



**American Cinema Editors**  
Best Practices Guide for Post-Production

## INTRODUCTION

The **American Cinema Editors' Best Practices Guide** is a reference for Editors regarding the ideal setup and operation of a post-production department. It covers a range of topics, including:

- **Workplace Environment**
- **Workplace Amenities**
- **Meals & Breaks**
- **Editing Room Etiquette**
- **Technology**
- **Department Staffing**
- **Schedule**
- **Finishing**

The contents are based on a comprehensive survey conducted by American Cinema Editors in the Summer of 2017 to determine which workplace issues are of primary importance to Editors.

This guide does not attempt to encompass everything related to the post-production working environment. There can be a broad range of working environments in post-production and departments can be varied. ACE believes that the general principles expressed herein represent recommendations for what we consider to be an ideal rather than a decree.

American Cinema Editors endorses the IATSE/Motion Picture Editors Guild contract and the best practices guide is intended to complement the existing MPEG rules by establishing additional standards for issues not covered under that contract.

## THE UNION CONTRACT

ACE strongly suggests that Editors familiarize themselves with the current IATSE/MPEG agreements and work to uphold these agreements to the letter. Rules of particular importance to editors are those pertaining to meal breaks, overtime, turnaround and safety. For Editors working on non-union productions, ACE believes that a basic familiarity with the rights and regulations of these agreements among Editors and Assistants will strengthen their ability to negotiate their employment agreements and working conditions.

## POST-PRODUCTION WORKPLACE

ACE believes that a comfortable working environment is fundamental to fostering creativity and is essential for Editors to produce their best work.

Editors report working in a wide range of environments without clearly defined standards. Many editors are working in offices that were not designed for post-production: They lack adequate sound proofing, climate control, space and are therefore ill-suited to the task of post-production. Others are working on studio lots in "editorial buildings" that are in dire need of updating and/or lacking in sufficient amenities such as break rooms, windows, proper ventilation, and more.

ACE understands that many factors contribute to the choice of workplace that houses the post-production team, including: budget, type of project, number of personnel in the department, proximity to shooting location and/or post facilities and that in many cases options are limited. However, the principles on which these guidelines are based should be considered when choosing a location for a post-production department. They represent an ideal that all productions both large and small should aspire toward.

They are as follows:

### WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

- Each Editor should be assigned an individual room of approximately 200 square feet.
- An editing room should have a window to allow natural light and air to enter the workspace.
- An editing room should have individual climate (heating and cooling) control to allow for specific temperature settings per room. Equipment gets hot; one thermostat for a whole facility isn't sufficient.
- An editing room should be located in a quiet space and have adequate sound proofing to both eliminate outside noise from coming in and to prevent sound from escaping the editing room, so as not to disturb other editors, assistant editors or post-production staff.
- In a poorly soundproofed workspace, editors should be spaced apart from one another in order to minimize sound bleed between rooms.
- Workplace should be free of noxious odors and pests.

## WORKPLACE CONFIGURATION

Whenever practical, each Editor should be consulted as to the setup of their individual edit suite as follows:

- Location and position of editing console and editing equipment.
- Type of chair to be used by the Editor.
- Type of editing console (ie, standing, sitting and/or adjustable).
- Lighting configuration (ie, overhead, floor lamps, etc.)
- Size of couch, desk, bookcase and other necessary furniture.

## WORKPLACE AMENITIES

The following amenities should be available in the post-production office space:

- Adequate and clean restroom facilities
- Strong wifi and/or other internet connectivity
- Water cooler or water dispenser
- Refrigerator
- Kitchen or kitchenette
- Communal lunch room or lunch table with chairs
- Sanitation/Cleaning services (nightly/daily)

## WORKPLACE LOCATION

- Location should have in-house parking, or be located in close proximity to adequate and safe parking.
- If meals are not provided by production, then a location convenient to local eateries is recommended.

## MEAL BREAKS

ACE would like to reiterate that it endorses the Union rules regarding meal breaks and would like to suggest the following best practices:

- Lunch and dinner breaks should not be taken in the editing suite.
- A suitable break room, table and chairs should be made available for meal breaks.

## EDITING ROOM ETIQUETTE

ACE believes that the editing room is the sanctum of the Editor and should be given the appropriate level of consideration, as follows:

- An Editor's personal space should be respected, thus the editing room should not be treated as the Director's or Producer's proxy office.

## TECHNOLOGY

ACE suggests that Editors be consulted on the choice of tools used to perform their job. Editors report working on outdated equipment, being forced to use editing software that is ill-suited to the type of project at hand, working on equipment with poor ergonomics. Most Editors have a high level of familiarity with the specific technologies and software used in editing, as well as the post-production workflow, and would like to have input into these decisions. ACE recommends that Producers consider the input of the Editors when it comes to the following:

- Choice of editing platform (i.e. Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premiere, Final Cut Pro)
- Choice of specific version of editing software
- Choice of media storage platform, including type and amount
- Choice of equipment vendor and/or technical support staff

## DEPARTMENT STAFFING

American Cinema Editors suggests that, whenever possible and where appropriate, Editors be consulted with regard to the staffing of the post-production department.

Picture Editors collaborate with a wide variety of other creative and technical personnel. As the primary creative force in the post-production department, incorporating the Picture Editor(s)' input into key hiring decisions promotes better collaboration and helps mitigate unforeseen problems.

## ASSISTANT EDITORS

ACE believes that the relationship between the Editor and Assistant Editor is of critical importance. Editors report being asked to work without an assistant, sharing assistants amongst a team of editors, being paired with an assistant not of their own choice, or being assigned an assistant lacking in the appropriate skills. ACE suggests the following best practices:

- Each Editor should be afforded at least one Assistant Editor. The Editor / Assistant ratio should be at least 1:1 or greater, if the size of the project demands.
- Each Editor should have the ability to hire the assistant of their choosing.

## OTHER POSITIONS & STAFF

ACE believes that whenever possible, and where appropriate, Editors should have input regarding the other creative, technical and departmental/logistical positions. These positions may include, but not be limited to:

- Script Supervisors
- Apprentice Editors
- Visual Effects Editors
- Music Editors
- Music Supervisors
- Sound Effects Supervisors
- Post Supervisors
- Post Producers
- Post Coordinators
- Sound Mixers
- Segment Producer/Editors
- Story Producers
- Composers
- Colorists'

## FEEDBACK

The ACE Best Practices Committee appreciates your feedback.

Please use the URL address below to submit your comments on how we can continue to improve the best practices guide:

<https://americancinemaeditors.org/contact-ace/>

## SCHEDULE

Many Editors are asked to meet unrealistic deadlines. Many feel they are not given enough editor's cut days to complete their first cut.

ACE recommends the following:

- Editors should be consulted as to the overall post-production schedule.
- To meet the need for temp sound, temp music and temp visual effects, Editors should be afforded adequate time and staff before presenting the editor's cut/to the Director (or Producers or Producer's representative) as follows:
  - A minimum of 2-3 business days after close of principal photography in the case of a half-hour television program.
  - A minimum of 4-5 business days minimum after close of principal photography in the case of a one-hour television program.
- Feature films should allow two weeks, with additional personnel for music, sound effects, and VFX as needed by the editor.
- Editors should remain employed by production in order to supervise all aspects of the finishing and final delivery of the project. This includes attending sound, music and VFX spotting, sound mix playback, reviewing the online edit, and reviewing color timing.

## FACILITIES & FINISHING

ACE suggests that Editors be consulted regarding the choice of post-production facilities from the start of principal photography (dailies) through final picture and sound finishing. Editors should have input with regard to the following:

- Dailies facility
- Sound finishing facility
- Visual Effects Facilities
- DI / Online / Color facility(s)

## SUMMARY

The American Cinema Editors believes that understanding these guidelines, and putting them into practice whenever possible, will have a positive impact on departmental harmony, improve the general health and well being of the staff, and improve the quality of the end product.