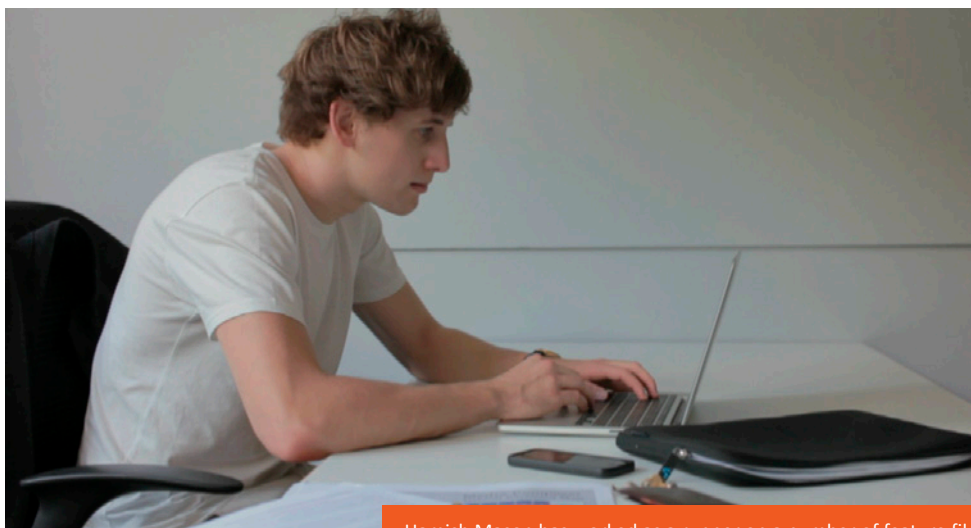


## What is a production runner?



Hamish Mason has worked as a runner on a number of feature films

Although the runner is an entry-level position in the film industry, it requires someone with excellent personal and professional qualities. The job can open the door to many other positions on films. The runner is in touch with every department, and has the opportunity to decide what his or her next professional step will be, and to make a good impression on heads of department and other senior crew who can recommend and hire crew for forthcoming projects.

Many runners enter the industry through work experience, and then move from project to project by developing good relationships with the rest of the crew, and by networking within the crew and in the wider industry. Often they will have some prior experience, for example on student films or short films.

A mid-range feature film employs one or two runners in the production department and another in the art department. The production hires a suitable vehicle for each runner, probably station wagons for the production runners and a van for the art department runner. Runners, however, are not always on the road. They spend a fair part of each day

in the production office or art department, helping out with photocopying, preparing and recording postage, doing lunch runs and generally making themselves useful.

In the production department, the runner works at the direction of the production coordinator. Together they work out a plan for the day based on when items are required, and the geography of the city. This plan is often changed by sudden urgent requests, and a good runner is skilled at re-prioritising tasks. The changes are always made in consultation with the production coordinator who needs to know where the runner is at all times.

The runner is one of the first people to start on the film, because the production office has to be running efficiently from the very first day of pre-production. Office furniture has to be set up, office equipment installed and running, keys cut and logged, stationery unpacked and stored, basic kitchen supplies bought. A runner who can help set up computers and get them communicating always makes a great first impression.

In the early weeks of pre-production, the runner's main tasks are to provide support and refreshments for the many meetings and to pick up items that the various departments require, such as additional stationery, perhaps fabric samples for the costume department, always coffee, tea, sugar, milk, biscuits. The location manager may ask the runner to drive to and from an outer-city location, to check distance and driving time. In Australia, union rules stipulate that if a location is

further than twenty kilometres from the production office, the crew must be paid travel time.

As the cast is confirmed, the runner's work starts to involve the actors, and a second runner may join the crew at this stage. Actors need to be transported to and from makeup and costume meetings and rehearsals. They may need to be taken to training sessions for their role, such as horse-riding lessons or violin tuition.

In the final week of pre-production, the runner provides support for the camera tests, distributes notices to nearby residents at locations, collects specially made costumes and always keeps the busy production office fed and watered.

The daily call sheet determines the overall shape of the runner's day, but changes usually occur as the day proceeds. The runner picks up cast and brings them to set (not the first actors who go to costume and makeup - they travel with the assistant directors). The runner brings the actors needed second in the day. During the morning, the runner is likely to be picking up and returning camera or lighting equipment hired for the day, or delivering paperwork between set, office and editors.

Although the runner may spend time on set each day, he or she does not have a role in the shooting crew. The reason is that the runner may need to leave set urgently at any stage – to pick up a replacement if a piece of equipment breaks down, to fetch some additional ice or milk for the unit department, to take home an actor whose work has finished before the end of the shooting day.

The afternoon is driven by the demands of the next day's call sheet. The runner may have to provide further support for the location manager with letterboxing or checking directions. At some stage of the day, the runner has to sit down with a pile of receipts to reconcile his or her cash float with the production accountant and get the petty cash topped up. The production team always welcomes support in printing and photocopying the call sheet, and as soon as these are ready, the runner hurries to set with them.

At the end of the shooting day the runner collects the camera cards and hard drives from the data wrangler and takes them to the cutting room, and on the way may drop some of the actors at home.

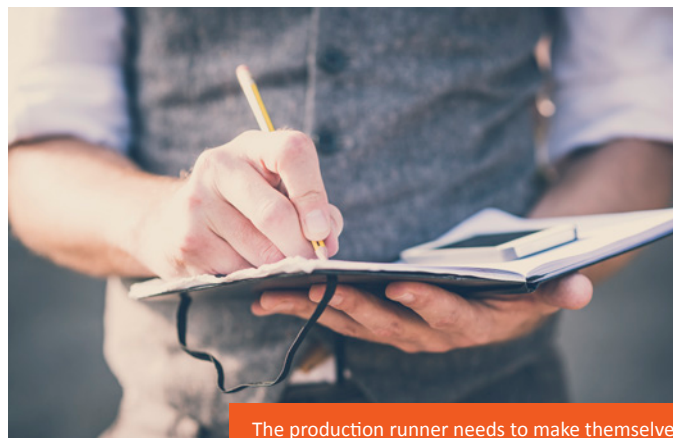
The main task of the runner during post-production is to wrap the film, and the production office. Time for this is short. The production team, including the runner, only works on the film for one or two weeks after the shoot wraps.

Hired items are checked and returned – walkie talkies, monitors, printers, the photocopier, makeup mirrors, wardrobe racks. The runner may assist with the sale of remaining properties and costumes. He or she also helps the production team scan, file and organise the paperwork that will ultimately be required for delivery of the film. They pass the delivery documentation over to the producer. Finally, the production team will hand over a clean, empty production office to their landlords or the next production.

[Click here to view interview with production runner Hamish Mason](#)

#### Useful resources:

- [Life as a TV runner](#)
- [Creative Skillset: Production Runner](#)



The production runner needs to make themselves useful on set and in the production office

Creative Content Australia is a not-for-profit organisation committed to raising awareness of the significance of copyright, the value of screen content and the impact that downloading and streaming pirated films and TV programs has on the creative industries: [www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au](http://www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au)

Creative Content Australia develops and distributes free online education resources to schools throughout Australia to stimulate classroom discussion about copyright and promote the value of creative content and good digital citizenship online [www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info](http://www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info)

