

The scripted production family tree

This is a training module from the ScreenSkills 'From Script to Screen' programme.

Links for navigation within this document:

- [Introduction](#)
- [Menu of links to departments](#)

Introduction

From the first seed of an idea to the final screening of the story, our industry grows amazing scripted content. To make that happen, every narrative needs an entire root system - a network of departments, people, skills and resources to bring it to the screen.

And the scale of that network can be huge. Every department is connected, and every department is essential. The more skills and talent each department contributes, the better the story gets.

So where do you fit in?

You may know your own role, but how well do you understand everyone else's? Use this resource to explore the "family tree" of scripted content.

Menu of links to departments

There are 22 departments in this module. Use each of the links below to find out more:

- [1. Executive Producers / Creators / Writers](#)
- [2. Production](#)
- [3. Production Accounting](#)
- [4. Directors](#)
- [5. Assistant Directors](#)
- [6. Casting](#)
- [7. Cast](#)
- [8. Locations](#)

- [9. Health, Safety and Security](#)
- [10. Continuity](#)
- [11. Art](#)
- [12. Costume](#)
- [13. Hair and Make-Up](#)
- [14. Camera](#)
- [15. Grips](#)
- [16. Electrical, Lighting and Rigging](#)
- [17. Sound](#)
- [18. SFX / Special Effects](#)
- [19. Stunts](#)
- [20. Transportation](#)
- [21. VFX / Visual Effects](#)
- [22. Post Production](#)

1. Executive Producers / Creators / Writers

In scripted content, everything starts with the Creator or Writer, who can also be an Executive Producer in some regions of the world.

Everything the other teams do is about bringing their creative vision to the screen.

Some shows and films just have one person in this role. Others have a department of Producers, with each of them looking after different episodes and blocks of filming to protect the overall vision and intent of the Creator.

The script is the blueprint, the plan, the map that outlines the course of the production.

Just about every decision that's made leads right back to that crucial document.

And it's the Writers' job to develop and nurture it so that the logistics of filming can be efficiently worked out.

Of course, at the start, during Pre-production the team might be working from a shooting draft, outlines, scenic breakdowns or even documents from the pitch – and not the actual final script. To learn more about these documents check the glossary.

Whatever material exists, the Writers' work guides the rest of the Production team.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

2. Production

The Production Department gets the right people and resources in place – at the right time.

That can mean almost anything from hiring vendors, like lighting trucks and catering, to crewing up entire departments.

The unit is usually headed up by the Line Producer or Unit Production Manager, who works closely with the Producer.

Their job is to ensure the optimal use of people, time, and resources in service of the story.

And they make certain that all the other departments can efficiently deliver their very best work.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

3. Production Accounting

Some budget decisions are made in advance, but most of the financial work happens after the script is complete.

At that point, the detailed breakdown of the budget is the next chapter, as the budget drives the decision-making process for all other teams.

The Production Accounting Department is vital in ensuring the setup of a smooth-running and well-managed production.

At the macro end of the spectrum, they could be exploring international and regional tax incentives that encourage productions to shoot in their area.

And on the micro level, they're monitoring all the routine financial processes, including making sure people get paid, and ensuring that money is spent as budgeted.

Production Accounting works closely with Line Producers on the budget, and prepares daily and weekly cost reports to keep spending on track.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

4. Directors

The Director is here to translate what's written in the script onto the screen, using creative flair and vision.

The script is the foundation, but the performance, the shots, and the titles our audience will watch are much more than mere words on a page. You need a gifted Director and Cast to bring those words to life.

The Director works with onscreen talent and ensures that their performances align with the creative intent. They design the space to help make the characters believable.

And they're doing all of this whilst also trying to balance the schedule and the budget!

The Director's work extends through the entire project, from Pre-production to Post Production.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

5. Assistant Directors

The Assistant Directors work with the Director and are here to turn the script into a realistic shooting schedule. They organise and facilitate all the processes around that.

They work with lots of other departments so that everyone can do their jobs safely and effectively. That includes guiding the Cast through many rehearsals and fittings and organising all of the Background Actors.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

6. Casting

The Casting Department's job is to find, hire, and negotiate for the Actors to play the characters that the Producer and Director want.

Usually Casting do this through Agents, but they also look out for promising talent.

They're always hoping to find the next big stars!

[Jump back to the menu](#)

7. Cast

The Cast, also known as the Actors and the stars of the show, are why we're all here.

In addition to the main and supporting Actors, there are often Extras or Background Artists who mostly have non-speaking roles. They help create realistic scenes and are also called Supporting Artists or SA's.

Sometimes the Cast also needs support in the form of Voice Coaches to help with accents, Choreographers to work on movement, and Intimacy Coordinators to aid Actors during intimate scenes.

There's also Stand Ins, who take the place of the Cast for new lighting and camera set-ups when the Actors are back at their dressing rooms.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

8. Locations

The Locations Department literally sets the right scene for the story.

In the script, the action might be amongst the scorching sands of the Sahara Desert, the howling winds of Mount Everest's summit, in a typical suburban shopping mall, or even on Mars.

The Locations Department will collaborate with various other teams including Production Design and Visual Effects to help provide the perfect setting.

They work out the logistics – finding spots that the Cast and Crew can actually reach without compromising the integrity of the story.

Using skill and ingenuity, they often work with other teams such as VFX, Virtual Production, and Production Design to create the illusion of a place – rather than actually having to be there.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

9. Health, Safety and Security

Keeping everyone safe is a crucial job on a production. The Health and Safety team work to help the production identify hazards and to reduce risks like trips, slips, and falls. Of course, those kinds of things can happen in any workplace. They're also there to ensure that more risky filming like stunts and helicopter shots are done as securely as possible.

Security's job is to make sure that the locations are secure for filming and that members of the public aren't going to accidentally wander into shots or cause any problems.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

10. Continuity

The Continuity Department is usually made up of one Script Supervisor, who's like a human encyclopaedia. They know where every character in the script has been, where they're going, what they've worn, and how they move.

Not only do they make sure that every part of the script is shot, but they see to it that there's consistency. For instance, if an Actor's shirt was wet in one part of a scene, they'll check to make sure that it's still wet when they go to shoot the next part of that same scene. The information generated by this team helps so many other departments in Post Production and beyond.

They work very closely with the Director to also make sure that the script timings are on track and that the shots are correctly logged.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

11. Art

When you see something on screen that's not an Actor, it's usually been placed in the shot by the Art Department. They're responsible for all the physical things that get on screen.

To start with, if you've got a set, it'll be designed by the Production Designer, built by the Construction Department, and decorated by Set Decoration.

The Property Department will dress the set with props. Those include 'dressing props' like furniture as well as 'action props' that could get used by the Cast – like a magazine or a mobile phone.

And maybe that mobile phone is being used to check a character's social media. Graphics will create the visuals to show a mocked-up app or website.

There's Picture or Action Vehicles too – they look after anything that will be driven on screen, or vehicles shown as part of the shot.

And all the trees and plants you see on set will have been put there by the Greens Department. You could have Armourers or Animal Wranglers too – it depends on what you're making.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

12. Costume

The Costume Department designs, makes, or finds everything that the Cast wear on screen.

They work with the Art Department and with Hair and Make-Up to create an illusion of the world that fits the Director and Producer's vision.

That includes things like continuity – knowing how everyone should look in every scene, and paying attention to all the details. If this character's vest is supposed to be ripped and dirty after a fight, then Costume needs to create that look.

They make sure that everything fits, is washed, and ready for filming. It's also the Costume team's job to keep the Cast warm and dry with coats and umbrellas in between takes.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

13. Hair and Make-Up

Hair and Make-Up work super-closely with the Art Department, and with Costume, to create the visual identity for all the characters.

Cosmetics, hair, wigs, scars, false teeth, prosthetics, body art – the attention to detail is phenomenal. They know how everyone should look for every day of the story. It's all about creating the world envisioned in the script.

And the camera picks up every detail, so before each shot and setup, they do checks to ensure continuity.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

14. Camera

Camera and Lighting make up the Cinematography team, with the Director of Photography – or DoP for short – usually in charge of both.

They choose the right equipment – lenses, cameras and lighting – to capture the Director's vision on screen in whatever format and resolution has been agreed to during Pre-production. They use a mixture of technical skills and artistry to make these decisions.

'DIT' stands for Digital Imaging Technicians. They manage the footage during the shoot, back up files, check that everything's recorded properly and more.

In some places, DITs are referred to by other names, but they're always the bridge between the Camera Department and Post Production, so are pretty crucial.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

15. Grips

The Grip Department is always responsible for physical camera movements – like mounting it on a dolly so it can move on tracks – or when there's a camera stabilisation rig.

Their work and responsibilities can vary depending on where the filming takes place.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

16. Electrical, Lighting and Rigging

Lighting affects every single shot that you see on the screen.

It provides the atmosphere, dials the mood up or down, and creates the appearance of day or night. The Lighting Department physically adjusts the equipment to form the ideal ambience. They work in close collaboration with the Electrical Department, who are usually in charge of rigging lights on set.

Electrical could work with practical lights like a lamp in a room or create moonlight by providing a cherry picker with a huge lamp on top. Check out the Glossary to find out more about bubbles, HMIs, key lights and fill lights!

Meanwhile the Rigging Department builds things, such as platforms for lighting, usually out of scaffolding.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

17. Sound

Audio is a crucial component of every story, and the Sound Department is responsible for capturing all the dialogue as cleanly and clearly as possible during the shoot. This audio is normally recorded separately from video.

Usually, the more Actors there are in a scene, the more microphones they'll use, and the bigger the Sound Department gets.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

18. SFX / Special Effects

If a shoot needs fire, smoke, water, or an explosion, SFX will be there.

SFX, or Special Effects, are experts in forming physical effects that really happen.

That's not to be confused with Visual Effects or VFX, which is all about artificially adding or deleting things in a scene.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

19. Stunts

A stunt is anything where an onscreen Actor could get injured such as jumping out of a car. But even running in the rain could be a stunt!

The Stunt Department works with the Director to design, coordinate and choreograph how the stunts will be filmed safely.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

20. Transportation

A production can be like a travelling circus, and the Transportation Department are the logistic ringmasters. They move everyone and everything as efficiently as possible working with the Production team to make sure everyone ends up where they need to be.

They oversee the facilities needed by Cast and Crew during filming – trailers, dressing rooms, offices, dining buses, make-up and costume trucks and more. Often on sound stages, there will be a variety of facilities to use on site, but on location, these are usually mobile vehicles.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

21. VFX / Visual Effects

VFX is the Visual Effects Department. They can create anything that can't physically be done on set.

But this isn't just about computer-generated monsters or sci-fi (although it can be!) – it's often much more mainstream than that. Sometimes they might be removing a building that the Director doesn't want in shot, or taking a set and switching it to an entirely new location.

Or they could be adding in a big crowd of people, or a view that wasn't really there during the shoot. VFX uses lots of different techniques to create and enhance content. This is a huge department, so there's an entire module just on the subject of Visual Effects.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

22. Post Production

Post Production is where all the filmed elements are stitched together and layered with music and effects to tell the story.

It's a big department, with everyone working towards delivering the original creative vision artistically and technically.

Multiple processes happen in Post, from editing the actual footage to replacing dialogue and sound effects as well as adding colour and music to enhance the narrative.

Post includes Post management, editorial, image finishing and sound finishing teams.

Post Production Supervision is involved right from Pre-production until the content is finished and delivered.

Editing usually begins during the shoot – they start assembling footage as soon as it's been filmed.

After the edit, the Sound Editors and Colourists will use their artistry to complete the original creative vision. If need be, they'll take it beyond what was imagined and bring the entire experience to the screen with the most polished story possible.

[Jump back to the menu](#)

This is the end of the document. This was created by ScreenSkills.