

Overview of Role

An Assistant Set Decorator reports to and works with the Set Decorator (SD) to realise the vision for the look and visual style of a production, by assisting with the sourcing suitable props and set dressings on larger productions. They break down the script for set dressing and props requirements and undertake research on locations, period and characters in advance of filming. Under the direction of the SD they will be given their own sets to look after. They work with the SD to agree on the style of props such as furniture, fabrics, wallpaper, and communicate this to the Assistant Production Buyer (APB). They may manage junior colleagues depending on the size of the department.

Core Responsibilities:

These core responsibilities are provided as a guide and are not exhaustive. The exact responsibilities in a particular job will vary depending on the scale / budget band / genre of the production.

1. Interpret the brief and carry out research

- Read the script and interpret the creative direction and vision
- Familiarise yourself with the PD's and SD's reference material
- Liaise with the SD to review the brief and clarify the design requirements and creative direction
- Confirm that you have a shared understanding of the design using visual representation as necessary
- Establish lines of communication across departments to track progress and any changes against production schedules
- Confirm the scope, depth, timing, specific objectives and format for the research
- Collate information regarding the period, genre, and type of production in relation to the design requirements
- Conduct research and gather relevant information and references, briefing those assisting you with the research
- Check that the information you wish to use is available and that you are legally allowed to use it
- Present research material to the Set Decorator
- Record all sources of information to store with the research
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information in line with organisational procedures

2. Determine production design requirements

- Obtain a copy of the schedule of works that has been created by the Production Designer, Supervising Art Director, Set Decorator, Prop Master, 1st AD, etc
- Prepare own script break down
- Read and confirm the set/dress and strike schedule
- Record key information from production meetings which could impact the Set Dec department
- Hold meetings with the Set Decorating Assistants and Assistant Buyers to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities
- Attend location reces to check how requirements may impact the set design and materials used

3. Develop and present design concepts

- Assist with the development of a design philosophy and specification which meets the production requirements.
- Consider the requirements from the script breakdown and decide what needs to be hired, and what will need to be manufactured or purchased
- In conjunction with and under the direction of the SD, arrange a Show and Tell to gain feedback on your design direction
- Consider the environmental impact and sustainability of design options
- Assess changes to the design brief and suggest alternatives when it is not possible to produce one solution that meets all requirements
- Develop alternative solutions when a different approach is suggested
- Confirm changes requested by decision makers and incorporate them into requirements.

4. Create Drawings to meet Production Requirements

- Access Art Department Drawings that need Set Dec input
- Assist with the preparation of drawings and manufacturing plans specifically for the Set Dec department
- Ensure clear communication with the SD and gain approval of drawings at all stages
- Oversee the completion, filing, and distribution of each plan to the relevant crew

5. Procure external services and source materials and supplies

- Maintain production confidentiality protocols confirm all suppliers have signed non-disclosure agreements (NDA's)
- Consider lead times and production schedule when considering bespoke builds or off the shelf items
- Brief the Assistant Production Buyer on requirements
- Brief Action Props on all requirements in conjunction with the SD
- In conjunction with SD, decide whether to purchase or hire props and the ongoing use of them
- Liaise with product placement for set dressing as required
- Source props from suitable suppliers e.g. props houses, auction houses
- Check locations can accommodate the specific items
- Ensure clearance is gained by the Production team before items are used on set
- Ensure the team are up to date with all orders and deliveries and that they have been allocated to the correct sets
- Ensure all items are logged, filed and checked
- Ensure that potential suppliers are adequately briefed about requirements and constraints including access to locations and any specific rules or regulations

6. Assist with design manufacturing

- Brief Set Decoration Art Directors, Draughts people, or specialist suppliers/ Heads of Department (HoDs) on the requirements if responsible for a particular set
- Consult with experts and ensure the relevant technical information is clearly expressed in the drawings and other material
- Check that the drawings / designs fulfil your brief at all stages of the design process
- Get approval from SD before any drawings or plans are signed off

7. Brief graphics department

- Explain the design specifications and show supporting information such as the nature, style, content, and creative intention of the graphic elements to the Graphic Designer
- Identify requirements and limitations of the design process related to graphic elements.
- Review artworks as the process proceeds and obtain sign off from the Set Decorator

8. Dress sets

- Liaise with other departments to ensure the scheduling and specific location requests have been considered.
- Check for clear plans and instructions of how the set or location is to be dressed if not your own set
- Identify any specialist equipment that may be needed for dressing the set
- Carry out set dressing
- Oversee the placement of all props
- Clearly brief any standby teams for re-set requirements during a shoot
- When working on location, take photographs of existing furniture/objects that are to be removed, or possibly re-positioned
- Update the Production Designer and Set Decorator as the work is being carried out, sharing photographs, to ensure their vision is being adhered to

9. Manage the work of teams

- Check that all members of the team understand the requirements and specific activities they are responsible for
- Monitor crew and suppliers' performance to ensure that contract terms are being fulfilled
- Provide individuals with the opportunity to contribute to their own personal development
- Devise a work plan with junior colleagues that will enable them to carry out the desired work
- Provide feedback to your team on the overall production and its progress and seek their feedback on ways to improve future projects

10. Comply with Health & Safety requirements

- Keep up to date with health and safety policies and procedures for the production
- Identify production working practices and aspects which may harm you or others
- Consult with production's H&S advisor(s) to confirm you've covered all potential risks.
- Check with the Location Risk Assessor for anything which might be a risk or hazard to your team working onsite

- Confirm that risk assessments for the work of your team have been undertaken and your team complies with health and safety legislation and procedures
- Update and maintain H & S information relating to your team
- Ask your representatives on set (standby team) to contact you immediately if they are asked to do something that might impact safety
- Ensure you know who the relevant person to report accidents or near misses to and to is, and how they would need to receive the report (i.e. in person, via email etc)
- Consider working hours for your team and ensure nobody is working longer hours than deemed safe

Role Specific Skills:

- Script breakdown and interpreting the creative vision of the PD and SD
- Creation of mood boards and drawings for approval by the SD
- Oversee development of own sets as allocated by the SD
- Network and liaise with other departments such as locations, props, etc
- Utilising knowledge of prop houses, auction houses, manufacturers, etc
- Set dressing

Other / Transferable Skills:

- Communication: interpreting other's requirements and communicating requirements to other departments and colleagues
- Team-working: collaboration within own and with other departments, liaising with suppliers and Production team
- Planning: scheduling and planning practical requirements for materials and supplies to meet Set Decoration needs
- Problem-solving: contingency planning and resolving issues with suggested props so that productions remain on schedule

Attributes:

- Resilience and enthusiasm: adapt positively to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met. Proactive and explores new ideas and non-standard ways of working which will enhance and deliver the best results for the production
- Productivity: organises work effectively and achieves required results within deadlines. Demonstrates the drive and energy to get things done in pressurised situations and escalates appropriately when necessary

- Ethics and integrity: honest and principled in all of their actions and interactions. Respectful and inclusive of others, and meets the ethical requirements of their profession
- Flexibility: willing to both listen and learn and to accept changing priorities and working requirements and has the flexibility to maintain high standards in a changing production environment
- Professional development: develop an ethos to learn and seek out learning and networking opportunities, identifying those that will be most beneficial.