Pre-production is the period of tune used to plan and prepare for the filming and completion of your film. It is the time to:

**Get Started**

- Establish your production company
- Set-up production offices
- Hire a crew
- Finalize your script and budget
- Arrange for insurance and completion bond
- Schedule your shoot
- Become signatory to the unions or guilds you wish to sign with, and post any necessary bonds
- Cast your show
- Find your locations
- Build and decorate your sets
- Wardrobe actors
- Order film, equipment, vehicles and catering
- Book travel and hotel accommodations
- Prepare all agreements, releases, contracts, and paperwork
- Plan stunt work and special effects
- Line up special requirements such as picture vehicles, animals, mock-ups, and Miniatures, etc.
- Set-up accounts with labs: set-up editing rooms, schedule routing of dailies, plan your post production schedule, hire post production crew and pre-book scoring, looping and dubbing facilities
- Clear copyrighted music to be used in your picture.
Plan Ahead to Avoid Problems

Arrange for cover sets should the weather turn bad while filming exteriors. Know where you can exchange or get additional equipment if needed at a moments notice. Keep names, phone numbers, and resumes of additional crew members should you suddenly need an extra person or two. Line up alternate locations should your first choice not be available. The lower the budget, the more prep time you should have. Lower budgeted films do not have extra time or money, so it is imperative to be completely prepared. Ironically, the films needing the most prep time are the ones that can least afford it. Many independent producers prepare as much as they can while waiting for their funding, although they are somewhat limited until they can officially hire key department heads. Many variables, such as budget and script Requirements, determine your preproduction schedule. The following is an example of what a reasonable schedule (barring any extraordinary circumstances) might look like based on a six-week shoot with a modest budget of $4-6 million. An ideal pre-production schedule allows one and-a-half weeks of prep for each week of shooting. Accordingly, a six-week shoot should have a nine-week prep period. The following eight-week schedule, however, should be more than sufficient as well as cost effective.
Preproduction Schedule

WEEK NUMBER ONE (8 weeks of prep)
Starting Crew:
Producers
Director
Production Manager and/or Line Producer
Production Accountant
Location Manager
Casting Director
Secretary/Receptionist
Production Assistant Number One To Do:
Establish your company (if not done earlier)
Set-up production offices
Finalize script and budget
Start filling out union/guild signatory papers
Firm up insurance coverage
Begin casting
Start lining-up your crew
Start scouting locations
Open accounts with vendors

NOTE: Depending on script requirements, the Production Designer will determine the start dates of the Construction Coordinator and Construction crew. The Production Manager will determine the start dates of the Stunt Coordinator and Special Effects crew.

WEEK NUMBER TWO (7 weeks of prep)
Starting Crew:
Production Designer To Do:
Start music clearance procedures using either your attorney or a music clearance service to determine if the rights are available and how much the sync license fees are.
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
Check List & Scheduling

WEEK NUMBER THREE (6 weeks of prep)
Starting Crew:
Art Director
Set Designer
Production Coordinator
Assistant Location Manager

WEEK NUMBER FOUR (5 weeks of prep)
Starting Crew:
First Assistant Director
Wardrobe Supervisor
Transportation Coordinator
Property Master
Set Decorator
Production Assistant Number Two

WEEK NUMBER FIVE (4 weeks of prep)
Starting Crew:
Production Secretary
Assistant Accountant
Costumer Number One
Assistant Property Master
Lead Person To Do:
At the end of this week, you should be ready for your first production meeting.

WEEK NUMBER SIX (3 weeks of prep)
Starting Crew:
Second Assistant Director
Transportation Captain
Swing Crew
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
Check List & Scheduling

WEEK NUMBER SEVEN (2 weeks of prep)
  Starting Crew:
  Director of Photography
  Key Grip
  Gaffer
  Costumer Number Two
  Extra Casting (if needed)

WEEK NUMBER EIGHT (final week of prep) Monday
  Starting Crew:
  Script Supervisor Production Assistant Number Three Key Set Production Assistant Additional Drivers (as needed)
  To Do:
  Post any needed bond with the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), otherwise clear your actors through Station 12 or you cannot give them work calls
  Complete your casting and send out contracts
  Finalize selection of locations
  Order all equipment, vehicles, stock, expendables, and catering.

Thursday
  Starting Crew:
  Best Boy, Electric
  Best Boy, Grip
  Hair Stylist
  Makeup Artist
  1st Assistant Cameraman To Do:
  Final Location Scout for Camera, Grip, Electric

Friday
  Starting Crew:
  Sound Mixer
  Production Van Driver To Do:
  Final Production Meeting
Pre-production Checklist

STARTING FROM SCRATCH
- Find a good attorney who specializes in entertainment law
- Establish company structure (i.e., Corporation or partnership)
- Obtain business licenses from city, county, and/or state
- Apply to the IRS for a Federal ID number
- If you've established a corporation, you'll need a corporate seal and a minutes book
- Obtain Workers Compensation and General Liability insurance
- Open a bank account
- Secure a Completion Bond (if applicable)
- Start lining-up your staff and crew

LEGAL
Your company's Legal or Business Affairs Department or an outside entertainment attorney should do this work.
- Secure the rights to the screenplay
- Negotiate (or review) and prepare the contract for the writer of the screenplay
- Review all Financing and Distribution Agreements
- Order Copyright and Title Reports
- Prepare contracts for principal cast
- Prepare SAG contract riders
- Prepare contracts for the Producer, Director, Writer, Editor, Director of Photography, Production Designer and Costume Designer
- Prepare minors' contracts
- Review E & 0 (errors and omissions) Insurance
- Review contracts regarding literary material to make sure all required payments are made
- Review permits and other documents having potential legal significance
- Prepare (or approve) all necessary release forms
- Start music clearance procedures
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
Check List & Scheduling

SET-UP PRODUCTION OFFICE
Order furniture
Have phone system installed
Copier machine
Typewriters
Computer(s)
Fax machine(s)
Office supplies
Bottled water
Coffee maker
Refrigerator
Extra keys to office (keep list of who has keys)
Order beepers for key personnel
Prepare department head envelopes for messages and approving billing

PAPERWORK
Sign union and/or guild contracts (If applicable)
Open accounts with vendors
Set-up production files
Assemble supply of production forms
Prepare contact list
Prepare chart-of-account for coding bills
Start purchase order log
Prepare and distribute inventory logs
Start raw stock inventory
If a television series, prepare a list of episodes production dates, Director for each show
Prepare DGA deal memo.
Prepare crew deal memo
Give start slips and tax information to payroll
Prepare crew list
Prepare Crew Start-Up and Data Sheet
CAST-RELATED
- SAG bond (if applicable)
- Finalize casting
- Prepare cast lists
- Station 12 cast members
- Cast deal memos
- Prepare SAG contracts
- Schedule designated Actors for medical exams (cast insurance)
- Actors checklist-doctor exam, Wardrobe notified, contract received, contract signed, script received, etc.
- Wardrobe fitted
- Line-up stunt doubles and photo doubles
- Dialogue Coach
- Schedule rehearsal(s)
- Schedule hair, makeup
- Work permits for minors
- Welfare Worker(s), Teacher(s)
- Line up an extras casting agency
- Interview stand-ins and Extras
- Obtain a good supply of extras vouchers

SCRIPT, SCHEDULES
- Finalize script
- Script typed
- Script duplicated
- Script distributed to cast and crew
- Script to research company
- Breakdown script, prepare a production board
- Prepare a One4ine schedule
- Prepare a Day-out-of-days
- Prepare a Shooting schedule
- Have the script timed
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
Check List & Scheduling

PREPARE BREAKDOWNS OF
Atmosphere
Production Vehicles
Picture Vehicles
Stunts
Special Effects
Locations

BUDGETARY
Finalize budget
Cash flow chart
Send script, budget and schedule to the completion bond company

INSURANCE
Send script and budget to insurance companies for bids
Secure Insurance coverage
Secure special insurance coverage for aircraft, boats, railroad, etc.
Prepare Certificates of Insurance for vehicles, equipment and locations
Send travel, stunt and effects breakdown to Insurance Company
Have a supply of Workers' Compensation accident forms and insurance information for office, 2nd Assistant Director and Company Nurse
Select doctor approved by insurance company for director and cast physicals

PREPARE PRE-PRODUCTION SCHEDULE
Including:
Casting sessions
Production meetings (Schedule at least two-more if time allows)
Location scouts
Rehearsals
Pre-rigging
**SECURITY**
- Intermittent Traffic Control
- Post for Parking
- Signed releases from neighbors
- Prepare maps to locations
- Heaters, fans, air conditioners
- Lay-out board, drop cloths
- Locate closest medical emergency facilities
- Power/Utilities
- Locate parking lot(s) if shuttling
- Extra tables, chairs, tent
- Locate areas for extras, dressing rooms, eating, hair, makeup hair
- Allocate parking areas for equipment and vehicles
- Line-up strike and cleaning service

**ORDER**
- Raw stock
- Still film, Polaroid film
- Camera equipment*
- Empty cans, camera reports, black bags. cores (from lab)
- Steadicam
- Video Assist*
- Grip, electric equipment*
- Grip, electric, camera expendables
- Dolly(s), Crane(s), Condor(s)
- Generator(s)*
- Sound equipment*
- 1/4” Mag stock
- Walkie-talkies, bullhorns, headsets*
- Cellular phone(s)
- Portable VCR & monitor (If dailies are shown on set)*
- Catering
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
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*Most equipment rents on a daily or weekly basis. If you are using the same equipment for the run of your show, you should be able to negotiate two or three-day weekly rental rates with each of the equipment houses with whom you are dealing

POST PRODUCTION-RELATED
  Set-up accounts for: lab, sound transfers, video transfers
  Set-up cutting room(s)
  Book scoring, looping and dubbing facilities and dates
  Route dailies
  Schedule screening of dailies
  Prepare a tentative post production schedule

LOCATIONS
  Location agreements
  Certificates of insurance
  Permits
  Fire and Police officers

TRANSPORTATION
  Motor home(s), star wagon(s)
  Honey wagon(s)
  Camera car(s), process trailer(s)
  Water truck
  Production trailer
  Hair, makeup trailer
  Wardrobe trailer
  Crew cabs, vans
  Grip, electric truck
  Camera truck
  Prop truck
  Set dressing truck
  Fuel truck
  Picture cars
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
Check List & Scheduling

ANIMALS
Locate the necessary animals/livestock
Contact the American Humane Association for guidelines in the proper care, use, handling and safety of animals
Locate and hire competent:
Animal handlers
Trainers
Wranglers

SPECIALTY ITEMS
Technical advisor(s)
Rear screen/process
Stock footage
Cycs
Mock-ups
Models
Special makeup and/or hair pieces
Photography

Prepare a portable File Box (or a legal-size accordion file) with the following paperwork to stay on the set at all times. This box should contain:

COPIES OF
All signed location agreements o Ml permits

BLANKS OF THE FOLLOWING
Location agreements
Call sheets
Production reports
Workers Compensation accident report forms
Automobile accident report forms
SAG contracts (a few of each kind)
SAG Taft/Hartley report forms
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
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Crew deal memo forms
Certificates of Insurance
Check request forms
Purchase orders
Petty cash envelopes
Release forms (an assortment)

EXTRA COPIES OF
Staff and crew lists
Scripts, script changes
Cast lists
Contact lists
Shooting schedules
Day-out-of-days
Maps to the locations
Start slips, W-4s, I-9s
Extra vouchers

KEEP ON THE SET AT ALL TIMES
A complete First Aid kit
Aspirin, Tylenol
Several flashlights
An assortment of office supplies
A typewriter and a small copier (if you have the room and they are within your budget)

Once the film (including post-production) has been completed and before the files are packed up and stored, prepare a Final production Book containing all the pertinent information you may need to refer to at a later date. This book should contain:

Corporate (signatory papers) information
Bank information (bank contact, account number, copies of signature cards, etc.)
Bank reconciliation
PRE-PRODUCTION NOTES
Check List & Scheduling

Trial balance
Final budget
Final cost report
Cast list, final SAG cast list
Chart-of-accounts, vendor list
Contact List (local and national)
Final staff and crew list
Crew deal memos
Location list (including cites and deals)
Call sheets
Production reports
Final shooting schedule
Final day-out-of-days
Key correspondence
Copies of major deals
Copies of signed union guild contract agreements
Information on insurance claims
Final script
Dates of delivery, delivery requirements
Inventory logs, location of inventory