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# STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO SHORT FILM PRODUCTION

## **STEP BY STEP**

### **MAKING YOUR SHORT FILM**

#### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A SHORT FILM?**

Longer than you think!

This small booklet is geared towards filmmakers starting out as producers, or writer/directors who can't find a producer, or even worse, writers or directors who have a producer, who has turned out to be shit. Yep! We've all been there!

Give yourself a good 4 months from writing the script to shooting it, especially if you're an "independent" filmmaker ie you don't have any money, that's most of us so you're not alone.

If you have to crowd fund, there's no shame in that, (even Spike Lee has done it) give yourself a good 6 months before the shoot. Crowds in the crowd-funding bit of the word take time to build and capture. So, it's really important to factor in fundraising time for your project. Fundraising sucks up a lot of time and energy, and you're less likely to get money if you don't give yourself the time to prepare.

Set aside at least two months to prepare everything you need before the campaign goes live, ie video pitch, tons of pictures, some of the copy you are going to use to entice people to give you their hard earned cash, a bunch of people to big your project up on social media, the email and contact addresses of everyone you have ever met since you were born, their friends and family and any organisations you have ever had any contact with including the staff of the hospital you were born in. I'm not kidding!!! Well maybe a little bit



Failing that, if you really want to make your film, then take a leaf out of Kim Kardashian's playbook and go into shameless filmmaker mode, which is beg, steal and borrow to get your film made!

This step by step isn't set in stone, I think you might find it useful to break down all the tasks you have to accomplish to make a short film happen, and believe me there are many, and the paperwork is huge, especially if you get money from a funding body, expect to jump through many hoops before you get your paws on that money. (Check out the Production Templates for all the paperwork you might need to make your short).

There's not that much to add really, I think it's self explanatory. The tasks in blue are for the director or writer/director to do. The tasks in black are producing tasks, Either way, it all needs to be done. They say that "preparation is everything", so i hope this helps you prepare, whether you're a student, or writer, director or producer. Good luck 🍀

Everything you might need to get funding/money, prep, shoot and complete your film is arranged in a simple:

### **TO DO list.**

Each section is split into different coloured jobs

1. Black is mainly production tasks (What a producer would do if you had a good one)
2. Blue for writing & directing tasks
3. Green for Heads of departments (HOD) tasks, ie tasks that a 1st AD or (DOP) Director of Photography, casting director, production designer, editor, costume, make-up, etc might do
4. **Bold & Underlined** tasks are really, important TO DOs

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## 4 MONTHS BEFORE THE SHOOT

Target Date	TASK	Date Completed
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### TO DO 1

1. Script rewrites if required
2. Director to **storyboard** script
3. Write **synopsis** for attracting interest & funding
4. Research images for **mood board** also the DOP

### TO DO 2

1. Search for DOP, storyboard artist, HODs - also director does this
2. Start thinking about a website for the project.
3. Continue storyboards if unfinished
4. Buy **Domain name** for film or production company
5. Make a list of contacts who can help you in any way (**database**) -also Director's contacts
6. Continue script rewrites if required

### TO DO 3

1. **Breakdown** the script
2. Sift through applicants for storyboard artists, DOP and HODs- Director also helps with this
3. Make initial contact with potential HODS you are interested in
4. Put together images for mood board
5. Put together images for website/social media re look and feel of the film
6. Write text/copy to accompany images on website

### TO DO 4

1. Interview Crew/HODs and make offers - Director too
2. Organise a **read-through/workshop** of the script with friends/actors- take photos of event, could be useful for social media
3. Make a list of people who can be **potential funders/investors** or anyone who can give you stuff for the film
4. Make a list of people who are **potential audience** -Director too
5. Make a list of people who can donate stuff for crowd funding **perks**
6. Contact organisations, charities with shared interest in subject of film

### 3 MONTHS BEFORE THE SHOOT

#### TO DO 1

1. Begin production prep
2. Start putting together a **production schedule**
3. Refine script breakdown
4. Contact organisations & charities for endorsements if needed
5. Discuss & put together Web design layout on paper
6. **Have 2nd read through of next draft** with other people you trust/ actors you might know - and some potential crew
7. Take photos of read-through

#### TO DO 2

1. **PreP meeting with DOP**
2. **Start web design**
3. **Refine storyboards with DOP input**
4. **Prepare cast breakdown for actors** and agents
5. Write **shoe string budget** and **ideal budget** for film

#### TO DO 3

1. Think about crowd funding pitch ideas & other funding sources, get something down on paper
2. Prepare **social media & crowd funding campaign**
3. **Write script** for crowd funding **video pitch**
4. Contact people who can donate or help with perks and rewards
5. Prepare adverts for remainder of HODS, designer, editor, composer etc
6. Contact other funding possibilities
7. Contact **people to crew** for the crowd funding pitch video

#### TO DO 4

1. Write **delivery schedule**
2. Place **casting call** for actors
3. **Shoot** crowd fund **video pitch**-(Not more than 1 day)-
4. Ask for 10% more money than you need to cover crowd fund costs
5. Set up facebook fan page & twitter accounts for the film
6. Send reminder to people donating perks
7. Send reminder to crew shooting crowd funding video

## 2 MONTHS BEFORE THE SHOOT

### TO DO 1

1. Prepare possible **location lists**
2. Sift through replies from potential Hods
3. Web design & **storyboards complete or near completion**
4. **Edit crowd fund pitch video**-(1 to 2 days)
5. Take photos of crowd funding perks and add them to campaign sites
8. Plan **audience strategy** for the film
6. **Sift through reply from actors or casting director if you have one**
7. Organise audition space and schedule
8. Submit crowd funding pitch to crowd funding platform

### TO DO 2

1. Interview remainder HODS and make offers
2. Complete perks and rewards
3. Social media goes live (**face book, website & twitter**)
4. Email database re website and other social media activities
5. Call actors & agents with audition slots
6. Everyone working on the film to contact their network via social media and your database, to direct them to crowd funding pitch.

### TO DO 3

1. Crowd funding goes live
2. Preproduction meetings with HODS
3. **Auditions actors**
4. Organise recces
5. Start remainder of crew search or ask HODS for recommendations
6. **DOP suggest post production places & contacts**
7. Prod meetings logistics-transport, catering, insurance etc -everyone
8. Contact & update database re crowd funding at least 2X a this week and twice every week until at least 6 months - a year after the film is done.

### TO DO 4

1. **Pre-production meetings** with various department heads
2. **Continue audition for actors if needed**
3. Get remainder of crew
4. **Go on recces** with available **HODS**
5. Contact and update database at least once a week

## 1 MONTH BEFORE THE SHOOT

### TO DO 1

1. Continue **recces** and complete where possible
2. Develop **shot list and story execution**
3. Initial **shooting schedule** - with **1ST AD**
4. Production **meetings** with **HODS**
5. Production Prep catering, insurance, equipment hire, locations etc
6. Contact and update database at least 3X a week

### TO DO 2

1. Production Prep continues- **everyone**
2. Secure Actors with **Cast Release forms**
3. Secure Locations with **Location Agreements**
4. Production **meetings** with crew
5. Complete as much production tasks and paperwork
6. Contact & update database about end of crowd funding campaign
7. End of crowd funding campaign

### TO DO 3

1. Production Prep - adjust budget and shoot if necessary
2. Production **meetings** with **crew** to complete all tasks
3. Secure equipment & other production logistics
4. Finish shooting schedule with **1ST AD**
5. Create **unit list** and **facilities list**
6. Buy a drive for the film
7. **Director rehearse actors include specific action rehearsals**
8. Contact & update database (hopefully you got some money if not all of it- don't forget crowd funding platforms take a cut!)

### TO DO 4

1. Complete production prep - **everyone**
2. **Director rehearse with actors if needed**
3. Production enquiries filtered through Producer & **1ST AD**
4. **Any final adjustments with actors + fittings, stills sessions** etc
5. Contact post-production companies
6. Complete paperwork, **Insurance** & contracts etc
7. Send out **call sheets, movement orders & unit lists** to cast and crew
8. Complete **delivery schedule**
9. Contact & update database also website & social media platforms

## YOU MADE IT THE SHOOT

**SHOOT DAY 1** Photos & Behind the scenes

**SHOOT DAY 2** Photos & Behind the scenes

**SHOOT DAY 3** Photos & behind the scenes

**SHOOT DAY 4** Photos & Behind the scenes

### POST PRODUCTION-MONTH 1

#### TO DO 1

1. Compress all **rushes**
2. First **assembly** of film- **Editor & director**
3. Secure post production house for **grade** and **online** if you haven't
4. Discuss and Prep Electronic Press Kit (**EPK**) + **Director**
5. Research **Film Festivals & VOD** platforms that show short films
6. Add behind the scenes photos, videos & other content to website & social media
7. Contact database re completion of shoot

#### TO DO 2

1. **Rough Cut** watch and discuss, take notes from trusted people
2. **Director** - take a couple of days with rough cut before giving notes to editor
3. Update database with progress report
4. Refine delivery schedule

#### TO DO 3

1. Edit notes from execs- especially if making a funded short
2. Let film breathe
3. Put together your **EPK**
4. Contact database with updates

#### TO DO 4

1. **Fine cut** - show a few trusted people, **test the film** and adjust to make story clearer if necessary
2. Complete delivery schedule
3. Contact database, update website and social media

## POST PRODUCTION-MONTH 2

### TO DO 1

1. Picture lock
2. Start of sound design
3. Prep titles & credit sequence (Get logo files)
4. Contact database

### TO DO 2

1. Start grade- Director & DOP in post house
2. Organise venue for wrap party/First screening
3. Contact database

### TO DO 3

1. Sound design complete
2. Refine festival strategy-register your film on sites like film freeway, short film depot,
3. Invite relevant funders, interested parties and **potential funders of your next film(s) Local press**, film reviewers/bloggers, people you might want to work with in the near future, filmmaking organisations, to screening(s)

### TO DO 4

1. Grading and online complete- Don't forget to get the film in different digital formats eg DCP, Quick time,
2. EPK ready (Take screen grabs from graded shots if required)
3. Get digital copies ready- the odd film festival still insists on DVD screeners, so it might be worth burning a few copies
4. Contact database with your plans for the film

## POST PRODUCTION-MONTH 3 AND BEYOND

### TO DO 1

1. Apply to first film festival from your festival strategy.
2. Organise Cast and crew screening cum wrap party
3. Put Distribution plan in action (Do at least one Q & A screening)
4. Start writing the next script or start ideas for your next film
5. Go to at least one film industry networking event per month to promote your film
6. Contact database with updates

### TO DO 2

1. Apply to minimum 50-100 film festivals
2. Continue DIY Distribution
3. Contact database at regular intervals with updates, offers, screenings with Q & A, acceptance to festivals and other free content of interest to them
4. Get your glad rags ready for attending festivals and maybe getting an award?! 🎉