

Matters and Manners for Mentoring: Set Etiquette for Interning/Apprenticing

By Suzanne Patterson

Mentoring opportunities under a professional media production makeup artist as an intern (or apprentice as it was called during the old Hollywood studio system days) is nearly extinct in today's industry. They tend to be fiercely protective of their networking and clients, and don't want to bother with helping newcomer artists into the profession for five main reasons:

1. The inconvenience of the extra time it takes on the job or away from the job.
2. Take extra time to retrain makeup artists that have come from various makeup schools with inadequate skills, set protocols, and product knowledge and usage.
3. Give away closely held trade secrets and techniques.
4. Further saturate the already crowded makeup for hire market.
5. Risk working with and introduce potential "stealers" to their hard earned jobbing network.

Fortunately there are still a handful of professionals out there that rose above these drawbacks to reach out to mentor others, either because they have benefited through the mentoring/apprenticing model themselves or simply believe in passing along the craft unselfishly in this time-honored manner. They are willing to take the time and effort to provide entry-level artists opportunities to further develop their acumen in an "on set" situation, or perhaps hone their skills in an FX shop experience.

Good mentoring follows the model used and taught in the old studio system, including high standards and ethics, and is still the most respected and thorough way of training and learning the craft from deep inside of the business. It also calls for patience, consistency, perseverance, and trustworthiness on the part of the intern/apprentice to fully realize and benefit from this opportunity. It is priceless instruction by occurrence, and a "laboratory experience" of insights that you will never acquire from a makeup school or class room type situation. It also requires commitment and dependability along with a willingness to build your skills with character and integrity along the way as you develop your potential through the collective experiences offered to you.

If you are one of these fortunate individuals who is in an on-set mentoring situation I cannot stress enough the value you will receive from sitting under this kind of tutoring, and observing the process that quite possibly could lead to a little bit of "hands-on" opportunity. There is great importance in submission to a set experience by following set etiquette to the letter at all times, as this will make a serious impact on whether you will get invited back again. If you prove yourself well in these then it can bridge to full up assisting and successful networking for jobs in the future.

What is Interning /Apprenticing, and How is it Different From Assisting?

It is important to know the differences between interning/apprenticing and assisting so you know what to expect. Interning or apprenticing, as a rule, is never a paid position; it is part of the artist's fundamental skills platform development process through observation that allows you a "bird's eye" view of the role of a professional makeup artist working in an actual production. You will see first hand how they manage and discharge the duties of their department. In many cases (and in non-union work) a makeup artist can be working

up to three separate duties that includes makeup, hair, and wardrobe styling under one department, so the learning experience value can be "tri-fold".

It's like a field trip to a real time situation where you can view kits and set-up, observe product usage and techniques employed up close, watch how talent is handled and processed through the makeup/hair/and wardrobe stage, and how they are maintained throughout the shoot. There are many other things learned from a production set situation that can never be taught or covered in classroom situation, including many department interactions and nuances that are crucial to the working process. So, the way to learn and absorb them properly is to BE around the action!

Having said all this, the quickest way for an intern to turn it into a negative experience and begin a bad reputation with their mentor is to "bite the hand that is feeding you". In other words the behavior, actions, and intentions that are expressed by the intern during these experiences will either show unity or have an ulterior or hidden motive. The latter is a sure-fire way to cut themselves off from future valuable learning experiences, badly tarnish a budding career, and dry up future assisting and networking potentials for themselves and others!

Interning is NOT assuming you will be actively participating in the process but it can lead to the potential of some light tasking related to the job, and under supervision when it is appropriate. This is especially true if you have been following rules to the letter and exhibit qualities of being a good assistant. However, do not come to set with the expectation of participating if you are just there to observe only. Consider it strictly a bonus if the opportunity does arise and your mentor deems you trustworthy enough to do light tasking for them.

Also, do not confuse tasking in this situation as a full up second (makeup assist.) Unless you have an agreement with your mentor to possibly upgrade to assisting during the production don't ever take it upon yourself to promote it anyway in your credits as a makeup second or assistant! It is crucial to your integrity as future professional artist to ask for the approval for credit (and a good idea to get it in writing) from your mentor so your veracity is clear to others on this if you decide to add it to your resume.

What Is Assisting?

Assisting, as it relates to this arrangement, is a "bridge" earned through the mentoring process to a more active or defined role of the intern to a mentor. Assisting definitely requires that the intern possess some rudimentary fundamental makeup artistry skills and can perform a tasking given to them correctly and without constant supervision.

Assisting in this circumstance is also unpaid. However, it can include an opportunity for the intern to list it on their resume, and according to the mentor's direction in this. Assisting at this level can also be paid work, but usually it is more of a stipend amount rather than a full professional rate. Assisting is a very crucial step in building a good resume, especially if it is a major production, so don't turn down the opportunities this early in your career to assist for free to gain the experience and exposure, and a possible heavy hitter credit!

Assisting is also a very important part of building your artistry fundamental skills platform and set worthiness, and a necessary process towards being an eventual key in your own right someday. Assisting is an opportunity to further build a good reputation with your mentor makeup artist (and production personnel), and it's a good entry level into the referral/networking process if you show yourself worthy. Continued assisting opportunities that demonstrate your polished fundamental skills and pristine set ethics on the job can also

lead to team artistry or preferred assistant status as you become more seasoned, and where you can possibly earn a professional assisting rate or even a professional full up day rate as a second. Most importantly it can land you in a leading artist's referral pool, and greater opportunities for networking. The mentoring process as outlined in this discussion bulletin is how I find my paid assistants, and who I deem trustworthy and skilled enough to eventually be in my referral tier.

Above all, the mentoring experience as an intern/apprentice is opportunity for you to view all aspects of production, take mental notes, and ask questions at the appropriate pre-designated times. Over the years I have compiled a set of rules for proper decorum for interns when they have been invited to come on a shoot with me. As you read through this list please do not take personal offense at some of these rules as most of these do not apply to the vast majority of my students who have been very gracious, respectful, and a joy to work with.

However, I have had some students through the years who have committed various infractions of protocols on set, and as such it does necessitate alerting you to possible situations. Being forewarned is forearmed and that is the best way to approach this situation, especially if you are about to embark on a set experience for the first time.

1. Always arrive to the production location 10-15 minutes prior to the call time the mentor gives you. This is an important business practice that speaks well of you, and when you are eventually out on your own jobs. Also you never know if you will have trouble on the way due to traffic delays, accidents, etc. You will never be late to a job in the future as a pro if you make this an important practice in being punctual. Make sure that you have all point of contact numbers with you so that you can call and alert your mentor at the first sign you might be late.

Any parking fees (parking garages, lots, etc.) at the production site is your responsibility so always come prepared for that. For instance, parking in Washington, DC can get as high as \$28 per day, so always have a little more than you think you will need.

2. Personal appearance: This is always a matter of style with comfort, but should always reflect good taste and modesty. I have developed a professional look that is understated style with a minimal amount of makeup that needs no maintenance. I also dress according to the shoot conditions, determining whether it is an outdoor shoot (with heat, humidity, rain, etc.) or indoors and come prepared accordingly. My hair is also styled in a way that will not need maintenance or interfere with my work. Comfortable shoes that allow me to have some speed on the job if needed, is a must, and if working outdoors, be sure to have protective gear in relation to the weather you are working in (for instance, hat, sunglasses and sunscreen for summer.)

Absolutely no fragrance, but double duty on the deodorant, and I always make sure my hands and nails are in top manicured condition. I keep jewelry to a very bare minimum (watch and earrings only.) In my professional view, working on set is not about making a big fashion statement that draws attention to you or needs constant personal maintenance during the day, it is about being equipped to do the job in an expert manner with a professional appearance. This is extremely important if you are working with high profile or celebrity talent, as you don't want to be the cause of a potential situation that would create concern or unnecessary attention with talent or crew because of your visual image. Please use these suggestions as a good guideline in formulating your own professional look.

There are also some situations on a shoot day where dressing for the location requirements becomes necessary, such as an outdoor shoot in a very remote area. I have been on sets that shoot inside caves, deep sink holes, barren deserts, or locations that had no bathroom facilities, electric or water. I have hiked rocky landscapes and steep hills, and hiked through deep wooded and forested areas (complete with poison oak or poison ivy) to reach filming sites where I am required to be, so in these cases you dress and wear shoes that will help keep you protected and safe from the elements, it's definitely not a fashion statement day!

3. Always allow your mentor to introduce you to members of the production crew. You may be introduced by your first name only, and if so, and it is expected that you maintain the first name only basis throughout the shoot. Everything you do on set from this moment on is through your mentor, so don't take even this small thing lightly as you will risk future mentoring opportunities. The last thing you want to do is to cause your mentor extra stress in worrying about what your motives may or may not be. This is a time to build trust, integrity, and confidence, so do all you can to show those virtues rather than cause someone to worry about your personal agenda.
4. NEVER EVER hand out your business card or resume' to others on set for any reason. This is the fastest way to be asked to leave the set and never work in the future with your mentor. This is not the time to make buddies with the crew for future contacts, as this is most definitely NOT your networking opportunity. Remain discreet, and always direct your attention to your mentor. You are an intern that has been given a rare chance to learn up close and personal in a set environment and it is of vital importance that you respect your mentor's professional connection with their client by observing this absolute rule of conduct. Strict adherence to this code will earn you respect and trust
5. Likewise, do not bring your portfolio book or reel to set for the same obvious reasons as stated above. Also, if you are handed a business card or contact information from anyone on the production it is the proper and expected protocol for you to immediately refer that action or any conversation about contact to your mentor. Always tell them that they can only get in contact with you through your mentor.
6. Do not bring your makeup kit to the set. Set observing opportunities are not geared towards extra kits or equipment from apprentices on location, and this is not a laboratory moment for you to experiment. This is a time to learn what you can by observing and then go home and practice any new found ideas or skills on your own. If you are working in a shop or studio environment away from the set with your mentor, that is the time for extra tutoring or instruction.
7. Bringing a camera to set to take personal photos is at the sole discretion of your mentor and must always be approved beforehand. Many times the production staff has specifically indicated to crew it is a "closed set" which means that what is being shot that day is proprietary knowledge only. In this case, you MUST strictly observe that protocol and refrain from taking any photos in any form, including using cell phone capability.

This means no photos in the makeup room or any part of the set. If you are found in violation then you will be immediately dismissed from the set and sent home. No exceptions! It is not worth the embarrassment caused or a tag of unprofessionalism on you to gamble it all just for a shot. If any photos are taken for makeup, hair, or costuming it is strictly for continuity purposes and usually turned over to production

after the shoot. The script supervisor (if there is one) also takes photos for continuity and the editing process.

Many times there will also be a professional set photographer who is taking stills for promotional purposes. In open set cases it is also up to the Producer if "outside" photos will be allowed, so please follow whatever protocol is allowed and always through your mentor first before taking any photos.

8. Listen carefully and adhere to any instructions given to you before filming or taping gets underway. Your mentor is responsible for bringing you on set, so **ALWAYS** maintain the discreet distance from the action that you have been specifically directed to. **DO NOT interfere with or question other crew members under any circumstances during filming!** Maintain strict crew protocols or what you have been personally instructed to do. Always direct any questions or comments directly to your mentor, and at the appropriate designated times you have been offered to. Stay close by your mentor at all times, and do not wander around the set or stray away for any reason.
9. If you have the good fortune to be on a high profile personality/celebrity talent shoot with your mentor, **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** are you to directly engage the celebrity in any conversation, or ask for an autograph or photo opportunity! This is a sensitive situation and requires your mentor to work at peak efficiency and technique, and employing the proper etiquette or protocols that may be requested by the celebrity. Remain at the discreet distance or at the pre-directed position while you observe, and do not interfere in any way. You may be asked to leave the makeup area immediately if celebrity talent feels uncomfortable in any way with your presence, or your mentor feels you have breached any level of protocol or process. Your reaction or behavior to this request (and how politely) will indicate how "professional" you are in handling this matter, and the future of your mentoring opportunities. Remember, all situations are part of a collective learning experience, and what may be a negative situation at the moment will always produce a positive knowledge point of skill in the future.

Just because the production company has cleared interns coming on set with a professional artist doesn't mean the celebrity talent is in agreement with it or will allow the intern "in their space." Every situation like this is an individual case by case circumstance, and most often is decided at the celebrity talent's momentary whim or convenience. You must be totally flexible about this, and understand it's not about you personally if the celebrity/talent nixes your presence or if you have made some errors in judgment or performance in this situation and had to leave the area. There will be an opportunity to learn later on in the day about your mistakes and how to positively benefit from them for the future. However, if you intentionally abandon all protocols and ethics for your momentary personal agenda then you can be sure that you most likely will be immediately dismissed from the set and future mentoring opportunities in jeopardy.

10. Do not expect or assume any kind of remuneration (money) from your mentor or the production, even if you have the opportunity to do light tasking or assisting! Interning in a mentoring program is never a paid position. If the opportunity opens itself up for you to get in the action at the request of your mentor, consider it an unexpected privilege to do so and nothing more.

Do not request or insist on the type of tasking or assisting you will or will not do. Arrogance doesn't work, and you don't need that tag on your budding reputation. If you have been given a task then essentially you have been designated a PA, so use it to

learn from that aspect. All interns (no matter what your department) need to know all the ins and outs of production management and how all the departments work.

11. Do not expect to have this field trip opportunity as a credit on your resume. Unless you have actually participated in assisting to your mentor, and your mentor approves the credit, do not list this on your resume. This is where integrity counts in your career, and more often than not, using unearned credits to "pad" your resume will come back to bite you hard eventually in one way or another.
12. About tobacco: As a makeup artist who must have hand to face contact with actors in a very close setting, it is a far better decision for a more professional image to avoid using tobacco products while you are in this setting. It is a distraction to alertness to the set and everything going on around you and can add an unwanted perception from others about your ability to perform the job professionally. Nicotine has a residual odor that can't really be eliminated, only masked. When it comes down to landing a makeup job in the future, consider this: many a makeup artist has lost work not by lack of talent, but because the actor/celebrity preferred working with a non-tobacco user. Professionally, I do not allow interns or assistants to smoke around me, my department area, or around the talent. That's not to say you can't smoke at all that day, but I definitely will request that you do so well outside of the set area and away from crew. Smoke settles into hair, clothing, and even on skin, and I don't need to deal with those issues under time restraints as well as the health hazard of second hand smoke. Please understand that I respect every one's right or need to smoke, however I do expect the same courtesy for my department's right not to be exposed to it.
13. Be attentive to the production at all times. This is not the time to catch up on your pager, cell phone, or voicemail messages, read, or look bored! There is so much activity and too much to learn in a set environment that warrants an inattentive presence from an intern (however taking notes is encouraged!) Also, this can speak volumes to others about your interest level in this learning environment provided for you, and you could risk future mentoring opportunities. There will be a lot of waiting in-between setup of shots, and it may seem very boring, but an alert intern will use this down time to observe the interdepartmental process (lighting, camera, set design, etc.) to ask questions and gain a better understanding of how these components synergize to produce a completed work.
14. Be prepared to stay the entire time of production, from set-up to wrap! If you arrive late or cut out early without a prior agreement to this, then that will give the strong impression all the way around that you do not have the potential to be truly professional in your work as a paid assistant or pro.
15. This "on set" shoot experience is not the time or place for the apprentice to criticize, critique, or evaluate the mentor's performance on the job. You might think you are a "Technicolor Talent" and would have done the work entirely different, but your mentor has graciously taken you under their wing and provided you with a valuable learning experience. Don't undermine that with a diva ego, you don't have enough experience yet to make that judgement. And, it's the quickest way to cut yourself off from the mentoring relationship!
16. Never be a no-show. If you have made a commitment to your mentor to attend a shoot, make sure you follow through with your responsibility to be there, and on time. If you have been officially added to the call sheet as an intern/apprentice, or PA, the entire production crew will also be expecting you (and added in the head count for meal breaks.) If you have a situation that will not allow you to attend, then be sure your mentor is given enough advance notice to adjust accordingly.

17. Leave any attitudes at home, check your ego at the door, and open up your mind to soak up the experience. Enjoy the process, but learn all you can. Someone thinks enough of your potential to offer this encounter, so treat it with respect and gratitude.

If you get the impression that these rules are too strict and confining for your budding makeup psyche, then this type of mentoring program is probably not the best experience for you in pursuit of your makeup career. However if you can show respect, adapt to the discipline it takes, and breathe in every little experience offered to you, then you are truly teachable and will go a long way to developing the kind of professional skills and relationships it takes to get to the top of your craft!

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