

## The Assistant Director

The role of the Assistant Director is one of the most important “below-the-line” positions on set. Contrary to what the role’s name might suggest, an Assistant Director is not involved in the creative aspects of directing a movie, but is rather a role that helps manage the logistics of the set, like timekeeping, callsheet generation, and on-set safety.

Generally speaking, there are usually two Assistant Directors on set, the First Assistant Director (1AD) and Second Assistant Director (2AD). The 1AD is the main person in charge of running the set and keeping order on set. They interface directly with the Director and are responsible for making sure the schedule is being followed and that everyone is on task. The 1AD should have a good sense of how long each scene should take, and should be able to make scheduling decisions on the fly if things are not going according to plan. The 1AD is also in charge of making sure the set is safe and secure, and for managing the 2AD.

The 2AD’s main responsibilities are callsheet generation and backstage handling. The 2AD takes a look at the schedule and makes sure all crew members and actors know where they need to go and what time they need to be there each day. Usually, this is done via computer programs such as Casper or Gorilla, which transfer data over from Movie Magic Budgeting and Scheduling. The 2AD should always double check the callsheet, though, as sometimes data does not transfer over

correctly. Once the callsheet has been finalized with the 1AD, Production Manager, and Director, the 2AD sends the callsheet out to the cast and crew.

Another responsibility of the 2AD is the shuttling of cast back and forth between costume, make-up, hair, and set. The 2AD usually helps place background actors in the scenes as well, and oversees the Second Second AD or Third AD if necessary.

On some larger sets, there can be a Second Second AD (22AD) or a Third AD (3AD). As sets become larger and more crew members and cast members are needed, the 22AD and 3AD handle some of the responsibilities that would normally fall to the 2AD, such as callsheet generation and backstage handling of cast. If more wrangling is needed, productions will sometimes hire Additional Assistant Directors (AADs) or a Fourth Assistant Director (4AD). The AADs or 4AD will be responsible for a very specific division of labor, such as the generation of a callsheet for a large number of background actors or for the specific shuttling of certain actors.

It should be noted that many of the jobs attached to each AD position are dependent on region. The 2AD and 3AD may hold different jobs in Australia and Europe than they do in the US, and the 22AD may exist or it may not on some sets. In a lot of cases, the assignment of titles can be rather subjective, with a 3AD handling the duties of a 22AD or vice versa. On smaller sets, there is usually just the 1AD, who handles all of the logistical and handling aspects of the set and manages the Production Assistants.

Regardless of the scale of the set, the 1AD is a very respected position and what he or she says goes on set. The 1AD is basically taking the logistical pressure off of the Director so that the Director can function in his or her creative element. A

good 1AD can make or break a film, and if things are going over time and over budget, it is usually the 1AD's head on the chopping block.