Assistant Directors

The Assistant Director is extremely vital to the production of a film. They are the right-hand person to the Director and possess incredible amounts of responsibilities and tasks. The overall responsibility of the Assistant Director is to maintain control over numerous amounts of situations and practicalities so that the Director does not have to worry about them and can focus more on the film at hand. The Second Assistant Director is the liaison for the Director and the rest of the crew members. They are to relay messages, answer questions and make sure everyone is where they need to be when they are needed to be there.

Another one of their responsibilities is to create a film schedule, or shoot schedule, for the Director and the rest of the crew and ensure that it is followed through and that everything runs smoothly. To do this, the Assistant Director breaks down a script shot by shot and works with the Director to determine and schedule when each shot should be taken and how long each shot should last. Another huge responsibility of the Assistant Director is to always maintain and control discipline on set. This includes supervising the crew members, ensuring everyone is present and in their correct locations, and making sure that everyone remains safe on set. The Assistant Director must eliminate anything or anyone who could be considered a threat or hazard to not only the crew members but also to the production as a whole.

Other responsibilities include tracking the production process and production budget and ensuring that they schedule accordingly, preparing daily call sheets, and overall maintaining order and sanity on set. Assistant Directors are also known for “calling the role”. When “calling the role”, the AD is giving specific cues to each member on set so that the members are following the schedule and will know when to perform a specific task or say a specific line. They are also responsible for the movements of the actors and actresses. This includes pushing them through wardrobe changes, hair and makeup, and getting them on set at the correct location on time.

Underneath the First and Second Assistant Directors is sometimes a Third and Fourth Assistant Director. These members assist the First Assistant Director and help maintain order overall. A lot of times, the Second and Third Assistant Directors have to take charge over several of the duties of the First AD because he or she simply does not have the time. For a normal film production, there are a hundred or more crew members on set at once, and each and every one of them must be maintained and kept on track so that the production can run smoothly. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish a big difference between all of the Assistant Directors working with the First AD, but the important thing to know is that they all work as a team to ensure success.

A good Assistant Director must possess a certain set of skills and qualities. First, they must be authoritative team leaders who know how to push and motivate everyone. At the same time, they need to be team players. The Assistant Director must be able to be looked up to by the crew and be taken seriously, but they also need to be easy to work with. It is extremely important that everyone knows that the AD is a reliable and dependable authoritative figure. The Assistant Director must have exceptional time-management and organizational skills to correctly achieve everything that needs to be done according to the production schedule. They must also be able to communicate well and pay close attention to detail, especially when working closely with the Director so that they never miss anything. Also, it is very important that the AD knows how to calmly and correctly deal with stressful or difficult situations. Like previously stated, one of their main responsibilities is to maintain order and sanity, so above all else, they must be able to always present themselves in that way too. And like most any other crew member involved in a production, a good Assistant Director must maintain a positive and energetic attitude so that everyone will enjoy working with them.

With the Director being the “head” of the production, he must be able to focus all of his attention and creative senses to the film. In order to do so, someone must handle the “smaller” tasks and situations on set. No task or responsibility is “small”, but for the Director, everything is smaller than the production of the film at hand. The Director does not have time to make sure that each crew member is doing what they are supposed to be doing and are located where they are supposed to be located. He does not have time to keep track of specific schedules and budgets. The Director doesn’t even have time to get a cup of coffee on a normal day of shooting. These are all reasons why the Assistant Directors are so incredibly vital to the production of a film.