

UW School of Drama

# **STAGE MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK**

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## Upon Assignment to the production:

1. The Production office will create a contact sheet and place it in the show folder. The SM should confirm that it includes the names of all the cast, the parts they are playing, their phone numbers, and email addresses. It should also include the names and roles of the Production team, UW relevant Faculty and Staff.
2. Check the SM supplies and request more (pens, pencils, tape) from the Production Office as needed.
3. Tape out the ground plan on the floor of the rehearsal room. The Production Office may ask the Scene Shop to help the SM with the tape out as available.
4. Meet with the Director (in person, or via email/phone) to define your relationship, duties, and assignments individually.
5. Read the play several times
  - a. Note where people enter / exit and prepare a cast / scene breakdown (a list of who is in which scene).
    - i. If there are not traditional scenes, use French scenes (a new scene every time someone enters or exits the stage).
  - b. Note any costume changes called for in the script, especially any "quick changes."
  - c. Prepare a preliminary scene shift plot, noting where changes are required and what they are.
  - d. Prepare a preliminary prop list.
  - e. Prepare a preliminary sound list.
  - f. Note any places that might cause difficulties. Examples might be violence in combat scenes, special effects, highly unusual props, difficult management of props, etc.

## Prompt script

6. Your Prompt Script will contain all the information collected during the rehearsal period, which pertains to the running of your show. It also contains all the blocking for the show and the location of all the sound and lighting cues.
  - a. There are several ways to setup the prompt script, including centering the pages of the script on 8 ½ x 11 paper, so that the script will be on the left-hand page of the book (if you are right-handed).
  - b. The blocking notation and the writing of cues should be kept as neat as possible. This will avoid error and ensure a substitute can follow the script should you miss a rehearsal / performance for any reason. All notes should be taken in pencil.
  - c. When blocking changes during a rehearsal, make appropriate changes in the Prompt Script. You will be asked by the director or actor what the blocking was for a scene, and you should be able to tell them clearly what it was the last time you ran it.
  - d. Use a form of shorthand that is readily understandable. Suggestions follow.
  - e. One of the most important reasons for the Prompt Script: if the Stage Manager is unable to attend a performance or rehearsal, another person could run the show from the information in the book. Once technical rehearsals begin, the Prompt Script should always remain in the SM Booth at the theatre.

## Developing prompt script shorthand

- f. It is necessary to be able to write blocking and business in rehearsal quickly and efficiently. To do so you must develop a method of abbreviating that works well for you. Blocking is always written in pencil and directly in the Prompt Script. Never write it on a separate paper to transfer later. The following is a guide for blocking shorthand, use and adapt it as it fits your needs.

X = Cross 2 = To or Towards EN – Enter EX = Exit	U = Up or upstage D = Down or down stage R = Right L = Left	Combine symbols to indicate movement.  Ex: EN UR X 2 DLC = Enter up right, cross to down left center.
Condense characters names to understandable abbreviations. Usually, 2 or 3 letters of the name is sufficient. Always include a list at the beginning of		Often it is helpful to condense the names of furniture, if you do this, be sure to include a list.  Ex: Cup = Cupboard, Tab = Table, Side = Sideboard.

<p>the script indicating how you have chosen to abbreviate.</p> <p>Ex: Rom = Romeo, Jul = Juliet, Cap = Capulet, LC = Lady Capulet</p>	<p>Keep your shorthand to the most often used terms and write out any further blocking or business instructions.</p>
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## Production Book

7. This is an overly extensive list of all possible sections of a Production Book. Not every show will need all these sections. The larger and more extensive the show, the more you will need to keep track.

Contact Sheet	Rehearsal Notes
Facilities Information	Company Policies
<p>Costumes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costume Changes Plot</li> <li>• Preset Plot</li> <li>• Running Lists</li> </ul>	<p>Lighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cue and Preset Sheets</li> <li>• Description and Placement of Cues</li> <li>• Practicals</li> </ul>
<p>Scenic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevations</li> <li>• Inventory</li> <li>• Ground Plans</li> <li>• Preset Plots</li> <li>• Shift Assignments</li> <li>• Shift Plot</li> </ul>	<p>Props</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check Lists</li> <li>• Elevations</li> <li>• Furniture Plot</li> <li>• Plot</li> <li>• Rehearsal Prop Plot</li> <li>• Running Lists</li> </ul>
<p>Sound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cue Sheets</li> <li>• Description and Placement of Cues</li> <li>• Equipment Inventory</li> </ul>	<p>Special Effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cue Sheets</li> <li>• Description and Placement of Cues</li> <li>• Running List</li> </ul>
<p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score / Sheet Music</li> <li>• Musical Part Assignments</li> </ul>	<p>Miscellaneous Tech Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master Plot / Backstage Cues</li> <li>• SM's Cue Sheets</li> </ul>
<p>Schedules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Rehearsal Calls</li> <li>• Performance Schedule</li> <li>• Photo Calls</li> <li>• Production Timetable</li> </ul>	<p>Prompt Script</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fight Choreography Notations</li> <li>• Intimacy Choreography Notations</li> <li>• Key</li> <li>• Plot Progression</li> <li>• Script Changes</li> <li>• Scene Breakdown</li> </ul>

## Prior to the first rehearsal

1. **Meet with the Director** Go over the rehearsal schedule and discuss what the director expects from you. This is a good opportunity to establish a strong working relationship with your director.
2. **Callboard:** Set up an area on the appropriate bulletin board for ongoing rehearsal/production information; including rehearsal schedule, master production calendar, sign in sheets.
3. **Rehearsal Call:** Post time and place (if different than typical) of rehearsals at least 24 hours in advance.
4. **Rehearsal Space:** Confirm reserved rehearsal room with Production office and obtain any codes / keys needed for the room.
  - a. Familiarize yourself with the building
  - b. Locate restrooms
  - c. Locate nearest first aid kit
5. **Meet with ASM:** Discuss responsibility and expectations

## Mailserv groups

6. **Fill in the Mailservs:** Check in with the Production Office about any production mailservs that are prepared. The Stage Manager should be listed as an Administrator of the production mailservs so they can manage members as needed.
  - a. Mailservs can be included on the contact sheet for clarity on who is included in communication with each group

## Building access

7. **Building access is granted through Husky Card or Temporary Access card:** SMs should work with the Production Office to make sure all guest artists have temporary access cards at their first rehearsal. If any company member has difficulty accessing the building, the SM should contact the Drama Program Coordinator or the Administrative Assistant.
  - a. The SM should confirm all crew are granted access to the performance venue on or before their first day at technical rehearsals.
  - b. Doors should NEVER be propped open at rehearsal or performance venues. If needed, station an ASM or crew at a door to let production members inside the space.

## Photocopies/printing

8. **Confirm printing access with the Production Office:** Production will provide printer and computer access for rehearsal printing. There is also a printer in the Jones Playhouse Green Room to print any directional signs, etc. There is not a printer in the Penthouse, so printing will need to be done prior to arrival.
  - a. Printing should include small jobs only. SMs must communicate with the Production Office prior to completing large printing jobs.
  - b. Please notify the Production office if paper runs out or the toner is low.

## Reports/document template

9. **The Production office will provide reports templates.** If an SM has their own template, they may send it to the Production Office to be considered for production use instead of the provided template.
  - a. Templates will be stored in the SM folder on the Production Sharepoint.

## Rehearsals

1. **Arrive prior to first call:** Set up a rehearsal room for the day
2. **Call breaks:** 10-minute break for every 1hour20minutes, or a 5-minute break for every 55 minutes.
3. **End of rehearsal:**
  - a. Submit reports/documents: rehearsal report, call sheet for the next rehearsal

- b. Restore room for classroom usage
- c. Make sure everyone else has left the room and building
- d. Close all windows, turn off lights, close doors

## Production Meetings

1. The Production Manager will run the first production meeting of the process, likely in-person with Director, SM/ASMs, Designers, Shop Managers, and possibly Faculty Mentors. The SM will take notes based on the PM's meeting agenda.
2. Production Meeting time will be scheduled by the PM based on Creative Team's availability and will occur weekly from pre-production until tech rehearsals.
3. The following production meetings will be run by the Stage Manager with the ASM taking notes. The SM will be responsible for reminding the Creative Team about meetings / resharing the zoom link and keeping track of absences as applicable.
4. Production meetings occur each night after tech
  - a. The SM leads these meetings, taking necessary notes
    - i. This meeting **MUST** be run efficiently. If a conversation is not pertinent to all designers it should be moved to email, or individual side-bar discussions
    - ii. Everyone must leave the space by 11pm
  - b. The ASM leads the crew backstage, completing all end of night duties
    - i. The crew must be released and out of the building by 11pm

## Tech Rehearsals

Prior to the first technical rehearsal:

1. Send an email to all crew to introduce yourself and remind them about the tech schedule one week before tech.
2. Prepare stage crew assignments based on where crew will be needed throughout the show. This may change once rehearsals on stage with the set / props begins.
3. Double check the First Aid kits to ensure they are fully stocked. Reach out to the Program Coordinator or Technical Director if anything is missing.
4. The Production Manager will provide a booth key prior to the first rehearsal. Confirm you have been granted Husky Card access to the performance venue before the first technical rehearsal.
5. Create a sign-in sheet for the cast and crew (digital or physical) to quickly see who has arrived at the space and when. If paper, ensure the sheet is replaced and fresh each day. It is important to include the names of all students (cast & crew) in the tech reports each night.
6. Writing cues
  - a. If a cue is taken off a work of dialogue, draw a line from that word to the cue.
  - b. If a cue is taken on a piece of business, make a note next to the cue describing what the business is.
  - c. If a cue is taken at a specific time, (EG: 30 seconds after the overture starts), it can be indicated by writing :30 next to the cue and :00 next to the overture cue.
  - d. All cues should be written on the side (in the "margin" of your script with a line drawn back referring to placement or with an indication of action.)
7. Writing Cues (cont'd)
  - a. **Light Cues:** most designers will provide the notation in which they have recorded cues on the lightboard. (EX: LQ 100, or LX 100)
    - i. Lighting Designers typically skip #s to leave room to add cues as needed.
  - b. **Sound Cues:** Sound Designers will provide the notation in which they have recorded cues on QLab (EX: SQA, SQB, SQC, or SD 1, 2, 3)
    - i. Sound Designers typically skip #s to leave room to add cues as needed.

- c. **Projection Cues:** will typically be tied into the QLab, with the sound cues.
  - d. **Unique Cues:** Any other cues unique to the production should also be clearly written into your prompt script
8. Writing Cues (cont'd)

### Scenery

- a. **Shift and Fly Cues:** these cues usually refer to the scenes surrounding them (EX: Shift II-i to II-ii)
- b. The Stage Manager's cue sheet for scenery should be a complete list of all items that should be checked before the show. This can be an expanded version of the pre-show checklist developed for this production.

Scenery Check: Dinner at Eight (Example)

**Preset: ACT 1 – sc. 1**

Telephone connected and working

Practical Lamps

Left and Right masking flippers in place

Mrs. Jordan's letter opener

USL door closed

USR door ajar

Curtains SL closed

etc.

- c. For each scene change, it should include a step-by-step rundown of what must move and in what order.

Dinner at Eight Change Act. 3- sc. ii to Act 3 – sc. iii

Q Stage Curtain in,

Q All Legs out

Masking flippers left and right offstage

Disconnect lighting Cables E

Disconnect telephone cable

- d. A similar shift plot should be made up for each shift. It should be detailed enough so that the Stage Manager knows exactly what should happen at every point in the shift.

From this scene shift plot the SM can make up individual cue sheets for the stage crew. Each crew member will then have their own duties to perform during each shift.

- 9. **Tech Table.** During load-in at the theater, the Technical Director sets up the Tech Table and supplies headsets and lights.
- 10. **Firearms:** If practical firearms are required in the show, the Prop Master will come to the Tech rehearsal and demonstrate use of the firearm. All firearms should be locked when not in use.
- 11. **Laundry:** Check the costume laundry schedule with the Costume Shop Manager.

12. **Preshow Check List:** Individual check lists for each theater are included below. Acquaint yourself with the list and the theater by going to the venue and walking through the items listed. This list provides a proper sequential order for preparing the theater for the technical rehearsal or performance.
13. **Post Show Check List:** Follows the exact same format as the Preshow Check list. This list is used upon completion of the technical rehearsal or performance and is used to close the theater.

### First Technical Rehearsal

1. You are in complete charge of the technical rehearsal and everyone, except the Director, is responsible to you.
2. Cast and crew are called at 6:00pm, and tech is to begin at 6:30pm. The rehearsal must end at 10:30pm, with the theatre cleared of personnel by 11:00pm. This is a Drama Department policy and must be enforced.
3. Arrive at the theater around 30 minutes before the company (schedule-willing) and bring your prompt script with you.
4. Post the sign-in sheet by the stage door, and in the dressing room (if the sheet is digital).
5. Use the Preshow checklist to get the theater ready for rehearsal.
  - a. Do not unlock the lobby door of the theater for tech; Actors and Crew must use the stage door.
6. Check the first aid kit and note the location of all fire extinguishers.
7. Turn on the work lights and unlock the Stage Management booth. Turn on headsets / intercom systems and do a headset check with the crew before beginning rehearsal.
8. As the cast and crew arrive make sure they sign in on the sheet. Actors should go to the dressing rooms and get into costumes.
9. Meet with the crew and explain their individual crew assignments. Have board-ops report to the light and sound designers. Explain scene changes to scenic and costume crew and be sure the crew understands the changes.
10. **Flies.** If the flies are used in the Production, the Technical Director will lead a workshop for proper use and best practices.
11. **Firearms.** You receive all firearms from the Staff Prop Master. They will instruct you in the care and use of the firearm. Schedule a time for the Props Master to speak to the cast and crew about firearm safety before they are used at rehearsal (usually at first tech). You are responsible for securing the weapon in the Stage Management booth after use.

### Theatre Rehearsal and Performance Policy

Before the first tech rehearsal, there will be a Crew Orientation, led by the Technical Director and the Production Manager. On the first day of tech there will be a full company orientation to the space where the crew, technical staff, and acting company will be introduced to each other. This is a time to explain the policy to everyone:

- Call time: All cast and crew members must sign in by the time they were called by the Stage Manager. If digital, a qr code to the sign in sheet should be posted at the stage door and in the dressing room. If the sign in sheet is physical, place it by the stage door.
- Lateness: Any person who knows they will have to be late to call for any reason must call or text the Stage Manager.
- Time Calls: Typically, the time calls will be half-hour, 15 minutes, 5 minutes, and places. At intermissions it is usually 5 minutes and places. You will make all calls over the intercom system. Actors are responsible to time themselves for the calls.
- Visitors: Only the cast and crew are allowed backstage. No guests are allowed at any technical rehearsals. Guests at dress rehearsals require permission from the Director.
- Alcohol and Drugs: No alcohol or drugs are allowed backstage.

- **Firearms Policy:** Only the prop person assigned, the actor using the firearm and you are to touch the weapon under any circumstance. The firearm should never be placed on a prop table. It should be held by a person mentioned above, or secured in the booth.
- **Props Policy:** Props are kept on tables on each side of the theatre. Actors must check all onstage and offstage props at the half hour before the house is opened. If a prop is carried offstage, it should be placed on a prop table by the actor or handed to a prop crew person. Props are not to be kept in dressing rooms unless they are specified as a “personal prop” and the prop person is notified.
- **Laundry:** The Costume Designer will determine what laundry needs to be done and when. This schedule will be explained to the costume crew at their orientation. Check with the Costume Designer so you can be up to date on this information. If anyone has questions, they should speak to the Costume Designer or the Costume Shop Manager.

### Technical Rehearsal Information for Cast and Crew

While you still have the cast and crew assembled, give them the following tech rehearsal information.

1. Tech Rehearsal is mainly for the Stage Manager and the technical crew to allow them time to integrate the show's technical aspects with the actors. Cues are frequently repeated until the stage manager and director and designers are satisfied. Actors should be reminded of this fact so that they DO NOT leave the stage area immediately after their scene.
2. Because tech rehearsals are complicated, actors must remain quiet onstage and off and always be available.
3. No member of the cast or crew may leave the theatre without your permission.
4. Notes are given in the house at the end of the technical rehearsal after actors are out of costume.
5. If it is necessary to repeat a cue you will call out “HOLD”, and then give necessary instructions. To resume, call out the exact line you want the actors to begin from, and then say “Continue, please”.
6. Actors are forbidden to use the intercom system, enter the light or sound booth, or fly galley, unless assigned as a crew member.

### Calling of Cues

- Communication between the crew and the SM on the headset is for essential cue information only. You must set the tone for communication on the headsets. (*Remember, be careful what you say on a headset because you never know who might pick one up to listen, or if a volume control has been left up too high.*)
- Cues should be called in the following manner:
  - A “standby” should be given about 20 seconds before the cue, followed by the cue itself. Be certain that “GO” is the last word said when calling a cue and try to time it just before it should be executed to allow for operator reaction time.
  - All standbys should be written into your prompt script. Adjust the timing of these calls if your original approximations were grossly incorrect.
  - Be sure to explain this system to all crew members involved.

### Crews:

All Crews are assigned through the Production Office.

- The Production Manager will provide a list of the crew assignments and their contact information.
- The SM should confirm the crew are on the appropriate mailservs and reach out to them prior to the start of tech to introduce yourself.
  - Crew assignments can fluctuate after the rehearsal process begins, so confirm with the Production Office to find out when the crew is complete.

## Technical Rehearsal Procedure:

- Cast and crew will be called to get into costumes and set up the space at the top of rehearsal. Ensure Director, Designers, cast and crew are ready to begin.
- Call places and inform everyone where you will start from to set your first cue.
- When everyone is ready, give them the “Begin” from the spot in the script you want to start from.
- Call the cue as written. Then call the “hold” to either go back and do the cue again or to get the cue right.
- If each cue must be written in the theater, hold the scene at each cue, let the Director and the Designers set the lighting levels, the sound operator the sound levels, and the crew change the set. Give enough time to the Director / Designers for each moment but encourage them to move forward if it seems the progress has stalled.
- Make a list of technical mistakes that are too small to go back and repeat the whole cue. These notes should be for cast and crew as needed. Give the notes at the end of the technical rehearsal.

## End of Rehearsal

1. All rehearsals must stop at 10:30pm. The theater must be cleared by 11:00pm. Inform the Director of this policy. They may want to stop a bit earlier (you may want to also) to give necessary notes concerning the tech. You (as the Stage Manager) call the end of the tech.
2. Actors are to get out of costume, hang them up and come back into the house for notes. They must place all costumes to be repaired in the proper area.

## Damages

1. Costumes. Remind all cast members to report any costume problems or repairs to costume crew and Stage Management at the end of all rehearsals and performances. Check with the costume crew about the needed repairs and note such repairs in your rehearsal / performance report. If a repair is needed during the week, check with the costume shop the following morning if they have not responded to the report.
2. Scenery, Props, Lights. Have the actors and crew report any damage to you, and then include those notes in the rehearsal / performance report. Follow up with the shops if you have not received a response the next morning.

## Tech Rehearsal Report

1. This is the record of attendance, show run times, and notes pertaining to each department. Tech rehearsal reports should be sent out each night after the rehearsal to (showname)-reports@uw.edu mailserv.

## Photo Call

1. The SoD Marketing and Communications office arranges for a season-photographer.
2. Photos are usually taken during the rehearsal prior to the first preview, for marketing purposes, as well as the rehearsal prior to opening for portfolio purposes.
3. The photographer does not interrupt the rehearsal, they take pictures around the run as it occurs.
4. Inform the actors at least 48 hours (about 2 days) before the call via email and out loud.

## Communication with the House Manager

- The HM should be added to the rehearsal report distribution list once tech begins.
- The HM will attend a production run-through before the first preview. Time willing, the SM and HM should meet during this rehearsal to discuss communication before / during / after performances, as well as late seating and intermissions, if applicable.
- Day of Performance:
  - 1.5 hours before Curtain

- Before the lobby opens, the HM should find the SM to let them know they arrived in the theatre and to discuss any performance-specifics for that day (including traffic delays in the area, larger than usual house size, patrons that have requested wheelchair seating, etc.)
  - The SM should keep in regular contact with the HM prior to opening the house
- 30 minutes before Curtain
  - All fight calls, intimacy calls, dimmer checks, presets, etc. should be complete 30 minutes before curtain.
  - Just before 30 minutes before curtain the HM should find the SM to confirm the actors / tech are finished with any preshow work in the theatre.
  - Once ready, the SM should give the house to the HM so the audience can be seated, no later than 20 minutes prior to the scheduled performance start time.
- 5 minutes before Curtain
  - HM and SM should communicate frequently between the House open and the scheduled curtain time so the SM can call places appropriately.
  - The HM will ask to hold the house if there is a significant number of late patrons
- No more than 5 minutes after scheduled Curtain time
  - HM will give the house to the SM and the performance can begin! The SM must wait for the HM to give the all clear prior to beginning the show.
- If there is an intermission, it is useful to give the HM a 5 minute heads up when possible. The HM and Ushers will manage the intermission, and let the SM know when the patrons have all returned to their seats so the performance can begin again.
- If there are any patron disruptions or emergencies (onstage or off), the SM should notify the HM for assistance and hold the show if necessary.
- After the performance ends:
  - Submit reports/documents: rehearsal report, call sheet for the next rehearsal
  - Turn off booth lighting, ensure all boards / speakers / projector are shut off
  - Shut and lock the booth
  - Make sure everyone else has left the room and building
  - Turn off the house lighting and backstage lighting
  - notify the HM immediately so they can evacuate the Patrons as needed.
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When to remove the tech tables (Photo call)

## Incidents

- Incidents should be listed on rehearsal / performance reports and must be reported to UW via [OARS Reports](#)
  - Only UW faculty, staff, students will be able to access the official [incidents](#) report
  - Per UW policy, medication CANNOT be recommended, only available to be taken voluntarily by the person in the incident.
  - For situations that require additional help, call 911, and make sure that you mention you're calling from UW, and they will route you to UW police.

## Show cancellation

- See the **show cancellation template** for the variables that lead to a show cancellation on your production
  - Stage Manager, Director, and Production Manager determine variables for show cancellation / understudy plans if cancellation can be prevented
- Communication is sent directly through the Production Manager when one of the variables occurs

- The Production Manager may ask the Stage Manager to send communication to the cast / crew, but the SM should not send anything without being approved by the PM
- The HM will post cancellation notice on the lobby doors/windows