a great resume and a new degree from a fancy school, and she got an office P.A. position right off the bat. She didn't accept immediately because she wanted to be a set P.A. I, on the other hand, was going straight for the Set P.A. job, not being that good in offices with words and people and stuff and barely

sober from my undergraduate years at some big state school.

My friend got an interview to be a set P.A. and she showed up in a dress! It's normal to dress up for normal jobs, but movie making is not a normal job. She waited for them to get back to her and when they did with the bad news, the office P.A. job was gone. I pestered the production office by phone until I got impatient and just drove 3 hours to the production office without scheduling an interview. I dressed in clean good boots, clean jeans and a rugged looking, but clean, shirt. I knocked on the door as soon as they opened in the morning said I was the P.A. who'd been hassling them and since I "was in the area," I thought I'd stop by and see if they needed any help today?

They looked me up and down from their desks, threw some keys at me and said, "Go fill those sand bags up, put them in the white truck, and drive it to that brown tent." I turned and left the trailer saying only, "OK," and didn't ask any questions. After finding the sand and the truck I didn't see any sand bags, so I found a Grip who helped me. I did my job quickly and quietly, and returned when it was all finished. I got the job.

First lesson. If you get a P.A. job...*take it*. The object is to get in the system and to meet people. You can try to change jobs or get a raise once you're on the crew, or after you have at least one gig under your belt.

Second lesson. Dress the part. Look like you are already working at the job you are going for.

## **CREDITS**

My friend was a driver (because he had a car) on a low budget movie. Since he wasn't getting paid in money, the Line Producer offered him A.D. credits in exchange for his work. Only after the shoot was over did he realize that although the credits made him *feel* great, they didn't mean a thing because he didn't know how to do the work.

Screen credits are something to write home about. They're a statement of your accomplishment and a boost to your ego. However, don't take credits for work you didn't do or can't do.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

You should have at least one good recommendation from a Director, First A.D., U.P.M. (Unit Production Manager), Production Coordinator, or Line Producer. It should be on company letterhead that has contact information for references. People actually call sometimes, so make sure you have a real reference with a real phone number. Try to get the highest-ranking person to give you a recommendation. An easy way to do this is to write your own letter and simply have the person read and sign it. Try to get a letter of reference before the shoot is over, which is when everybody disappears and the best intentions are lost in the shuffle. You should copy your recommendation letters and include them whenever you give out your resume.

## RESUMES

No ~~types~~ typos!

You can put anything in your resume as long as you can do what you say you can do. Did I say that out loud? I've always found it best to put down what I really did, with a little creative writing to spruce it up. There are many different styles for resumes, but make sure you have the basic information: What you did, for whom you did it, and when you did it.

Stay away from fancy fonts, color, photos, and graphics and keep it on one page. You can go to two pages once you have the experience to justify it. Make it easy for people to glance at it for 15 seconds (while you're standing in front of them nervously) and get a general idea of what you have done, while also being a good read when they are alone. Use bold face fonts and consistent layouts. Something like this:

### **Director. Duluth, MN. Summer 2006**

Wrote, directed and edited 5 minute film with two actor friends and three crew friends. 63 hits on YouTube. Learned what not to do.

## VIBES

After you have had some contact with the people with whom you will be working, trust your gut feeling about the project. I once drove from Hollywood to Roswell, New Mexico because I had met three people who were working on a show and were all very excited

about it. They loved the director and the script he had written, and the cast was great. I felt like I would be proud to have my name on the credits. There's nothing wrong with working shows for the experience and money only, but if you can find a project that feels good to be a part of and tells a good story, it makes the work much more satisfying.

## **POST-PRODUCTION SCHMOOZING**

Someday your first job will end and you'll need another. It's a good idea to have business cards. Pass your cards out at the end of shoots to *everybody*. Keep the cards simple—your name, email, phone, and Web site for example—you're not famous yet. You can handwrite other stuff on the card, such as the production name you worked on together. That way they'll know who you are when they find your card a month later under their car seat.

Always carry cards with you in case you meet someone working on a shoot, or you see a production in progress and want to give a card to someone on the production staff.

## FILM SCHOOL

You may have gone to film school. Maybe even a fancy one with a fancy name. You may in fact find yourself deep in debt from this school and on a set as a lowly, underpaid P.A. bossed around by uneducated crew who make six figures a year. More ironically you may find that while on this set you see people doing things that don't make sense to you because of what you've learned.

Do yourself a favor and keep your mouth shut and your ears and mind open.

When you're in charge you can use what you've learned in school. People will know you went to film school; word gets around, so your mission is not to add to the reputation of film school newbie's as being cocky, spoiled, wimpy, disrespectful snotty little punks.

Your best course of action is to treat your P.A. job as school. The crew is your teacher; especially the most experienced and revered crew. Get to know them. Gently listen to what they say and watch how they work with the other crew.

Your mission is to learn how movies are made in the "real world," how professional crews have learned to work together, and how to be an excellent P.A.

## I REALLY WANT TO DIRECT

I once learned a great lesson that made a big impression on me after I repeated the common phrase, "But what I really want to do is direct," out loud on a set. I was on a shoot with some old school union Grips and Gaffers who had driven from Hollywood in their huge trucks. They'd brought their wives and rented houses in the area since it was a nice summer shoot away from the city. These guys had been in the business since the 1950s when they'd worked on famous location shoots like *Around The World in 80 Days*. (As a side note, one of them told me this story from that shoot: He and a huge crew were battling the rigging of lights in a hellishly wet and muddy tropical hilltop when suddenly a helicopter landed. To his disbelief, the director's girlfriend proceeded to be carried past him as she stood primly on a pallet wearing a white dress and holding a shade parasol. She was set down carefully on a platform that was brought out for her so she could watch the shoot without getting dirty.) Anyway, these guys were pros! And sometimes I'd watch them light a set as they sat three abreast in chairs and point and bark out orders to their assistants.

One day I found myself watching them while they were lighting a set just like that. While they worked, they chatted me up and started asking me questions. After the pleasantries were covered, things got serious.

1<sup>st</sup> GRAYING GRIP  
So why are you a P.A.?

P.A.  
(feeling regret as the words  
leave his mouth)  
Well, what I really want to  
do is direct.

The THREE OLD MEN Laugh hard  
for a while.

2<sup>nd</sup> GRAYING GAFFER  
Hey everybody, you hear  
that! What he really wants  
to do is direct!

THE CREW Stops setting lights,  
looks at the P.A. and all  
laugh.

3<sup>rd</sup> GRAYING GAFFER  
So why are you a P.A. then?"

P.A.  
Well...I...uh...to learn and, and,  
like, make connections.

1<sup>st</sup> GRAYING GAFFER  
But if you really want to  
direct, why aren't you  
directing?

P.A.  
But I, I mean, how if I  
don't have money?

2<sup>nd</sup> GRAYING GAFFER

Make short movies. Get a cheap camera and edit any way you can. Make them one after the other. That's how you learn to direct my boy. By *directing*.

3<sup>RD</sup> GRAYING GAFFER

And then when you get famous, hire us!

The point here is that you need to practice doing whatever you want to do in life. Don't worry about resolution, length, or quality if you want to direct. Just make movies. Practice. Watch movies. Read about movies. Practice some more.

If you want to be a director – direct.

## WHAT TO HAVE

Things like a screwdriver may seem totally silly to lug around, but they aren't. I was working on a Ford commercial, and in addition to being a P.A., I had to drive a new truck through a river, on camera. Being a P.A. I had of course just cleaned the truck after driving it across the river I'd be splashing through (what fun!) towards the camera.

We were all set to go when somebody realized that the wrong license plate was on the front. If I hadn't had a screwdriver on my Swiss Army knife, I would have had to walk through the river, get one, and walk back, all while the director watched the sun get lower and lower. The moral of this story is that you should anticipate what you might possibly need and bring it. Then bring all the stuff you think you might not need but that you have room for.

See the checklist on the next page. Rip it out if you want, I won't be insulted.

## GEAR CHECK LIST

- Clipboard. The aluminum kind that closes over the paper is the most rugged.
- Technology. Use durable technology with extra power. Make lots of back-ups.
- Leather Man or Swiss Army Knife. With a corkscrew for wine at that crucial moment.
- A few pain relievers of your choice. It feels good to help others who are in pain.
- Chewing gum.
- A map of the area. P.A.s do not get lost.
- Black Sharpie pen, no other brand will do.
- Pen and pencil
- Change. For parking meters, etc.
- Small pad of paper or Post-Its
- Lighter. Not that you should smoke, but others do and you may need to start a fire.
- Gaffers tape!
- A water/shock proof bright little flashlight.
- Envelope for receipts.
- Old sweat shirt and/or towel.
- Rain poncho or waterproof, not water "resistant" slicker.
- A hat such as a Tilley Endurable
- Extra bricks (radio batteries)
- Sunblock
- Small pack of tissues. You never know.

## TOOLS OF THE FUTURE

It's always dangerous to talk about the future since it can date a work like this, so I will speak generally. As a P.A. you may use handheld devices or computers to communicate, document, store and organize information. As technology becomes more advanced, it will continue to work itself into the production world and *everything* will continue to get more powerful, smarter, and smaller until we can't even push the tiny buttons. Then they will make the buttons just the right size so we can use press them and we'll all be happy. That is until we can just think things and don't need those silly buttons. My advice after many years of working with technology that is:

1. *Useful* and suited for your task. Technology is sexy and thus it's very easy to waste a great amount of time with bells and whistles that you end up not really needing. Try and get past the marketing emotions, ascetics, and sexy sounding features and down to its usefulness, day in and day out.
2. *Durable*. The set is and always will be a rough place, make sure that what you buy is built to take punishment. Used padded waterproof cases for travel and have a padded backpack for laptops.
3. *Reliable*. You'll need a reliable way to backup data and the ability to use flexible power sources such as different sized batteries, AC/DC, solar, etc.

It will be a few years—OK, maybe months—before we have a system that is as versatile as a pencil and paper (read: cheap, need no power source, are fully submersible, have unlimited expandable memory,

unlimited fonts and sizes, are usable in any language, need no printer, can be left as a note or made into a hat, an airplane, or a boat, can start a fire, can be used as a shim under a rocking lunch table, etc).

Technology is a tool. It is perhaps the most powerful one we have. Tools are neutral objects. A hammer can build a house or kill someone; we decide what to use tools for. A good tool is focused on one, or a few, specific jobs and takes practice to learn how to use well. But once you learn how to really use a well-made tool, it will help you do great things.

I hope you pick a good cause and use excellent tools!

## CONCLUSION

The P.A. position gives you a great chance to explore all the different areas of production, and to find out which of these areas you like the best. The P.A. position is also an excellent place to make the all-important contacts that can help you once you choose your path. Once you have decided, go for it. There are very few old P.A.s in the world. That is what being a P.A. is all about: Coming in cold, paying your dues excellently, and moving on. I hope this handbook helps you come in a little less cold.

**That's a wrap!**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



### **The Author Video Blogging in 2008**

I badgered my way onto my first Hollywood location shoot in Maine in 1989 while on summer break from college. I continued work in the summers as a P.A., on location shoots for both big and small budget movies, TV shows and commercials. After college I moved to Hollywood and continued working as a P.A. until I realized that I liked to write about it more than do it. The Web appeared and I went to San Francisco and worked in educational Web media production while also freelancing for magazines like *Wired*. In 1999 I completed a Masters in Educational Technology at San Diego State University, and in 2008 an MPS from the Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP) at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. What can I say, I like to teach and learn! I hope this handbook helps you learn how to be a kick-ass P.A.

(Feedback is welcome! [calebjc \[at\] well \[dot\] com](mailto:calebjc[at]well[dot]com), or [plocktau.com](http://plocktau.com))

## SET LINGO

Here's some basic lingo it would be good for a new P.A. to know. You'll find a lot of these words and phrases are from old school film (as in actual celluloid) production from over the last 100 years or more. Also, check online for complete dictionaries of film lingo with much longer definitions and history.

**Abby Singer.** The second to last shot of the day. Famous A.D./P.M. who always mistook the second to last shot for the last shot.

**Apple Box:** Wooden crates that come in in ½, ¼, and full sizes.

**Associate Producer:** A sort of Vice President of production or post-production.

**Best Boy:** Second in command in the grip or gaffer departments.

**Back Light:** Light in, well, the back.

**C-47:** A common P.A. trick. It's just a wooden clothespin! Used to clip things to hot lights. The wood keeps them from heating up so you can unclip them from a hot light.

**C-Stand:** Metal stand with telescoping pole and Medusa like arms. Baffles new P.A.s when they try and work with them.

**Call Sheet:** The best-laid plans of the day's actors and shots they are in – God willing and the creek don't rise.

**Cookie:** Material put in front of light to make a pattern, such as leaves.

**Continuity:** Actors, prop and set consistency.

**Craft Services:** Vital food and drink. Watch your waist! And drink some water with that coffee soldier.

**Dailies:** Unedited shots used to review the day's shooting.

**DBTA:** Dead by the third act.

**Dolly:** Rolling camera platform.

**Extra:** Non-speaking background roles.

**Executive Producer:** Has/got the money/power.

**Fill Light:** Light that, well, fills in shadows from the likes of a Key Light.

**Fish Pole:** Pole for holding the dialog microphone out of the shot.

**Foley Artists:** Sound effects generator people in post-production.

**Gaffers Tape:** That which holds films together.

**Gaffer:** Electric and light department.

**Grip:** On set carpentry/construction.

**Honey Wagon:** Trailers on set, often for cast.

**Jenny:** Short for generator.

**Key Grip:** Head grip.

**Striking:** Said before turning on a set light to prepare people. And before turning off a light to make it clear that a bulb has not blown out.

**Key light:** The main light, or the sun.

**Lavalieres:** Small mics that clip to actors collars. Also called, "Lapels."

**Magic/Golden Hour:** Sunset or sunrise.

**Martini:** Last shot of the day.

**Mise-en-scene:** Shot showing entire scene.

**Pre-production:** Planning before shooting starts.

**Production:** Shooting.

**Production Assistant:** You rock!

**Producer:** Big cheese in production.

**Post-production:** After shooting work.

**Scrim:** Filters placed in front of lights.

**Second Unit:** Separate small crew for insert shots, stunts, and long shots. Great P.A. gig.

**Shot Sheet:** List of shots needed.

**Swing Gang:** Small grip crew that builds stuff on set (but not usually sets).

**Video Village:** On set video playback.

**UPM:** Unit Production Manager, AKA, Production Manager (PM), or Line Producer: On set and location operational boss of overall production process. Often hires P.A.s. Often fires P.A.s

**Wrangler:** Manages extras, animals, etc. Not that extras are animals!

**Wrecking Crew:** Make up and hair dept.

**Writer:** Birthed script. Often confused on set unless also producer or director.

**Wrap:** The End. Secure equipment. Try and go to sleep quickly.

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