

Sound Assistant/Trainee

Industries:

Film

Departments:

Sound

The lowdown

Providing general back up and support to Sound Crew

Checking all stock, microphones and batteries

Making sure that the sound department runs as smoothly as possible

Is this role right for me?

To do this role, you will need to:

Have a basic understanding of electronics and sound recording

Have good working knowledge of a variety of microphones and how to position them

Have good listening skills

Be fit and practical

Be able to anticipate

Have good timing

Have precise attention to detail

Be diplomatic and sensitive on set

Understand the relevant health and safety laws and procedures

What does a Sound Assistant do?

Sound Assistants usually begin work on the first day of shooting, arriving on set half an hour before call time, with the Sound Crew. They help to unload the sound van, and working with the Boom Operator, check that all equipment is prepared. During rehearsals, Sound Assistants have to pay close attention in case they are required to move microphones. They may also have to help the Boom Operator to plan for difficult shots.

Sound Assistants also help to lay carpet if required to stop any unwanted noise being picked up from the studio or location floor. They make sure that headphones for checking dialogue continuity are in good working order. If there is unwanted noise during recording (talking, coughing, traffic, etc.), Sound Assistants have to deal with it as quickly and tactfully as possible so that the shooting schedule is not disrupted.

Sound Assistants help the Production Sound Mixer to attach clip microphones to actors' clothing. They also help the Boom Operator to negotiate cables on the studio floor during recording. At the end of each shooting day, they make sure that all the sound discs containing the sound rushes are correctly packaged and labelled. They are employed until the end of the shoot, when they make sure that all equipment is carefully packed away and that any remaining sound paperwork is handed over to the production office.

On larger productions where Sound Assistants are required to swing a second boom, a Sound Trainee carries out general running duties. They also shadow the Production Sound Mixer and Boom Operator, learning while gaining invaluable on-the-job experience.

Sound Assistants usually work with the same Production Sound Mixer and Boom Operator. Most Sound Assistants work on both film and television productions. The hours are long and the work often involves long periods working away from home.

Will I need a qualification

You don't need a formal qualification but you will need specialist training in sound recording. There are many courses in sound production available at different levels. There are also some industry-led training schemes.

If you are considering taking a film production course in higher education, the following courses have been rigorously assessed by the film industry and awarded the Creative Skillset Tick for the high standard of education they provide and the degree to which they prepare you for a career in film:

What's the best route in?

You can get started in the industry by finding a Production Sound Mixer willing to offer a position on their sound crew as a Sound Trainee. You can also work with equipment manufacturers or hire companies to learn about sound equipment and to make good industry contacts.