ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The AD on a film crew is responsible for all of the on-set, day to day operations. They are one of the top positions on a film set existing below the line. Their responsibilities include: tracking daily progress against the production schedule, arranging logistics, preparing daily call sheets, checking the cast and crew, and maintaining order on the set. They also have to ensure the health and safety of the crew. Depending on how big the production is this role can be broken down into first assistant director and second assistant director. If that is the case then the 1AD has overall responsibilities of AD and supervises the 2AD. Both of these roles are considered technical or non-creative roles. Some of the qualities Assistant Directors have are: exceptional organizational and time management skills, attention to detail, excellent communication skills, flexibility, ability to multitask and prioritize tasks, the ability to troubleshoot and problem solve, deal with crisis situations, and be an authoritative and motivating team leader while maintaining positivity throughout the shoot. They usually work long hours in pressurized situations.

The 1AD is directly responsible to the Director and runs the floor on a set. They are responsible for keeping the production on schedule throughout the day, and communicating with the entire crew while maintaining their safety. They must also maintain the security of the shot itself. A good AD can estimate how long a scene will take to shoot and keep everything running smoothly and on time. They are basically the “right hand” to the Director. They deal with all the practical and technical aspects of a shoot so the Director can focus on the creative side. They help break down the script into a storyboard, and determine the shoot order while also keeping it on schedule. During pre-production the 1AD consults with the Director to create a filming schedule while keeping in mind the budget, cast availability, and script coverage. They also oversee the hiring of locations, props and equipment, and even checking weather reports before each days shoot. During the production they make announcements in order to coordinate the cast and crew, they supervise the other assistants, and keep the shoot disciplined and ready for the Director’s cues.

The 2AD is responsible for creating daily call sheets based on the production schedule and can act as a backstage manager. This can entail being a liason with the actors and putting them through make up and wardrobe. Depending on the size of the production they can be responsible for supervising the other assistant directors and managing background extras.

So, overall, the Assistant Director is in charge of maintaining a schedule and coordinating all the practicalities of a shoot so the Director can strictly focus on their creative vision. They are the key link between the Director and cast and crew. They also act as liaison with the production office and give routine progress reports about the film shoot.