

Modern Calls On Set

There are two steps to the process of recording each scene:

1. The process of preparing to shoot
2. The process that is associated with each “take”

1. The process of preparing to shoot

Where to put the gear?

Where to set up unit?

What has to be taken into account in setting up for each scene is:

- *What is the area of action?*
- *Which way are we looking?* Because of the “line of action” it is likely that the camera view will be constrained to 180 degrees. The gear can then be set up “behind” the camera.
- Then you set up as close as possible to the set without blocking access, safety and power.
- Where possible sort this out in pre-production.
- Remember each location brings with it its own set of constraints.

Sometimes, when the Director has already decided, they will walk through the scene, explaining the action and all the camera setups. At other times its not decided until after **the first block through below:**

1. **The Director walks through the action with the actors**, usually with everybody else watching it. Preliminary marks are put down for the actor’s positions, and then the actors are cleared from the set so they can save their energy, and prep. They will also be made ready – Make

up / Hair / Wardrobe and possibly pampered a bit by 2nd or 3rd Assistants coffee etc.

2. **The director then walks through the set ups with the DOP, Continuity and the 1st AD.** Other people may also listen, particularly the Sound Recordist and Boom.
3. **The gear is then set up.**
4. Under the orders of the various heads of department the crew then go about preparing the equipment for first set up. In standard coverage this is usually the “Master Shot”.
5. **The 1st AD keeps in touch with all the different areas,** helping them to coordinate and working towards the fastest possible completion. The Director often goes off set to work with the actors.
6. At some point, when the 1st AD determines that the set is close enough to ready, **the Director and Actors are called back for final rehearsal.** Usually the actors like to have one or two uninterrupted “run throughs” as the set looks and feels quite different now.
7. Once this is done, **camera rehearsals take place. The shot is worked on step-by-step,** and precise marks are established for the actors, camera and boom. Lights are adjusted, and set is dressed “to the frame”.
8. Then a **series of rehearsals or “final run throughs” commence,** making sure that all the elements coordinate smoothly. This culminates in a **“final rehearsal”**

2. The process that is associated with each “take”

If the final rehearsal is successful the **1st AD** calls out: **“FINAL CHECKS”**

As **each department** completes its checks they call out **“CLEAR”**.

1st AD calls **“QUIET ON SET. WE ARE GOING FOR A TAKE”**

Point of focus on set changes from the 1st AD to the Director. **From now on nobody speaks** or makes a sound until the shot (not the take) is “in the can”.

On the Director’s signal the **1st AD** calls out **“FIRST POSITIONS”**, and everybody moves to their first position – i.e. where they need to be when the scene or shot starts.

When the Director is ready (and judges the cast is ready too), they will signal to the **1st AD**, who then calls out **“ROLL SOUND”**.

The **Sound Recordist** starts the recorder and, when it’s up to speed, calls **“SPEED”**.

In the meantime the Clapper Loader will have already put the clapper in front of the lens – the operator signalling where to put it so that it is close enough to read.

When the **Clapper Loader** hears **“SPEED”** they call the slate and take number (ONE TAKE ONE).

Once the **Camera Operator** hears this they start the camera rolling and call **“MARK IT”**.

The **Clapper Loader** claps the board, then quickly clears the frame, usually changing the take number as soon as they do.

As soon as the **Camera Operator** has the correct opening frame they reply **“SET”** (sometimes the Director will ask “FRAME?” first).

The **Director** may give last-minute brief instructions before calling “**ACTION**”.

The shot then continues until the **Director (and only the Director)** calls “**CUT**”. (unless safety is threatened, in which case whoever perceives the threat calls “CUT”).

If the Director is not happy they will say something like “GOING AGAIN” and then give a reason. Ditto if there are problems in any other department.

In this case the appropriate notes, adjustments will be made before the 1st AD calls out “SETTING UP FOR TAKE 2. FINAL CHECKS”. And the process will start again.

If the Director is happy with the take they will say something like “GOOD FOR ME. EVERYBODY ELSE CLEAR?” If everything is clear the 1st AD will say something like “GOT THAT. MOVING ON” and the crew will move on to the next set up.

Depending on how big the move is the Director and Cast may leave set while this is done.