

PREPRODUCTION CHECKLIST

1. Make a Production Schedule:
 - a. Block out dates for all your shoots; Aim to leave at least 4 weeks for careful editing. If you are editing at the last minute, you will be stuck using your first cut rather than having time to try a few different versions, and you won't have time for polishing, fine-tuning, and post-picture lock work such as color correction and sound mixing (these can make a huge difference).
 - b. Log, take notes, and assemble selects / rough scenes while you are still in production.
 - c. Equipment can be reserved two weeks in advance. Be sure to be the first person through the equipment room door exactly two weeks before the shoot so you can keep to your schedule.
 - d. Be realistic about scheduling – a typical rule of thumb is that it takes approximately one 8-hour shooting day to cover 2-4 minutes of script time.

2. Crew Up:
 - a. Plan in advance to make sure you have all the crewmembers you need for your shoots. Make sure to ask other members of the class ahead of time to make sure you aren't scrambling for crewmembers at the last minute.
 - b. Remember, the more you are able to delegate specific jobs to specific people, the more everyone will be able to focus. Consider getting other students from class to help. At a minimum, you should consider having at least a gaffer and a grip added to your crew. Additionally, a camera assistant (especially if you're doing camera moves or complicated focus pulls), a production / costume designer, etc.

3. Visualize your project's "Look":
 - a. As you move from the written script to thinking about your piece on screen, think broadly about what kind of color palette, mood and tone you want your piece to have.
 - b. Collect images that inspire you visually and place them in your notebook.

4. Find and secure Locations:
 - a. Make a list of all the locations that appear in your script, and list a few options for each one.
 - b. Always bring a still camera with you for location scouting. Visit at several times of day if possible.
 - c. Take notes about the available light in the location. Think in terms of planning your lighting creatively around what's already there.
 - d. Think about the size of the location and what kind of options will be available for placing lights and camera positions. Will you be able to move far back enough to get wide shots if needed?
 - e. Make sure to ask a lot of questions – you should find out about availability, any limitations or scheduling issues, circuits and outlets.
 - f. If possible, you might want to move furniture away from walls to avoid casting harsh back shadows. Make sure you will be able to make the changes you

need to the location, both in terms of set dressing / props and in terms of logistics (moving furniture and lights, etc).

5. Casting:

- a. Bad actors and age-inappropriate casting are often the downfall of student films. It will really pay off to spend time and be creative about casting – Unless they are truly perfect for the part, don't just cast your friends!
- b. Be creative about how you go about looking for actors – try craigslist, local casting resources, calling local theater programs, community /adult ed acting classes, putting up flyers, just asking non-professional regular people in the community who might happen to be the right physical type for the role.
- c. Consider teaming up with other class members to hold a common casting type of open audition.
- d. Make sure your posting / flyer contains relevant info about the roles you are casting (include age, physical characteristics, short blurb describing character, date /time / length of audition, materials that need to be prepared (such as monologue), your contact info, shoot time frame, remuneration – you're not paying them, but you should always offer a DVD of the finished film for their reel and you'll feed them)
- e. Hold open auditions in a space where you can separate the person auditioning from the people who are waiting.
- f. Make a form for people to fill out (including contact info, experience, scheduling constraints, etc)
- g. Consider whether you want to ask for a monologue, a cold reading of a scene (good to test chemistry between two people), or reading from your script.
- h. Always give some directions / suggestions after the first reading. You want to see if your actor is able to change aspects of their performance / responds well to direction.
- i. Videotape auditions if possible – include CU to see facial expression and MS to see gesture / body language.
- j. Let actors know when they can expect to hear from you
- k. Consider holding callbacks if you need to see more.

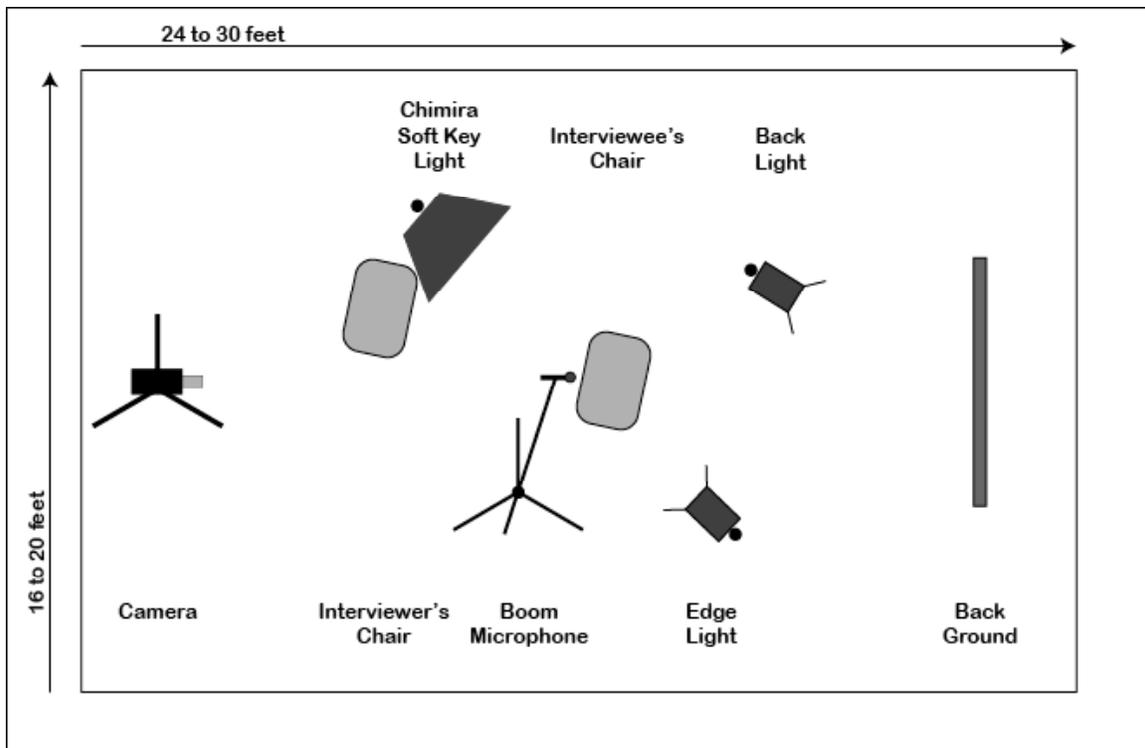
6. Production Design (questions to ask yourself):

- a. What is the Film's theme?
- b. What are its mood progressions?
- c. What kind of location should each sequence have?
- d. What statement should each location make towards the film's premise?
- e. How should each set be lit?
- f. What kinds of props go with the set?
- g. What kind of belongings do the characters keep around them?
- h. What kind of clothes does each character wear and what do the clothes tell us?
- i. How does their wardrobe vary from scene to scene?
- j. What color palette and progression would promote the film's thematic development?

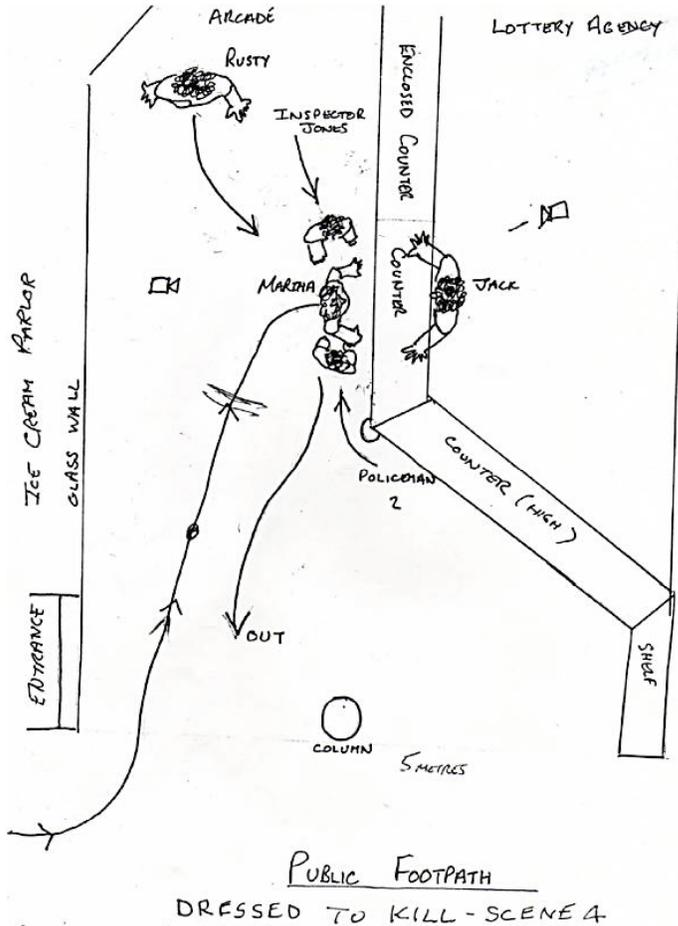
7. Prepare costumes, props, set dressing

8. QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN DEVELOPING A SHOOTING SCRIPT
- What do you need to show to establish environment?
 - When do you show establishing info?
 - When do characters move and how to show movement (follow character / make shot wider / let character leave frame / show another character's eyeline change)
 - At each significant moment, whose POV are we sharing – does POV shift? When / how?
 - What are significant eyelines and when do they change?
 - When / why does the camera move?
 - How can you use composition to show relationships (framing, focal length, arrangement of characters, etc)?
 - What kind of coverage do you need (critical moments should have more coverage / more editing options)?
9. Make a floor plan / lighting plot for each location
- Sketch a simple floor plan
 - Mark Camera positions (designate A, B, C etc)
 - "A" should be the widest shot, since it uses the most lighting and determines how subsequent shots look
 - Figure out placement of lights in the scene

Lighting plan:



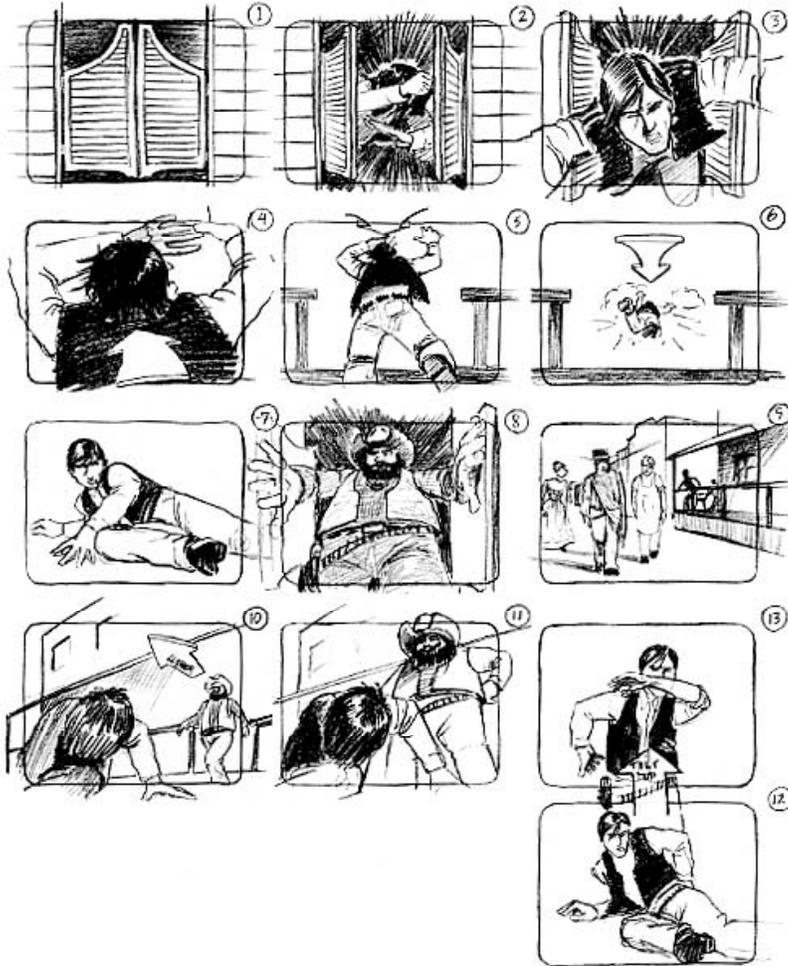
Floor plan:



10. Break down your shooting script:

- a. Number each scene in your script
- b. Bracket off each intended shot
- c. Give each bracket a shot description
- d. Make sure to leave lots of generous action overlap so you have editing options
(A great exercise is to analyze a dialogue scene in a feature film - watch the scene, make a floor plan, and try to figure out how to draw all the camera positions into the floor plan.)
- e. For each scene make a breakdown sheet(s). This allows you to organize all of the different needs of the scene - cast, wardrobe, props, make-up/hair, etc.

11. Make a Storyboard



12. Make a Shooting Schedule

- a. Location: you want to clump scenes that are in the same locations so that you can use that location up and leave and not have to come back. Coming back (pick ups) can result in a lot of extra money and headaches. Sometimes you can break different parts of one location up without issues. For example, with the apartment scenes, we can shoot inside the apartment one day, but do all of the external shots on another day. Locations also matter in accounting for any moves that are required during the day which will take up a lot of time with all of the crew.
- b. Time of day, Weather: Depending on what light you'll need some scenes may need to be shot at different times. Sometimes you can cheat the time (like dawn for dusk) but not always. Also, you want to shoot your exteriors as early as you can so if weather affects you, you can move inside and try again later if the weather gets better.
- c. Length of scene: matters for how much you can fit into a day (incl. any moves to new locations that may be required). It's difficult estimate how long to schedule each scene because it depends on the shooting style, the performances and if you have interruptions/complications. If you have rehearsals prior to shooting it will be much

- faster and smoother for all involved. I would suggest trying to shoot at least 2 pages per day in what ever order makes sense. If you shoot your entire film in one day it has very little chance of success. You need to take your time and get the coverage of each scene so that the editor has material to work with.
- d. Equipment, vehicles required.
 - e. Actors and Extras: you try to make contiguous blocks for the actors as well so that they can be done in as few days as possible. You also want to think about ordering scenes within a particular day well enough that they can have continuity of emotion and narrative for their performance. You don't want to schedule one scene where the actress is crying, and in the next she is laughing wildly. Getting a lot of extras together is difficult as well, and you want to do that all together and have the option of reusing them (with different clothes and in the background) amongst scenes.
 - f. Importance of scenes: I think it's always good to get the hardest, riskiest thing done as early as possible so that if it goes wrong you have time to move things around and readjust.