

"Indie in DC" Preproduction and Preparedness



Top 5 Tips

Many dread preproduction. It can be tedious and the least creative part of the production process. However, preproduction can save you time, money and quite a bit of heartache. Here are some tips to get you in the preproduction mood.

Write it down. Write it down. Write it down. And then write it down some more: From brainstorming your ideas to developing scripts to creating a budget, it is a good idea to write everything down. It's a lot less expensive to work out the story on paper than shooting from the hip on camera. You will need to document ideas, shot lists, outlines, budgets, storyboards, scripts, etc. Stay organized and keep your documents in one place- a journal, file, binder, planner, mobile device, etc.

Research: So you have an idea for a television show, documentary or film. Great! To germinate your idea, you'll need to know what has already been done on the subject, research who the experts are in this field, the best locations to shoot your scenes, etc. Before you even begin shooting, you should be able to expertly tell anyone that asks your vision and how you plan to make it come to life on screen.

Ask for help: When you're not working with a big budget, you'll need access to all of the free or affordable resources that you can get your hands on. When you're asking for help, tell your story, be inspiring, ask boldly and be thankful. Simply ask, but also give people the space to say no and don't be discouraged by no's.

Shoot pre-visualization videos: Test ideas on camera using anything that you have at your disposable-- be it a camera or mobile device. You can do it on the cheap by using friends, family members, toy figures, and other objects as stand ins. This will help you figure out if the shots you have in mind will work well in practice.

Clear your Conscience: When in doubt, get releases and clearances for locations, talent, music, logo usage, b-roll and extras. Legally speaking, this will save you the most money and time. Who wants to be blindsided with lawyer fees and legal woes?

Free and Affordable Resources

1. Community Access Stations

There are several other community access stations in the Washington, DC area where membership is also affordable (or free). Use us all as resources to hone your skills and/or distribute your product.

2. Library of Congress

The Library of Congress is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and serves as the research arm of Congress. It is also the largest library in the world with millions of books, recordings, photographs, maps and manuscripts in its collection.

101 Independence Avenue Southeast
Washington, DC 20540
(202) 707-5000

3. DC Public Libraries

There are 27 public libraries in Washington, DC. Visit dclibrary.org to find one in your area to do your research or use as a quiet workspace to create.

4. Join or become active with professional organization that focuses on media production. Here are just a few:

Television, Internet, & Video Association of DC, tiva.org
Women in Film and Video, wifv.org
Multicultural Media and Telecommunications and Internet Council, mmtconline.org
Docs In Progress, docsinprogress.org
DCFilm Alliance/DC Shorts, dcshorts.com

5. Subscription services. If you are willing to invest some dollars, consider getting a subscription to a music, stock footage, and/or stock photos online database. Some options are:

Getty Images, gettyimages.com
FirstCom, firstcom.com
Shutterstock, shutterstock.com