

The Properties Department

As a rule of thumb, props are defined as anything that is handled by an actor, or is clearly identified within the script. Also included are fake license plates for picture cars, dummies for stunts, director chairs for the shooting crew etc. Props differ from set decorations in that they are generally scripted items that actors touch. Set decorations may become props if the actor interacts with them during filming. Good props can give a character substance, give the actor something to interact with and when shot alone as a close-up can be used as a dramatic storytelling device.

Property Master

The Property Master (or Prop Master) is the head of the Property department, also known as Props. The Property Master is responsible for the design, acquisition, placement and safe handling of all props required for a production, with the approval of the director, showrunners and sometimes the actors. The Prop Masters directly hire the rest of their crew and may arrange for additional personnel such as Technical Advisors and Food Stylists.

The Prop Master's main kit consists of a trailer filled with bins of commonly used prop materials and specific items bought especially for the show, an on-set kit, carts, and director chairs. The Prop Master is responsible for making sure all props are rigged to be safe for talent to use and securing equipment when not in use. The Prop Master must employ a variety of tricks to make certain gags work. Sometimes heavy collaboration between departments is required in this role. The Prop Master delegates tasks to the Assistant Prop Master while also attending production meetings, overseeing the ordering of props, creating and tracking a budget, managing the fabrication of props by vendors or Property Assistants, and ensuring that everything is organized and on hand before the shoot date.

Assistant Prop Master

The Assistant Prop Master carries out tasks assigned by the Prop Master. Sometimes the Assistant Prop Master will act as the Prop Master assigned to the set if the Prop Master is away from set. The Assistant Prop Master is responsible for keeping track of prop continuity during filming, working on clerical duties such as buying props, ensuring all props and rentals are returned to prop houses, budgeting, and may assist with the Prop Master's prop breakdown.

Property Assistants

The Property Master may staff additional Property Assistants as needed. They may be responsible for organizing props on the trailer or lockup, director chairs, cleaning and safeguarding props, repairing props, assisting on set, and handling background continuity and props.

Property Buyer

Property Buyers, much like the Set Dressing Buyers are responsible for much of the purchasing for their department. Prop Buyers will know the prop houses and vendors to turn to purchase anything the Property Master Requests.

Armorer/Assistant Armorer

The Armorer must be a trained and skilled expert in firearm and weapon safety. Armorers are responsible for obtaining and safeguarding weapons, following weapon safety protocol, inspecting weapons in front of the 1st AD, actors, and anyone else on set who would like to ensure that the weapons are safe to use, and educating the cast and crew on weapons safety. At a minimum, Armorers must have any required weapons permits and must complete the free firearms safety training through IATSE TTF Safety First!