

JOB PROFILE 1ST ASSISTANT CAMERA / (FOCUS PULLER)

1st Assistant Camera (1st AC) is an independent profession and, as the responsible technician, leads the Camera Department in consultation with the Director of Photography (DoP). 1st AC's act as the voice and liaison for the Camera Department and, bound by instructions, carry out all technical requirements to best implement the desired visual style.

Tasks

Before filming begins, the 1st Assistant Camera assembles the required camera equipment and tests it for completeness and functionality. During filming, she/he is responsible for precisely setting, adjusting, and moving the focus and other technical parameters during the shot; depending on the DoP's instructions, this also includes light metering and aperture settings. Furthermore, the 1st Assistant Camera is responsible for the flawless operation of the equipment and is an important member of the DoP's team. On very small productions, she/he also take on the duties of the 2nd Assistant Camera.

For the production, the 1st Assistant Camera is the point of contact for all technical matters concerning the camera department. She/he handles additional equipment, extra personnel, and equipment swaps. The members of the camera crew (other 1st Assistants, 2nd Assistants, Video Operators, or Camera Trainees) report to the 1st Assistant Camera.

In very large film productions, it is common to divide the tasks between two employees: a focus puller who deals exclusively with focus control and focus design, and a 1st Assistant Camera for all other tasks mentioned here.

Requirements

The role involves providing technical, organizational, and practical support in the production of film, television, and video productions. This requires advanced theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the following areas:

1. Photography
2. Optics and filter science
3. electronic recording and storage formats/systems
4. Video technology and signal transmission
5. Film and television production workflow
6. Film lighting: characteristics and applications
7. Camera technology: handling, functionality, applications, and compatibility of all common camera systems, including accessories, as well as techniques and possibilities of electronic and traditional cinematography and their differences
8. Film materials, film processing technology, and film editing
9. basic knowledge of post-production and color correction techniques
10. Timecode (camera settings, synchronization with multiple cameras)

1ST ASSISTANT CAMERA / FOCUS PULLER - AREA OF ACTIVITY:

Divided into the production phases of pre-production, filming and post-production, the scope of work of the 1st Assistant Camera includes:

Pre-Production:

- Reading the screenplay, particularly in regard to special filming techniques and special and/or additional equipment required.
- According to prior agreement with the DoP: compilation of a list of camera equipment (including the DoP's own equipment), ordering additional equipment for temporary use, communication with film production company and camera rental houses.
- Organizing a camera crew – depending on the project requirements: additional: 1st AC for B camera, 2nd AC('s), Video Playback or Video Assist Operator, DIT, Data Wrangler – and conduct negotiations with film production company – also regarding fees, number of camera testing days, etc.
- Organizing recording material (film stock) or media for data storage (best in consultation with the DIT or post-production)
- Establishing communication with post-production according to the DoP's specifications in terms of design, and if applicable, data and quality assurance.
- Assembling the equipment at the camera rental house: Functional and visual inspection of all equipment; camera set-up according to the needs of the DoP, tests of lenses, cameras and footage; control of the tests and, if necessary, test repetition and exchange of equipment, assuring proper and complete functionality.
- Visual check of all recorded test footage (film or digital), especially if it is an insurance requirement
- Coordination with VFX and creation of a lens grid
- If necessary, support of the DIT in workflow test runs in addition to post-production work.
- If necessary, clarify additional equipment needed with Key Grip, regarding fixings and rigging (for stunts, cars, top shots, etc.) and additional equipment such as gimbal, drone, etc.

Filming:

- Setting up and dismantling the camera, and altering its setup for different shots (in cooperation with 2nd AC & Grip)
- Changing lenses, filters and film magazines or recording media
- Check the camera, lenses and filters for functionality and cleanliness.
- Setting all camera and lens parameters: gate size, aperture, variable shutter; reverse mode, slow motion, fast motion/time laps, ramps; assuring flicker-free recording, frame rate; if necessary, adjustment of all other camera parameters (system, recording, monitoring, meta data, user buttons, etc.) in consultation with DoP
- Connection and control of any other additional camera devices (e.g. Matte Box, remote focus, video assist, monitors, special devices, etc.)

- Protecting the lens from any disruptive light leakage into the lens (in consultation with DoP)
- Responsibility for focus and focus pulling - the precise setting, tracking and shifting of focus during the shot - according to the given technical situation and dramaturgical specifications.
- Inspection of the camera's gate for any debris, such as dust or particles when shooting on film stock; inspect digital recordings through playback or consultation with the DIT
- set the basic settings and check the control monitor as well as the vector scope and waveform monitor
- Carrying out minor repairs of the cameras and its accessories
- Establish communication with the film lab/post-production and the Editing Department, especially regarding creative questions on behalf of the DoP, as well as in matters of data and quality assurance in consultation with the DIT.
- Communication with film production company and camera rental house(s) regarding the temporary use of additional equipment and personnel.
- Attendance at dailies/rushes demonstrations depending on the type of footage (studio, DVD, online, etc.)
- Assessment of reasonableness and safety for team and equipment

Post-Production in cooperation with 2nd AC / DIT / DAT or VAO / VPO:

- Check that the camera equipment is complete
- Clean and return of the camera equipment to the camera rental house(s)
- Settlement with the film production company; ensuring remuneration is as negotiated for yourself and the team

Epilogue

There is currently no established job description for this profession. Therefore, in cooperation with the Austrian Association of Cinematographers, aac, this job description was formulated based on current production processes, see <https://www.aacamera.org/berufsbild-kameraassistent-in/> and Austrian Union - <https://www.youunionfilm.at/filmschaffende/berufsbilder/#1Kameraassistent>.