Assistant Director

The role of an **assistant director** on a film includes tracking daily progress against the filming [production schedule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Production_schedule), arranging logistics, preparing [daily call sheets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daily_call_sheet), checking cast and crew, and maintaining order on the [set](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movie_set). Basically being the director’s right hand man on everything. They also have to take care of the health and safety of the crew. Historically the role of an assistant to the director (not the same as an Assistant director) was a stepping stone to directing work. Here is a short list of just some of the things a professional AD does on a daily basis.

**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. For full-length features, A.D.’s break the information into all kinds of reports.

**2.  Scout Locations**:  Bring your Assistant Director along on your location scouts so that she/he can help determine how to manage logistics on everything from where to store production equipment to where the actor’s dressing rooms will be to where to set up Craft Service.  The A.D. will manage all of these things during production.

**3.  Give instructions on set**:  During production, the crew looks to the A.D. 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. 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.

**4.  Accomplish the day’s work**:  During production, the A.D. 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,), via walkie-talkie with the help of the second A.D.’s and P.A.’s .  This frees the Director to focus on creative aspects on set.  The A.D. also keeps track of time to be sure that shooting days don’t run too long.  If they do, the A.D. 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 A.D. to keep the production on time can mean the difference between staying on budget and paying out too much in overtime and meal penalties.

**5.  Safety**:  The A. D. is responsible for giving safety talks to the crew, when necessary.  On one of my films, we shot a night scene in a hot tub, which had to be lit, of course.  Our A.D. gave the crew instructions about how to work around water with electricity and warned everyone to work thoughtfully and slowly so that no one got injured.  It may seem like basic common sense, but taking two minutes to give safety instructions focuses everyone’s attention on just how important it is.