

The Assistant Directors main duties are assisting the Director, coordinating all production activity, and supervising the cast and crew. They are also in charge of a department of other Assistant Directors and Runners.

Overall, they provide the link between the Director, cast and crew, while also liaising with the production office, and providing regular progress reports about the shoot. Before the shoot, the AD'S main task is to create the filming schedule, working in careful consultation with the Director. When drawing up the shooting schedule, ADS must also be aware of the budget, cast availability and script coverage.

Preparing the storyboard, overseeing the hiring of locations, props and equipment and checking weather reports are all key pre-production duties for ADS. During production, they must ensure that everyone is on standby and ready for the Director's cue for action.

The ADs' main responsibility is to keep filming on schedule by driving it forward, so they make announcements and give directions to co-ordinate the cast and crew. They also control discipline on the set, supervise the other Assistant Directors and oversee the preparation of the daily 'call sheet' (a document with daily shooting logistics, distributed to all cast and crew).

ADS are also responsible for health and safety on set or location, and must take action to eliminate or minimize hazards.

The A.D.'s role on a major feature film is a big, big job, suited for someone unafraid and able to multitask. Here are 5 basic things the AD does:

- 1. Schedule the shoot:** During pre-production the A.D. analyzes the script and breaks it down into a schedule based on the availability of actors and locations. Additionally, they note special wardrobe, set dressing, and prop needs for each day of shooting. They then organize these elements into a schedule that reflects which scenes will be shot on which days.
- 2. On full-length features, A.D.'s break the information into all kinds of reports –** Production Boards, Day out of Days, One-Liners –
- 3. Scout Locations:** Assistant Director help scout locations so that she/he can help determine how to manage logistics on everything from where to store production equipment to where the actors dressing rooms will be to where to set up Craft Service. The AD will manage all of these things during production.
- 4. Give instructions on set:** During production, the crew looks to the AD team for information. “Where are the bathrooms?” “What time is lunch?” “Where can I park this cherry-picker?” and, most importantly, “What are we shooting next?” This last question is crucial to getting each day’s work completed. While the Director is busy working on what is currently being shot, the Assistant Director is always looking ahead to what comes next. This is where a good shot list comes in handy.

5. **The Assistant Director** breaks the shot list into a schedule for each day, working with the Director to determine which shots should be accomplished with each camera set-up.
6. **Accomplish the day's work:** During production, the AD is constantly referring to the shot list to determine what to set up for next and communicates this information to all department heads (lighting, makeup, wardrobe, set dressing, props, transportation, catering,). This frees the Director to focus on creative aspects on set. The AD also keeps track of time to be sure that shooting days don't run too long. If they do, the AD may have to push the next day's call time later than originally planned. In the eyes of Producers who manage finances on a paid shoot, this is a crucial function of the Assistant Director's job. The ability of the AD to keep the production on time can mean the difference between staying on budget and paying out too much in overtime and meal penalties.
7. **Safety:** The AD is responsible for giving safety talks to the crew, when necessary.
8. The AD is also responsible for getting the set quiet when it is time to shoot a scene. Hearing "Quiet, please!" called out on set because it means it's time to shoot. Which is why we're all here in the first place.

**Below-the-line** is a term derived from the top sheet of a budget (Motion Picture, Television, Commercial, Industrial, Student Film, Documentary).

The 'line' in below-the-line is the one separating the Actors, Director, Producers, and Writers from the other crew.

The top sheet of the budget is the summary of the entire budget of the project – no matter what the size (cost).

The traditional delineations for the top-sheet are:

- Total Above-the-line
- Total **Below-the-line** (*hence the term*)
- Total Above and Below the Line
- Additional Coverage (Other)

Grand Total

In general, Above-the-line refers to Actors, Producers, Writers and Directors. For the most part, these are fixed costs. For example, if a scene is cut from the script, the writer is still paid the same amount.

Below-the-line crew refers to everybody else including (but not limited to):

Assistant Director  
Art Director  
Line Producer  
Location Manager  
Best Boy Electric  
Best Boy Grip  
Boom Operator  
Character generator (cg) operator (television)  
Custom Designer  
Director of Photographer  
Camera Operator  
Composer  
Dolly grip  
Gaffer  
Graphic Artist  
Hair Stylist  
Key Grip  
Make-up Artist  
Hair Stylist  
Key Grip  
Make-up Artist  
Production Assistant  
Script Supervisor (continuity)  
Sound Engineer  
Stage Manager (television)  
Stage Carpenter

Technical Director (TD)  
Video Control Broadcast Engineer (television)  
Film Editor  
Visual Effects Editor  
Graphic artist  
Hair stylist  
Key grip  
Make-up artist  
Production assistant  
Script supervisor (continuity)  
Sound engineer  
Stage Manager (television)  
Stage Carpenter  
Technical Director (TD)  
Video control broadcast engineer (television)  
Visual Effects Editor

What is a Production Assistant?

A Production Assistant, or PA, is the entry level position in filmmaking.

Most PA's work generally for the production, supporting the rest of the crew and making sure all of their needs are met. There is no such thing as a "typical" day for a PA, and your responsibilities change daily.

While higher up positions usually stay put and deal with the current shot, PA's are working in the background on one (or ten) of the hundred other details required to ensure the shoot runs smoothly.

While the duties of a PA vary from production to production, some common tasks are:

- Managing Paperwork – collecting time sheets, handing out scripts (known as 'sides' during production, as they are printed on both sides of the page and encompass only the scenes that will be shot that day.)
- Heavy lifting – helping load and unload the dozens of lights, stands, and apple boxes it takes to pull off each shot.
- Crowd control – managing extras in a scene, or locking down the set to make sure no pedestrians unwittingly amble into the frame, ruining the shot.
- Errands – anything from getting coffee to delivering the dailies back to the production office to (if you're in the art department) picking up miscellaneous props

Being a PA often means long hours for little pay. As the low man on the totem pole, PAs are often asked to transport or house themselves for different shoots. It requires a lot of stamina and a good jacket, as you will be working outside regardless of the weather.

Being a PA is an exciting and rewarding beginning to your film career.

As a PA, your responsibilities often do not carry over to the next day, and despite the long days there is no work to take home with you. Many PAs are shared amongst departments, so you will be exposed to several facets of production and have a constant opportunity to network. "It never gets boring. Every day you're always going to someplace cool, someplace different," says Alex Cody, a freelance PA in New York City. "Wherever the set is, you're always working with different people. One day you're on a film set shooting a private concert and another day you're on a farm in the middle of nowhere. You'll have a chance to work for the people you admire, and each day can be a new learning opportunity."