



TIPS FOR TV RUNNERS

By no means are these tips exhaustive and most of it is probably common sense but just in case you'd like some pointers, please read on.

The list has been compiled by contributors to the www.twatercooler.org forum for people that work in TV.

They encompass Commissioning Editors, Line Producers, Producers, Directors, Production Managers, Assistant Producers, Production Co-ordinators, Production Secretaries, Runners, Editors, Archive Producers & Researchers, Camera Operators, Sound Recordists, Engineers, Data Wranglers and more!

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ATTITUDE

1. Always have a nice smile on you. No need for manic grinning though. Just cheery will do.
2. If you see your fellow Runners working hard and you don't have anything to do - get stuck in to the tasks too. It will help your chances of future employment to show your willingness.
3. If sent out with someone senior on a task/recce/shoot and they ask you about yourself - do not tell that person that you want to work in TV because it seems much easier to get into than film or music which are the two great loves in your life. DO not say that TV isn't something you really like at all, or you really want to be a Presenter and this is just a stepping stone for you.
4. When you are asked to do a boring job, e.g. help another runner organise the recycling, do not pull a face and say, "You must really hate me", when all you have been asked to do is flatten and tape together three boxes. In other words, no matter how menial the task, approach with enthusiasm and perform to the best of your abilities.
5. Ask questions about things you don't understand and show your interest in the other things that are going on in the office or other departments. If you are particularly interested in something that's going on that you are not directly involved with, it never hurts to ask if you can go there for a day or so to see what they are doing. It won't always be possible but sometimes the Producer/PM may try and switch things around a bit so that you can at least shadow for one day.
6. Usually if something gives you something to do, it will be important and need doing immediately. Do not get distracted from the job in hand. If someone asks you to do something when you are in the middle of a task, explain what you are doing and ask the second person to make the judgement on which is more urgent. If it is not obvious, always ask when tasks should be completed by.
7. Prepare everything beforehand and organise well. Make sure all your media is properly labelled. Prepare for things to happen in advance of when they are scheduled to.
8. Don't be caught out by other peoples mess ups and don't pass the buck - take ownership. If you take responsibility, people will entrust you with more responsibility.
9. Never assume anything. Just because you may be diligent and efficient, doesn't mean everyone else in this world is. So just because you've left a message for someone or sent a text/email, don't assume they picked it up, or did anything about it.

CALLSHEET

10. This is a document containing all important info about the shoot/record: contacts, maps, Health & Safety, schedule, travel, accommodation, door codes, technical specifications, kit list, props list, talent, catering, car parking space allocation etc... It's known as a 'Callsheet' because it will also contain the time of the day individuals are expected to be at the venue. This is known as a 'Call Time'.
11. Have a schedule, get a highlighter or several and really emphasise which bits you need to pay particular attention to – e.g. for compliance recordings on live events to make sure you know which ones you are responsible for.

CASH

12. If you are given a float to buy things on behalf of the production, you will be expected to sign a receipt to prove you were given the cash. Your float should always be same amount you were given and will be a mixture of receipts and cash when you reconcile it.
13. When you have spent all of the money, you will be expected to produce receipts for all the money that has been spent and return any remaining cash. You must then fill out an Float Advance form. Sometimes this is called an Expenses Form. The purpose of the form is to prove the money spent has been accounted for by attaching the receipts and the Co-ordinator or Manager will then put codes on the form and enter it into the budget as money spent. Always ask your PC/PM to explain exactly how they prefer you to fill out the form as each company will be a bit different.
14. If they don't give you a wallet, get your own so it's separate from your own personal money.
15. Always get a receipt. Then immediately write on it what the item is if it is not evident. If it's for food/drinks, write who you got them for or who was at the meal. Your Production Co-ordinator will need to know for the production company records.
16. Unless specifically told to do so, you are not authorised to buy alcohol/cigarettes on the float as a general rule. There is also no drinking during work hours.
17. Learn the difference between a credit card slip and a receipt. Your Production Manager and Accountant have no use for a credit card receipt. Always ask for a VAT receipt (not everything will have VAT applicable or every vendor will be registered for VAT but they will tell you when you ask and should be able to give you a till/handwritten receipt of some kind). This is very important because the production company must claim the VAT charge back from the government.
18. Keep some Petty Cash vouchers on you for the supplier to sign if they can't give you a receipt or you forget to get one.

CATERING

19. Thinking about accessing your Facebook? Think "have I made that nice Producer a cup of coffee /tea today". If the answer is no, do that first. In fact, get a round in and tidy up the kitchen area while you are about it. If anything is running out milk/teabags/bread, inform whomever in the office needs to restock it. This will usually be the Office Manager or Receptionist. Or it could be you.
20. Most productions run on coffee and tea, so on your first day, find out how everyone takes their drinks and make a note of it, so when you see your team walking into the office or on location, you can have a drink waiting for them, the way they like it.
21. Have clean cups + plates washed up before the lunch rush.
22. If, when on a location shoot, you get sent for bacon sarnies, or other hot food, for the whole team from the local café, go in person on the first day and if you will be shooting in the same place the following day – try to ring the order through on the following day and pick it up. Organise your order in ascending order of seniority so the director / talent / DOP's food is the hottest and freshest when you get back. That means that yours will be the coldest and soggiest I'm afraid although you'll earn brownie points for attention to detail.
23. Always treat the crew well. If you're on a shoot with camera and sound but no camera assistant look after them both. If it's a hot studio or sunny day and they are filming handheld actuality, they will both be getting hot, tired and dehydrated so keep them well stocked with water and high-energy snacks. But don't let them treat you like you're their bitch - you will have a dozen more duties to attend to as well.

24. On a busy factual-based shoot, the camera & sound are often worked the hardest so don't keep them hanging round for lunch & tea breaks either as when the camera's not rolling nothing much is being achieved. If you've helped them out and they are a decent pair, they will put in a good word for you at the end of the day with the powers that be. A happy crew = a happy shoot!
25. On a big event or studio shoot, check if your Producers and production (Production Manager, Co-ordinator, Secretary) have eaten, as they often have to work through breaks. Perhaps offer to get food put by for them for later.
26. If looking after gallery or truck staff, ensure drinks always have lids for safety purposes.

COMMUNICATIONS

27. On your first day, enter the production office and core team contacts to your phone address book.
28. Email the current contact list to your personal email so that you can always access it wherever you are via email/web mobile.
29. Only access Facebook/Twitter/Myspace/whatever during lunch or when your feet are well and truly under the table. Think six months unless you have specific instruction to do so.
30. Get into the habit of writing a 'To Do' list every day and ticking off your tasks as you do them. At the end of the day, start writing tomorrow's list before you leave and copy across everything you didn't get done today. This will help you to focus on the varied tasks you have been given by the entire team and get you used to prioritising.
31. Try to remember Producers, Directors and Production Managers will be across a 101 things to with the production at any one time from casting to budget issues, so it may take them a bit longer to reply to an email. Your question about what colour paper they want the script on isn't at the top of their priority list. Try to write all these questions down and at the end of the day, or when you can see they have a moment, go and speak to them and go through it all at once, instead of sending lots of small emails. One of the key things about being runner is being organised.
32. If you don't know which task is more time-sensitive, always ask your Production Co-ordinator or Manager to explain which should come first and why.
33. If you are asked to do something and you can't do it / don't know how to do it / forget - always tell the person who asked you to do it as soon as possible. You have been given that job to do and if you don't do it, it will still have to be done, so giving someone as much notice as possible to fix it will be your best course of action. Like ball cancer - ignoring it does not make it go away...
34. Your team will sometimes talk a lot of shorthand and use industry language. Don't pretend to know what something is or means if you don't know. No one expects you to know everything. Ask someone to explain it to you at an appropriate moment and don't be embarrassed - it shows you were taking it all in and you are keen to learn.
35. NEVER address those older than 30 as 'mate'.
36. Learn a trick for remembering people's names. A quick trick is to look people in the eye, and repeat their name again. People will then look you in the eye and say their name again or agree or nod or something. Let it sink in. And if required use a backup trick to remember is to rhyme something about them with their name – eg 'smells like a drain – Adrian'. Do NOT do this if they are talent (a presenter) or at channel controller or commissioner level where you should know their bloody name.

37. Whenever you make a booking (for a car, food - whatever) - double check it's been received and actioned until whatever it is you've arranged actually unfolds before your very eyes.
38. Always check with the rest of the team that it's ok for you to leave the office/location/studio before you put your coat on at the end of the day.
39. You will earn extra brownie points if you check if anyone needs anything doing before you prepare to leave.
40. Ensure you have a sensible, personal email address. Your name is fine. 'BigbangersDD@hotmail.com' is not. Jokey email addresses promote a sense of unprofessionalism.
41. Always put a subject line on emails that relate to the content. If the content changes – change the subject line, makes it far easier for people to find the email later.
42. If you are shy and have trouble chatting to the production staff, a good way to get started is, 'How are you today?' or 'How's it going today' or similar when you take their food + drink, they like the fact you care and it starts conversation.
43. NEVER send ANY tape, DVD, hard disk, pen drive etc in snail mail unless specifically told to do so. You will usually need to take it somewhere in person or the Co-ordinator will need to organise a courier for it.
44. Check the file naming conventions on the network if not evident. When you leave the production, other people will need to use the information you have left and must be able to find it easily. Never save anything to the C:/ drive or Desktop – always on the production directory.

DRESS

45. Dress appropriately for the day. Smart casual in the office is fine. Jeans, trainers, t-shirts all fine. They should be clean, preferably not ripped to show your bangers/nutsack and do not say 'F**K' or 'C*NT' anywhere on them. No one wants to see your thong/boxers either.
46. Wear good sturdy sensible shoes that do up properly, not ridiculous sandals that will flap all the way down the corridor as you jog off to get something, and then trip you up when you have three boiling teas in your hands.
47. On outdoor shoots make sure you have appropriate clothing, TV involves a lot of standing around freezing. Layer up.

48. When working in entertainment or drama, either in studio or location, it is most practical to wear belted trousers with pockets or some kind of small satchel type affair, as typically you may have the following about your person:
- Dressing room spare keys
 - Callsheet
 - Guestlist
 - Lanyard with essential phone number laminate attached to it
 - Leatherman
 - Personal mobile
 - Pens
 - Petty Cash Float
 - Production mobile
 - Running order
 - Script
 - Security passes
 - Walkie Talkie with headset

EDITORIAL

49. Don't be afraid to offer input/ideas. Learn when to sit in the corner and keep quiet, and pick your moment carefully to offer your input. Whether it is well received or not will be determined largely by your timing.
50. Whenever you finish a research task, even if it's finding phone numbers of local taxi cabs, put the information into a Word file or an email that is clearly labelled and send it to the relevant person. Do not assume the fact you have not been asked for the information, as an excuse to use Facebook until you are asked for it.

HIERARCHY

51. The commissioner/client/host/actors is not your friend. They don't know who you are and have little interest in you, unless you are feeding / watering / running out for their fags. It is not appropriate to approach them and ask them for a job/ back to yours. They will most likely not remember you next time you meet, so you should always be prepared to politely introduce yourself, if appropriate, every time you meet them. Of course, one would hope they may remember you from the previous day if you are working on a series...
52. Observe senior team members/clients when in your vicinity and ensure they are fed and watered and have everything they need. If you are asked to organise something on their behalf, please check with your Production Manager first before you do it.

HOURS

53. If you are due to finish at 1800, prepare yourself to stay until 1830 or later. Don't arrange to meet your mate down the pub at 1810, sometimes work can overflow and to go beyond the call of duty without angst will be expected. Just don't be rushing for the door on the dot.
54. You may be required to stay late for which you will be obliged to do. Any weekend work will usually be compensated with paid days off. Often referred to as DOIL (day off in lieu).

LOCATIONS & TRAVEL

55. Always have a tube map & A-Z in your bag / on your phone.
56. If working in London, remember it is filthy and you will be on public transport for quite a large part of your day, which is full of filth too. In order to minimise catching colds, flu etc... always wash your hands with soap whenever you get to your destination. So get to work in the morning - wash your hands. Get home in the evening - wash your hands and probably your face too. Out on a run during the day? Wash your hands when you get back to the office. Do not touch face, lick fingers etc without hand washing or antibacterial hand gel first.
Sounds a bit crazy but seriously you will find it makes a huge difference to how many colds/bouts of man-flu you get during the year.
57. Always look up how to get to your destination before you leave and check how long it will take you. You can then tell the team where you are going and when you expect to be back.
58. Ideally print off a route and map before you leave or input the postcode to your GPS if you have it on your phone.
59. On a shoot keep a call sheet on you at ALL times... . And don't lose it either! Your Producer won't take too kindly to being called up by some random OR the document making its way to the Press.
60. Learn correct radio etiquette and operation. NEVER swing your radio around by the aerial – it costs £250 to replace, which you will be liable for.

LOCATIONS, Drama

- i. Step up! If the 3rd AD is called off for some reason (phone, toilet etc), fill their shoes. The 1st will appreciate that there's someone there.
- ii. Keep your eyes peeled! Make sure that you always have eyes on the artists between takes - they have a habit of wandering off, and unfortunately it's not possible to tie them all to a post.
- iii. Feed the front line! Keep some DECENT biscuits and hot drinks to hand for when the camera/sound guys have a few minutes rest. All too often the good stuff goes and they're left with 5 packets of Tesco Value Bourbons to nibble on. That doesn't go down well.
- iv. Communicate! Make sure everyone knows what's going on at all times. If you're doing a pick up, let the 2nd AD know if there's traffic (no matter how bad, it's always going to be slower than you'd hope). If there's a scene change or cut, make sure that those around you know.
- v. Double check! If you're asked to collect an artist for the next scene, check on your call sheet that you've got the right artist (3rds unfortunately, often mis-communicate resulting in red faces all round).
- vi. Courtesy! It's important not to be big-headed about your job. You may have spent two years at college and three years at uni to get where you are, but you're still at the bottom of the ladder. Courtesy must also extend to members of the public whom the shoot will often be inconveniencing. Explain nicely what's actually happening and demonstrate how they may continue to go about their business without disturbing the shoot.

MOVING ON

61. The UK TV industry is tiny and you will bump into the same people as you move from company to company. Your reputation is so important and regardless of whom you put as references on your CV, if your potential employer sees a show on your CV, and they know someone from that show, they will more than likely call them for a reference. There are always productions in the pipeline and regularly teams have to be put together at very short notice, this means that PM's and Producers will go often assemble a team from personal recommendations and people they know.
62. Network. The most painless way to do this is to go to the pub with your team after work. Particularly good to go when other people within the company will be there that you don't know. You don't have to stay for long and you could always just have a soft drink if you preferred. You never know when the person you chatted with about something random might see what your availability is for something else coming up at the company.

PHONE MANNER

63. Listen to those around you and how they speak on the phone. Always be courteous to whomever is on the other end and speak clearly. Never swear at the caller.
64. Whatever anyone else says or does, if a member of the public phones the production office about any show, treat them very courteously. That also applies if you are on a location shoot and come across people outside.
65. Be polite because they are the customers and effectively pay your wages, one way or another. It is not cool or clever to assume you are better or know more just because they are "on the outside" and you are on the "in".
66. If the person they caller wants is not available, or not at their desk, you have a number of options:
 - * Can you help with whatever the caller wants?
 - * If you can't help, take a basic message but remember to take their name, number and briefly what it's about.
 - * Suggest the caller emails the person they want. Give their company email address out only.
67. As a rule, under no circumstances should you give out personal email addresses or mobile numbers. Always take the caller's numbers /email address and get someone to call them back.

THINGS NOT TO DO

68. It is not appropriate to sleep with anyone on the team or the crew, particularly, your boss. This often changes the dynamics of a professional team and can make it very difficult for you and your co-workers. You (not your boss) will be the one regarded unfavourably. Also consider that sleeping with your boss and sticking around for awkward pillow talk will probably result in you never working with them again.
69. Under no circumstances should you come to work wired or pissed. It's not appropriate. Ever.
70. Never save the talent's number in your phone then boast to all of your mates that he/she is your friend. It is likely they will encourage you to call the talent when you're pissed and this is never a good thing!
71. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES would it be good to ask the talent to sign your autograph book / broken arm cast / tits or pose for your Facebook pic.

LOCATION RUNNER KIT LIST

Decent, waterproof backpack to keep logs/release forms/petty cash/receipts safe and dry, together with all sorts of useful items, such as:

Bluetac
Cable ties
Chalk
Gaffer tape
Hand towel
Handwash gel
Hazard tape
J-Cloths
Lighter
Multi-tool, with penknife, screwdrivers, scissors etc.
Notepad
Pens/ Pencils
PVC tape
Sellotape
Torch
Wetwipes

Compiled by:

Akira
Bang Tidy
Beast
Hpeacekeeper
Jambon
Jasper

King Canute
LizzyTheBrit
Miss Bertina
Mr E Finger
Normski
Pageant Malarkey

PFB
Phantasium
Ringo
Sweet LuciferGrowley
Uncle Arthur
VeggieDave

<http://www.tvwatercooler.org>