

So you want to be a

Set PA

Just about everything you need to know when
looking up from the bottom of the ladder



CONTACT INFORMATION

1st AD: _____
Name Phone

2nd AD: _____
Name Phone

2nd/2nd AD: _____
Name Phone

UPM: _____
Name Phone

Prod Super: _____
Name Phone

POC: _____
Name Phone

Congratulations you're a Set Production Assistant.
Welcome to the AD Dept.

This guide contains information that should make
your life as a Set PA in the Motion Picture and
Television/Series Industry all the more rewarding.

Read It, Learn It, Do It!

Refer to this guide as often as you can.
It's been created to help you along this journey.

THE SET PA CODE

1. Safety, safety, safety.
2. The answer is always "Yes" (If the answer is really NO, say "give me a minute" and turn the NO into a YES)
3. Be available and attentive.
4. Show respect and common courtesy.
5. When in doubt, ask.
6. Have a sense of urgency – always hustle.
(But never run on set)
7. Don't sit down.
8. Don't cluster in conversation with other PA's.
9. If someone says, "I understand" then they understand.
Stop talking and don't continue discussing the subject.
10. Communication is essential.
11. Don't panic.
12. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something.
13. Don't be afraid to admit you were wrong or made a mistake.
14. Don't be afraid; it's only a movie.
15. Have fun!

“The difference between a PA and a dog is that people are afraid to kick dogs.”

SET PA RESPONSIBILITIES

Remember these things and you will have a happy AD

- THE PA CODE
- Do not sit down - the 1st AD stands all day, so can you.
- Do not stand around in a group talking, especially with other PAs.
- Do not surf the web, check your email, take pictures or go on social media. Only use your phone for work purposes.
- Do not hang around craft service table.
- Do not lump along at a snails pace - show urgency and initiative - hustle at all times. Hustle, do not run - never run on set.
- Do not state your opinion or share ideas on the set unless specifically asked.
- When you are given an assignment, stick to it.
- When you are put in a lock-up position, stay there.
- Know the shot & Know what the camera is seeing.
- Know what is happening next.
- Know how other departments operate – the more you know the more valuable you will be.
- Regularly sweep area for garbage.
- Never plug into any electric outlet without permission of the gaffer/electric.
- Water set every so often.
- Keep set quiet.
- Do not let extras roam around set - keep them in holding.
- Be on your toes and anticipate - this however is not an open license to do the job of an AD.
- Have a checklist – read it, use it, check things off.
- Save all receipts. And never spend your own money.
- Assume you are on an NDA even if you did not sign one.
- When you are new on an established set (Day Playing), DO NOT try to take over the jobs of the staff PAs. It's annoying.
- Keep ADs happy. Make sure your AD has eaten and has a full gas tank. A happy AD is a happy PA!

** Remember: there is always something to do.**

Things you should know about each location

- Where the bathrooms are.
- Where Background holding is.
- Where the air conditioning/heat on/off switch is.
- Where the shot is and what is in the frame.
- Where the lock-up positions are.
- Where the copier is and how to use it.

A DAY ON THE JOB

PRE CALL

- Fill your car's gas tank.
- Wear comfortable shoes & appropriate clothing for the day's conditions.
- Bring a cell phone charger so you aren't using someone else's.
- Have Call Sheet, Fully Charged Phone, Surveillance Earpiece, Note Pad, Pen, Black & Red Sharpie, Gloves, Knife/Box Cutter, Flashlight or Headlamp, etc.
- Set more than one wake up alarm. DO NOT BE LATE.

CALL TIME

- Check in with 2nd AD & 2nd / 2nd AD
- Get assignment.
- Hand your AD his/her radio as soon as you see them. Make sure the radio is turned on and on channel 1.
- Hand out Radios on day 1 or to Day Players when they work – Get your radio & extra charged batteries (every Set PA should carry at least 2 Hot Bricks/Biscuits/Batteries) Make sure your radio is turned on and on proper channel.

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- Hand out Fresh Batteries to Crew Members
- Hand out Sides & Shot List (if there is one) to Keys.
- Your day will vary - Stay on your toes & listen to your AD.

LUNCH

- Make sure crew and key cast get through line first.
- Unless otherwise told, Set PAs go through line last.
- Watch the line for last person - Notify 2nd AD of time.
- Get lunch head count - give total to 2nd /2nd AD.
- Hand out fresh radio batteries to crew.
- Make sure your AD gets lunch.
- Take a moment for yourself – this is your only opportunity but be available if called upon.
- Call crew back to work on 1st AD's call.

WRAP

- Fly the Call Sheets immediately after wrap is called.
- DO NOT hand out a single call sheet before wrap, unless with the direct permission of the 2nd AD.
- If it is required, help with last-minute physical push/pull call sheets - here is where your Red Sharpie comes in handy.
- Help 2nd/2nd AD get out times of all crew.
- DO NOT wrap equipment belonging to other departments unless specifically requested by that department & approved by an AD.
- Collect radios from day players - AD Dept and Production stay on radios until 2nd/2ndADs command (only exception is the 1st AD).
- Sweep set for garbage and any forgotten equipment.
- Keep a Call Sheet, read it and have it ready for the next day.

“Actually, I loathe seeing PAs clustered together period. They should be doing something – trying to anticipate what will happen next – instead of sitting around blabbing. When I see PAs complaining to each other, I want to fire them on the spot.”

POSITIONING

1 st AD	-	On set by camera at all times
2 nd AD	-	With Cast - at Base Camp
2 nd /2 nd AD	-	Periphery of set
Key PA	-	On set at 1 st AD's back
Base Camp PA	-	Base camp with 2 nd AD
DGA Trainee Paperwork PA	-	With 2 nd & 2 nd /2 nd AD and all paperwork
1 st Team PA	-	With principal actors at all times
Background PA	-	With Background/Extras at all times
Set PA	-	In lock-up positions as dictated by ADs/Key PA
Walkie/Radio PA	-	PA in charge of radios

The newer you are, the farther away from the camera you will be.
Moving closer to the heart of the filmmaking process
is a right that is earned over time.

“PAs should keep a “production face”:
My Movie Right or Wrong.

They should not gripe about the food
or the hours. For them, this is basic training
and you don’t question orders
in basic training.”

LOCK-UP

A lock-up is a method of controlling unwanted or extraneous noise and activity immediately before and during the filming of a shot.

In a lock-up it is your job as a Set PA to keep everyone who is not designated to be in the shot quiet and out of the shot.

Usually the 2nd/2nd AD or Key PA will assign lock-up positions. However, it is the 1st AD's prerogative to set lock-up positions.

Maintain your lock-up as best as you can. If a lock-up situation becomes dangerous, radio the 2nd/2nd AD or Key PA immediately.

DO NOT be a hero and put yourself or someone else at risk.

When you are placed in a lock-up position, DO NOT leave that position or replace yourself without the direct approval of an AD. Even the Producer DOES NOT have the authority to directly remove a PA from a lock-up position. Should a person of authority ask you to leave your lock-up position, radio an AD immediately.

When the 1st AD calls "Quiet", "Rolling" & "Cut", each Set PA should echo the call at their respective Lock-up positions.

“If you’re lucky enough to get such a job, you should throw yourself into it body and soul, absorb as much about the process as you can, and impress the people who matter (like the ADs) with your incredible initiative.”

COMMUNICATION

Communication is of utmost importance!

Communication is what AD Dept does!

Always keep the noise down on the set.
If someone is being noisy, you are being noisy.
Ask them to quiet down or walk away.

Repeat out loud (Echo) 1st AD's calls for the following:
(simply put, call out so all crew hears)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Car backing Up | - | Call out when a vehicle is moving |
| Car Coming
Through, Watch
Your Backs | - | When crew is working in or close
to the traffic in a live street and a
vehicle approaches |
| Cut/That's a cut | - | We've stopped rolling |
| Fire in the Hole | - | There will be gunfire or explosives in
the scene |
| Hold the Work | - | Stop all work |
| Hold the Roll | - | Something has happened to prevent the
camera from rolling, stand by for the roll |
| Last Looks
Final Touches | - | For hair, makeup and wardrobe, final
opportunity to look at actors right before
the camera rolls |
| On a Bell | - | Rolling on a Sound Stage, a bell will sound
which indicates: One long ring = Rolling
Two short rings = Cut |
| Pictures next | - | We are about to shoot, last opportunity
to do things |

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Pictures up	-	We shoot now
Quiet Please	-	Everyone is quiet - this means everyone shuts up, holds all work and stands still!
Rehearsals next	-	We are about to rehearse, last opportunity to do things
Rehearsals up	-	Rehearsal starts now
Rolling	-	Sound and Camera are rolling
Settle In	-	Calm down, Get ready
Stand by	-	We are about to start shooting, be ready, moments away
That's a Wrap	-	The days work is over, time to clean up
That's Lunch	-	We're breaking for lunch - ½ or 1 hour
Turn Over	-	"Rolling" in England & other international sets
Turning It Around	-	Finished shooting in one direction, now we shoot in the other direction
We're Back	-	Lunch is over, back to work
Wrap It/That	-	We are finished with it – Put it away, Clean it up

Some more terms to know for smooth communication

Abby (Shot)	-	Second to the last shot before wrap (from AD Abby Singer)
Banana	-	Actor/Background walking in an arc
Base Camp	-	Where the trailers (Makeup, Hair, Costume, Cast, AD) are located, as well as crew parking and Catering - crew and cast report here when arriving for work
Bogie/Lookie Loo	-	Civilian – Non Crew/Cast Member
Camera Left/Right	-	Left or right direction from the camera's perspective
Crab Left/Right	-	Left or right direction from the dolly's perspective
First Team	-	Principal Actors
Flag on the Play	-	After moving on someone realizes there is an issue and the take needs to be redone

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Flying In	-	Needed item/person is coming in
Fly the . . .	-	To distribute something (Fly the Call Sheet)
The Football	-	Envelope/Box that holds documents and other items that go back and forth from the Production Office and AD team
Hold the Work	-	Stop all work
Hot Biscuit/Brick	-	Fully charged Radio Battery
Hot Set	-	Do not touch or move anything on the set, the set must remain exactly the way it is
Island Days	-	Days off
I Understand	-	The person's got it, don't say another word about it
It's/That's Dead	-	It is done – we are finished with it, Wrap it
Jonesy (Shot)	-	First shot of the day (after Safety Meeting) (from AC Sarah Jones - RIP)
Kill That	-	Turn it off, stop it
Lamp Left/Right	-	Left or right direction from a light's perspective
Martini (Shot)	-	Last shot before wrap (at some point buy your AD one of these or a Manhattan)
New Deal	-	New camera setup
On the Day	-	When it actually happens/when camera is rolling
Points/ Hot Points	-	Called out as a warning when carrying something big - get out of the way
Puff & Fluff/Vanity/ Fancy Folk	-	Hair, Makeup and Wardrobe/Costumes (but <u>DO NOT</u> use these terms. Call them Hair, Makeup & Wardrobe/Costumes)
Sides	-	Pages of the script (reduced to half size) of the scenes to be shot that day
Skins	-	A list of the extras for that day
Second Team	-	Stand-ins (for lighting and Camera set-up)
Tearing Down the Elephant	-	To break something down, clean it up or put it away (usually for the last time)
Working Trucks	-	All equipment trucks - Parked close to set

WALKIE-TALKIE RADIOS

Grips have c-stands, Electric has lights.
The main tool AD Dept has on set is a radio. Use it wisely.

When an AD arrives at set, hand them their radio.
Make sure the radio has a fresh battery,
is turned on and is set to channel 1.

Using Your Radio

- TO TALK - Push button, wait half a second, then speak. Don't let go of button until a half second after you are finished speaking.
- TO LISTEN - Shut up and open your ears.
- All PAs wear headsets or earpieces with radios.
- When the 1st or 2nd AD communicates on the radio, repeat exactly what you hear and only what you hear. Don't interpret and redefine the information.
- Respond to all radio requests - If you are the person fulfilling the request, copy it.
- Copy the ADs WHEN THEY ASK FOR SOMETHING on channel 1. THEN DO IT!
- When an AD requests/says something over the radio, respond. NEVER leave the ADs hanging. When we ask for something we don't want to hear crickets! We DO NOT want to feel alone.
- Let people know when you are doing something.
- Keep it simple and concise.
- Turn down/off radios when camera/sound is rolling and DO NOT TALK on your radios when camera is rolling!
- Make sure all phones and radios are turned down on the set at all times.
- Carry 2 fresh, spare batteries (hot biscuits/bricks) on you at all times.

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- Take all conversations to channel 2.
- AD Dept/Production is always on channel 1 (full-time) and channel 2 (overflow/longer conversations). Know what channel each department is on. Ask the Radio PA or...

1	AD/Production	2	AD/Production
3	Transportation	4	Art Dept
5	Property	6	Camera
7	Electric	8	Grip

Walkie-Talkie Lingo

Back to 1/Backing Up	- Returning to channel 1, said at end of conversation on 2
Copy/Copy That	- I understand - Got it
Cueing	- The radio is stuck in the talk position and is transmitting unintentionally
Flying In	- Coming with whatever you requested
86 It/86 That	- Stop it, Forget about it, Kill it
Go for "name"/	
Go Ahead	- Talk to me - I'm listening
Go to 2	- Switch to channel 2
Going to 2	- Response by the person who is told "Go to 2".
Looking	- Searching for something or someone
On 2	- Once switched to channel 2, let the other person know you are there
Standby	- I'm busy right now, Wait one moment
Stepped On	- Someone else keyed their radio when a person was talking, nothing was clear
10-4	- Copy, Understand, Got it
10-20 or 20	- Your location/position
What's your 20	- Where are you?
10-100/100/10-1	- Bathroom (using)
10-C	- Having a cigarette (cigar for this AD)

“One thing that irritates me is when I see an actor walking off the set in his or her Pajamas (the costume) on a freezing night while a bunch of PAs are clustered together nearby not helping out.”

MISC KNOWLEDGE

- First meal (Lunch) should be served 6 hours after general crew call.
- Second meal should be served 6 hours after crew is called back from first meal.
- Never stand in an actors eye-line. If for some reason you are near camera during a take, turn your back to the actors and stand still.
- Shadow First Team – Know where they are at all times.
- Keep an eye open for safety issues.
- Punctuality is key! An old film biz adage is: If you are not there 15 minutes early, you are late!
- Do not replace yourself on a lock-up. Get permission from an AD if you need to leave for any reason.
- On location, you represent the production and AD Dept. Make a good impression on the owners and residents. (remember, we may want to come back one day!)
- NEVER burn bridges!
- Another old film biz adage is: You can have it fast, cheap or good. Pick two. As a Set PA, always pick fast and good because you are already the cheapest person on the set.

MISTAKES

YOU WILL MAKE MISTAKES! It is as simple as that.

Always remember . . . you're human.

What matters is how you respond to these mistakes.
How you “bounce back” is what you will be judged on.

Interesting tidbit - they might not admit it,
but your ADs make mistakes as well.

“The secret of life is to
fall seven times and
to get up eight times.”

Paulo Coelho

PAPERWORK

There is a lot of paperwork involved in the making of a film. Most of this paperwork is generated and distributed by the AD Dept/Production. Set PAs will assist in the paperwork process where and when directed by an AD.

Enjoy the paperwork, it is your friend.

Your Personal Paperwork

Fill out your Start Paperwork/Deal Memo when you start the job (on your first day).

Fill out your Timecard each week before you Wrap!
Nobody wants to wait around for you to fill out your timecard!

Keep the following paper work for your own files

- ALL Call Sheets
- ALL Production Reports (if you can get them)
- Your Deal Memo (always get one!)
- ALL PayCheck Stubs
- Crew List

All are important paperwork to keep, especially if you might be interested in being a DGA-AD someday.

If you are interested in the DGA, ask your AD for more info.

“The best PAs are the ones who keep themselves as busy as possible. They can always be tending to the Talent (or something else).”

ON SET GAMES

A lot of films have been shot in Las Vegas and many a gambling scene has been captured on film. Well, sometimes life imitates art.

The great American poet, George DeLacy, once wrote "Show me a man who doesn't love a game and I will show you a man who doesn't love life." Here are a few well-loved games found on many a set. These games are usually played on Friday or set in motion during the week to culminate on the last day of the shooting week. Winners are announced at lunch.

The Bucket Game or Pass the Hat – A bucket or large hat is carried around the crew. Each participating crew member writes his/her name on a \$5 bill (or some other prefixed denomination) and places it in the bucket/hat. Note: one can always put in a higher bill amount than the prefixed denomination but never a lower bill amount. Additionally, one can drop as many bills in the bucket/hat as they want to. Once the game is closed, a person draws a bill from the bucket/hat and the winning name is announced.

The Card Game – A deck of cards is sold to crew members one selected card at a time at a prefixed price per card. All the funds raised go into a kitty. Once all 52 cards have been sold, three cards are randomly selected from a second deck.

Payout on a \$5/Card purchase is as follows:

Card 1 – 3rd Place - \$35
Card 2 – 2nd Place - \$75
Card 3 – First Place - \$150

“PAs should never sit down.
After all, if the 1st AD can stand
by the camera all day long, then
the PAs can stand as well.”

ETZ•AD

SO YOU WANT TO BE A SET PA

WHERE THERE WAS ONCE A BEGINNING,

THERE IS NOW AN END.

Don't let this guide intimidate or overwhelm you.

It is informational by nature.

Your ADs really are nice people.

Have fun and don't hesitate to ask questions.

After all, if you're not having fun, why the hell are you here?!

FINALLY

Remember, when working as a Set PA and when using this guide . . .

Learn It, Live It, Love It!

MISC CONTACT INFORMATION

_____	:	_____	_____
Position		Name	Phone

_____	:	_____	_____
Position		Name	Phone

_____	:	_____	_____
Position		Name	Phone

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Position		Name	Phone

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Position		Name	Phone

_____	:	_____	_____
Position		Name	Phone

GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Excerpts are from Shooting to Kill by Christine Vachon, one of the film industry's leading independent producers of over thirty feature films.

Shooting to Kill ©1998 by Christine Vachon & David Edelstein

The information in this booklet is merely a guide.
One of the best ways to learn is in the field - from the ADs,
Production Managers & Coordinators you work with.
Listen to their words and take their advice to heart.
They once were PAs themselves.

This booklet is a compilation of ideas, observations, discussions
and works of other fine members of the film industry.
Credit must be given to anyone and everyone who
has ever worked in the crazy business of film.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A SET PA

For every young woman and man
who had that crazy idea to enter the
film business and become a SET PA.

ETZ•AD

"I Like what I do, so let's like what we do!"