

“ Making a movie is like putting the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together. The producer’s job is to have an overview and keep the whole picture in mind while making sure all the small components fit together perfectly.”

—Denise Di Novi

Producer, Edward Scissorhands

Chapter

6

Making Your Movie

- **Your Production Schedule**
- **Note to the Director: a Word about Continuity**
- **Production! Shooting Your Movie**
- **The Editing Process**
- **Forms and Contracts**



Your Production Schedule

This is the nitty-gritty for a pre-production, production, and post-production schedule. This section will outline the procedure to make a short film from start to finish.



The next pages include a timeline and the steps of making a movie, based on an eight-week schedule. Your film might take more time, or less, but you can use it as a guide.

We've also included a few forms that your cast and crew will need to fill out (see pages 115 through 117.) These forms protect both the actors and filmmakers.

Pre-Production: Week One

• Begin writing screenplay

Writer(s)

- Once you have decided what you want to write about, discuss the idea with the director, producer and the rest of your crew. Brainstorm about ways to make the story more exciting. As the writer, it is your job to keep track of these ideas, so write them all down.
- Create character sketches for each character.
- Refresh your memory on screenplay format.
- Write an outline of your screenplay (this would include the main things that will happen and how each character works in the scene).

Director

- Go over the screenplay with the writer. Always think about how you want to tell the story visually.
- Start talking to different crew members about the positions they want to take.

Notes:



Pre-Production: Week Two

- **Re-write script**
- **Choose actors**

Director

- Work with the writer on the screenplay.
- Choose the crew.
- Hold auditions for roles.
- Pick actors for roles.
- Conduct a table reading (see “Actors” below).

Writer

- With your first draft of the screenplay finished, make copies and distribute them to everyone involved with the film.
- Gather feedback, and figure out which of the suggestions to use.
- Rewrite the screenplay.

Cinematographer

- Give feedback on screenplay.
- Start to think about location possibilities.

Actors

- Participate in a **table reading** of screenplay: all the actors sit around a table — and each takes one character. Read the screenplay out loud, even if it is a rough draft. This helps the director, writer, and the actors to figure out what works and what does not.
- Give feedback on screenplay.
- Prepare for auditions. Get familiar with all the characters.
- Once roles are assigned, start to memorize lines.

Editor

- Start conversations with director and cinematographer on shooting ideas.

Notes:



Pre-Production: Week Three

- **Next draft of screenplay**
- **Create storyboard**
- **Rehearse with actors**

Director

- Give feedback on the screenplay, paying attention to what works (and what does not) at the table reading.
- Start to work on storyboard.
- Conduct table reading of screenplay.
- Working closely with the cinematographer and editor, finish storyboard and distribute to rest of crew.
- Hold first rehearsal for actors.

Writer

- Write second draft of screenplay and give to the director.
- Listen to table reading of screenplay.
- Gather feedback and incorporate any changes.

Cinematographer

- Give feedback on screenplay to director and writer.
- Since the screenplay is near its final form, start finalizing location decisions.
- As an exercise, using your camera, practice shooting the table reading to get used to shooting people talking.

- Work with director on storyboard.
- Go over location choices with director.
- Think about whether locations need extra help in making them work for each scene. (Are props needed?)
- Go to the chosen locations and begin experimenting with shots.

Editor

- Give feedback on screenplay.
- Start to think about editing possibilities. Watch movies, television programs, and commercials for ideas.

Actors

- Perform table reading.
- Continue to study character and memorize lines.
- Participate in rehearsals.

Costume/Makeup/Hair

- What kind of clothing would best convey each character in each scene? Make a list.
- What kind of makeup and hairstyles would best convey each character in each scene? Make a list.
- Go over these lists with the director.
- Start to look for necessary clothing, props, and makeup.



Pre-Production: Week Four

- **Final draft written**
- **Rehearsals continue**
- **Prepare for production**

Director

- Give feedback to writer on screenplay.
- Work with actors on characterizations. Discuss the “story” of each scene. Discuss the motivation of the characters.
- Hold rehearsal for actors, during which you should block the scene with the actors and the cinematographer. **Blocking** the scene means not only going over the dialogue, but also how and where you want the actors — and the camera — to move during the shoot.
- Create a production schedule.
- Create a final checklist for production and go over it, making sure all is ready.
- Before production, hold a final meeting with the entire cast and crew to go over all the details. Is everyone ready?

Writer

- Third draft of screenplay is written and distributed.
- Listen to table reading conducted with actors playing their correct roles.

- Final draft is written, incorporating ideas from table reading.
- Final draft is distributed.

Cinematographer

- Go over the director’s storyboard and experiment with setting up different shots.
- Work with director on blocking.
- Continue experimenting with shots on chosen locations. *Double check supplies needed for production:*
 - Do you have enough blank tapes? Do you have back-up tapes?
 - Do you have adequate batteries? Do you have back-up batteries?
 - Do you know how to turn off the date and time display so that it will not appear on your shots?
 - Do you have the props you need for each set?

Costume/Makeup/Hair

- Have you found the necessary costumes and makeup? Make sure you have everything you need for production.



Note to the Director: a Word about Continuity

After each scene is shot, take careful notes (or assign this responsibility to someone else) of possible continuity issues. For example, in one shot your actor is eating a piece of chocolate cake. Is the cake completely gone in the next shot?

If you are shooting over several days, but the action (according to the screenplay) is supposed to take place all in one day, are your actors wearing the same clothes they were wearing in the first shoot or have they mysteriously changed clothes?

Alternatively, if your action takes place over several different days, you will want your characters to have a change of clothes for each new fictional day. All this has to be determined before shooting begins so that the actors (or the costume person) can be sure to bring the appropriate clothes.

Either you or the costume person should, at the beginning of each new scene, write down the names of the actors in the scene. Next to their names, write down the different clothes they will need. Then, mark down the place in the script where the change of clothes should occur.

The same is true with makeup. The makeup person should keep track of makeup, as it is needed scene-to-scene, paying special notice to continuity.

Create a shot list. This is a list of every shot you want and need to make. You should go over this with the cinematographer and make sure you do not have too many for each day. After your first day, you will have a better idea of how long each shot takes. You may need to re-create your list if you think it will take too long.

Production! Shooting Your Movie



To the Director, Part II:

When the actors are in their places and the camera is ready, you shout: “**Camera!**” That lets the cameraperson know it is time to start shooting.

Then, you loudly say: “**Action!**” That is a signal for the actors to begin.

When you shoot a scene, watch very carefully. Is the scene working? Do you like it? Or do you think the actors could do better? If you’re not sure about a scene, and if your camera has playback capability, you can rewind and look at it.

When the scene is over, wait at least five seconds, letting the camera roll, and then shout: “**Cut!**” Only then should people feel they can talk freely on and near the set. The delay will give you time to record over your voice (so it will not end up in the movie) when you start shooting the next scene.

Once you have reviewed the scene, you and the camera and sound people will need to make a decision quickly. If you are all happy

with what you have shot, move on to the next scene. If not, try it again.

There are many reasons why you would re-shoot a scene. You might not like the way the leading actor is saying her or his lines. Someone might have sneezed during filming. Or, you might have to brainstorm how to set up the scene better.

Shoot as many takes as needed, but remember your time constraints and the patience of your cast and crew.

Before you do a new take, you need to tell the actors what you want them to do differently, tell the cinematographer how you want it shot differently, or talk to the art director about how you want the scene to look different. Make sure your direction is specific, then shoot the scene again.

After each day’s shooting, review your shot list. Did you get every shot you needed? If you missed one or two, is there a way for you to make it up in the next day’s shoot? Try not to get too far behind.

Notes:



Production: Weeks Five & Six

- **Directing**
- **Shooting**

Director

- Get to the shoot early to make sure that everything is ready.
- Work closely with the cinematographer, checking shots on the viewfinder or a playback monitor.
- Stick to your schedule.
- Always remember your storyboard.

Writer

- Although this may not be necessary, be prepared to make screenplay changes throughout production.
- Help with continuity.

- **Acting**
- **Getting ready to edit**

Cinematographer

- Place props as needed.
- Set up and start shooting.
- Be flexible.

Editor

- Thinking about how you want to edit the film, watch the shooting and make helpful suggestions to the cameraperson and/or director at the end of each shoot.
- Start to review the **dailies** — the daily tapes of each day's shooting. Make a list of the shots you like and, using the numerical code on the camera, mark down the time code and the tape number so you can find the shot you want when you need it.

Notes:

Post Production-Pulling It All Together: Weeks Seven & Eight

- **Finish editing movie**
- **Choose and lay down music and sound effects**
- **Hold a screening of the film**
- **Have a wrap party**

Prepare for an interesting and intense couple of weeks. Editing your film, even though it is shot, will take a lot of time and effort. It is in the editing room that the film in your head becomes a reality on the screen — a challenging transition to make.



Note to the Editor and Director

First task: make a log (a list) of all the raw footage. This is a list of all the shots with the corresponding number of where they appear. This is *really important!* You will find yourself referring to this list over and over again. Be sure to mark the list with all the vital information you need. For example:

Tape counter number on your VCR or edit machine	Sample scene description
1:01	Close-up: boy and girl (happy) walking down sidewalk (Good sound. Bright light.)
1:45	Medium shot: girl screaming when she sees a monster (Really good.)
3:12	Close-up: monster tentacle grabbing boy's foot (A little dark, see if there is another.)
3:50	Amazing long shot of monster slithering away (Gave me chills.)

If the editor has already made a log based on her/his viewing of each day's dailies, then the editor should review the shots with the director.

As you log the footage, watch each take of each shot and make a separate list of which takes you like the best and where they are on the tape. This is known as your **select** list, and your favorite takes are called your **selects**. Having a select list makes it easier to find everything when you start editing.

Once you have logged all the footage and chosen your selects, you can start editing the rough cut. How you do it depends on your equipment.

Editing can be the most technical aspect of making a movie. If you are lucky, you will have access to some professional digital (computerized) editing equipment. If this is the case, rely on the operator or owner of the equipment to show you how to use it. The advantage to digital editing is that you can edit your movie in any order you want. If you change your mind about an edit, it's easy to go back and lengthen it, shorten it, or try something different.

Notes:

THE EDITING PROCESS



Director

- Work with the editor on the rough cut — the first attempt at editing the film.
- Your editor may bring new thoughts to what shoots will work best. Listen to what he/she says. Work together. Be a creative, collaborative team.
- Lay down the sound effects.
- Choose the music for the film.
- Before you finalize everything, show the film to your whole crew to get their reactions. Discuss the film with the editor. Make whatever changes you think you should after these talks.

Editor

- You will either create a rough cut on your own, or, more likely, will work with the director and perhaps a couple of other members of the crew on editing a rough cut.
- Once you have the rough cut, show it to the director (and other involved parties) and see if he/she has any comments.
- When everyone is happy with the rough cut, you should begin putting the finishing touches on the movie. Again, what you can do will depend on your equipment. If

possible, add music and sound effects that will help give the movie more impact.

- Clean up any glitches.
- Make sure the sound levels are consistent throughout.

Rest of the Crew

- Participate in the editing process. Make suggestions, but even more important, *observe*. See how a film is put together.
- Hold a party (in Hollywood, it's called a “wrap” party, because it celebrates “wrapping” up the film). Make sure everyone who had anything to do with the film is invited.

Be proud of what you created.

Hold a screening of your film!

Forms and Contracts



LOCATION CONTRACT

Permission is hereby granted to _____ (hereinafter referred to as "Producer"), to use the property and adjacent, located at

_____ for the purpose of photographing and recording scenes (interior and/or exterior) for motion pictures with the right to exhibit and license others to exhibit all or any part of said scenes in motion pictures throughout the world; said permission shall include the right to bring personnel and equipment (including props and temporary sets) onto said property, and to remove the same therefrom after completion of work.

The above permission is granted for a period of _____day(s), from _____ to _____ at the agreed-upon rental price of _____.

Producer hereby agrees to hold the undersigned harmless of and from any and all liability and loss which the undersigned may suffer, or incur by reason of any accidents or other damages to the said premises, caused by any of the employees or equipment, on the above-mentioned premises, ordinary wear and tear of the premises in accordance with this agreement excepted.

The undersigned does hereby warrant and represent that the undersigned has full right and authority to enter into this agreement concerning the above-described premises, and that the consent or permission of no other person, firm, or corporation is necessary in order to enable Producer to enjoy full rights to use of said premises, herein above mentioned, and the undersigned does hereby indemnify and agree to hold Producer free and harmless from and against any and all loss, costs, liability, damages, or claims of any nature, including but not limited to attorney's fees, arising from, growing out of, or concerning a breach of above warranty.

Signed

Lessee

Title

Signed

Address



TALENT RELEASE

I _____ give permission to _____ to use my name, likeness, pictures, and/or voice in connection with the motion picture or video tentatively titled _____ for broadcast, direct exhibition, and any subsidiary purposes whatsoever. The foregoing consent is granted with the understanding that _____ is the copyright holder of _____ and has sole discretion to cut and edit the film and/or voice recording of my appearance as seen fit. I specifically waive any rights of privacy or publicity, or any other rights I may have with respect to such use of my name, likeness, pictures, and/or voice.

I hereby certify and represent that I have read the above and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Signed _____ Dated _____

Printed Name _____

Guardian Signature _____ Dated _____
(If under 18 years of age)



Film Title

Director	Date
Producer(s)	Day of Days
Sunrise (time)	Weather:
Sunset(time)	

Schedule (scenes you will be shooting that day)

Set Description	Scenes	Location

Talent

Cast	Role	Make-up Time	Call Time (on set)

Production Crew

Time In	Time out
Director	
Writer	
Cinematographer	
Art Director	
Make-Up Artist	
Hair Stylist	
Costume Designer	
Sound Technician	
Location Manager	
Caterer	
Misc. Crew	

Epilogue: Looking Back

Did you like making a film? Is it fun to work collaboratively with others to create something that never existed before?

What surprised you about what you learned?

Did you like working collaboratively in a group? Why or why not?

Would you like to make another movie? Why? Why not?

What are some of the things you would do differently if you had to do it all over again?
Did you make any mistakes?
What did you learn from them?

What would you think if, after you finished your film, someone else changed it?

Hopefully, you ended up loving the process of filmmaking, and this is just the beginning of your creative exploration.

Be bold.

Be creative.

As they say in Hollywood, "break a leg."