

Filming Criteria

CLOTHING:

Because cameras are electronically quirky and are not as discerning as the human eye, here are some simple rules to follow so you can be confident of looking good on camera.

WHAT TO WEAR:

1. Wear something comfortable.
2. Wear coats or jackets in solid colors: brown, blue, tan, green, or grey.
3. Basic colored shirts with button fronts or polo shirts
4. Subdued stripes, checks or plaids are acceptable, but see below.

WHAT NOT TO WEAR:

1. Avoid wearing white or very light colored shirts (yellow, pink). They may look too bright on camera
2. Avoid wearing lots of bright red. On some TV's you will look like an inflamed kidney.
3. Fabrics with fine checks or stripes may cause a rainbow flutter or moiré pattern to be seen on camera. Check ahead of time if you are not sure how a particular article of clothing will look on television.
4. Do not wear logos or advertisements unless applicable
5. Do not wear large pieces of jewelry.

Please bring at least one additional shirt, just in case.

Additional Information

WHAT IS A BACKGROUND ARTIST?

YOU help to add life and character to a scene. YOU make the audience feel as if they are a part of the story unfolding in front of them, instead of being a distant observer.

THE ART OF BEING A BACKGROUND ARTIST

You are a non-speaking actor. We can tell you when and where to walk across the set and who to stop and deal with, but we don't usually have time to give you a motivation or a character. You will all know what the scene is, where it takes place, and what kind of people you are playing. Create a character for yourself and a reason for every time you cross the camera. Stop and talk to Mary not just because you were instructed to, but because you want to congratulate her on a promotion or find out how last night's softball game went.

The possibilities for making the background come alive are endless. The more meaning and motivation you put into each cross or encounter with another extra, the better the scene and the movie will look on the screen.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

As a general rule, extras do not speak while appearing on camera—they pantomime speaking. This is because the sound guys on the crew always try to record as pristinely clear dialogue as possible from the main actors in the scene. Sound effects, including the voices of people in the background, are almost always added in post-production.

This rule extends to ANY NOISE you might otherwise make while the camera is rolling—from footsteps to sneezes to your cellphone. If the scene takes place in a room with hardwood floors and you're wearing loafers, don't be surprised if you're asked to cross camera in your socks.

A QUICK WORD ON CLOTHES

Another general rule: When it comes to clothing, the camera likes muted colors better than bright ones, and greys better than blacks or whites. You will be likely be asked to bring several wardrobe options to the set with you, and get given explicit instructions on what colors and patterns to embrace or avoid.

ON THE DAY

We will look at what you are wearing and the additional clothing that you have brought and tell you what they want you to wear. Don't take their approval of your wardrobe personally, they might be going for a specific look or you might be in the same color as the actor in the scene.

Please do not bring white, black or red clothing. Please do not bring clothing with obvious logos on them (like Nike swoosh, Adidas, Makers Mark, etc.). Unless we have been cleared by those companies to photograph them, we are not allowed to show specific logos on screen. Always bring or wear soft soled shoes appropriate to your wardrobe.

Don't cross in front of a light as you will make a shadow on whatever it's lighting. Do not stand in front of lights waiting for your cross, for the same reason. And remember, we are here to help you have a good experience on the set. If you have a question, ask

STANDARD INDUSTRY TERMS

“Rolling”: The camera is on and film is running through, everyone is ready and the next the next thing you'll hear is...

“Speed”: The sound mixer is letting the camera people know the tape is up to the proper speed for recording.

Next...

“Background”: This is your cue to start your action as described to you. Don't wait for “action”, always go on “background” unless you are specifically told you to do otherwise

Next...

“Action”: This is the actor's cue to start their action or dialogue. No one except the actors saying their dialogue will speak, until the Director says...

“Cut”: The Director has stopped the scene either because it is over or because something has gone wrong. Wait quietly where you are until you hear what's next. If we're going to do the same shot again you will hear...

“Back to One” or “From the Top”: The whole shot will be done again from the beginning. You return to your starting position and do the same action you did before.

Another Possibility after “Cut” is...

“Picking Up” or “Picking It Up”: This means that the Director is happy with a portion of the scene but wants to redo a different part. The director will either tell you “Picking up about 15 seconds into the scene” which means return to your starting position and then go 15 seconds into your action to find your new start. Or the director will say “Picking it up from Jack kissing Sally” or “Jack's line ‘well I guess it's final then’” which means you will have to start from wherever you were at that moment in the scene.

Which brings us to the hardest part of your job:

“Matching”: You will need to match your action every time we shoot a scene. This means doing exactly what you did the first time we shot the scene, every time we shoot the scene, or a piece of the scene. Watch the actors' movements in the rehearsals and try to listen for pieces of their dialogue so that you know where you are in relation to them for each part of the scene.