First Assistant directors have many responsibilities and wear many hats on set. Among these roles is to be a direct liaison between the Director and the rest of the production. They in fact deal with all production activity to help free up the Director.

The role of the 1st AD can be broken into 2 areas: Preproduction and production. In preproduction the 1st AD creates the filming schedule all while being aware of the schedule and availability of the cast, the script coverage and budget of the shoot. This includes securing the locations of the film, props and equipment. Also knowing the script in detail to when and where these locations, equipment and props will be needed.

Creating a schedule is essential to stay on budget. The AD be in contact with all department heads to get the entire production under one timeline and have marching orders towards an end date. The AD creates an outline and shot list breaking down the shoot scene by scene.

This brings us to production and the AD now becomes the voice on set. The AD maintains order as well as look out for the safety of the crew. The AD sets up the blocking for the scene, allows rehearsal, and then asks for Final Checks. This is to allow other departments to make any adjustments. Quiet on the set!

The next part I’ve witnessed first hand being on set. Once everything is ready to go, the Director in my case calls for “sound speed,” “camera rolling,” Then snaps the clapper snaps and “scene, take.” Then Action. These are important because it acts as a double check for one to make sure the sound guy didn’t fall asleep at his post and the camera is in fact rolling. It would be unfortunate to get a good take and someone forgot to push a button. The clapper helps the editor by giving a sound to cue off of to sync video with audio. Lastly, reading off the scene and take also helps organize thing both off the shot list but in the editing room as well.

The director calls cut and if there is the need for a retake the AD resets everyone back to starting positions. While film is being shot the AD has to mindful for time. Keeping everyone on a schedule and moving people faster if they day is getting behind. This includes speaking to the director.

Communication is key; both with your director and film crew and being almost like a parent keeping track of everyone and what they are doing. In the end the AD hand behind the scenes getting everything done to allow all the other departments to just focus on their specific area of concern.