



**GUIDELINES FOR DOING INTIMATE
SCENES IN CAMERA WORK**

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FOREWORD

Most film and television professionals will encounter intimate scenes at some point of their careers, but until now the practices associated with them have mainly been learned through practical work.

The purpose of these guidelines is to give film and television professionals – and especially beginners in the field – an idea of what kind of things should be considered when working on intimate scenes. These guidelines are intended for all film and television professionals working on intimate scenes.

In addition to general guidelines, this booklet includes separate guidelines for actors, directors, producers/production managers and costume/make-up department. It may also be useful to study the guidelines of other professional groups. Many of these points are recommendations and guidelines rather than rules, and actors and crews can use them as a basis for drawing up their own rules for doing intimate scenes.

The guidelines are not intended to prevent or complicate working on intimate scenes. There are stories in which it is essential to show sex and nudity, and we must, of course, be able to tell those stories. However, common principles for working on intimate scenes can make it safer and more comfortable for all parties. A better working atmosphere and a more open culture of discussion can also improve the result.

1. General guidelines for everyone

Intimate scenes are scenes involving sexual acts or nudity by one or more persons. Intimate scenes also include scenes with partial nudity (e.g. underwear, nightgowns, swimsuits).

You must be able to talk about everything (in good time)

Nudity and sex are topics that many find difficult to talk about, even with their loved ones, so it is understandable that people have not always had the courage to speak openly enough about issues relating to intimate scenes. However, improving communication is the easiest path to a more functional operating culture so, despite the nerves or embarrassment, it must be possible to talk about issues relating to intimate scenes.

Discuss the implementation of intimate scenes and actors' boundaries openly and in detail well in advance of the shoot, and create a choreography for the scenes so there are no surprises on the day of the shoot. Open discussion and concrete details help dispel fear and nerves about intimate scenes, so that no one is left alone with uncertainty and doubt.

The discussion should only cover the intimate scenes, not the actors' own experiences or preferences. No conclusions should be drawn about the actors' gender identity, physical characteristics or sexual orientation, and related issues should only be discussed on the actor's own initiative.

Crew behaviour matters

The behaviour of the crew can have a major impact on how awkward or uncomfortable the intimate scene is for the actors. The behaviour of the crew must be respectful of the actors and take into account the specific needs of the scene, such as closed set¹ and covering the actors between shots.

Otherwise, the crew should try to behave as they would during any other scene. Drawing attention to the unusual nature of the situation, mystifying it or using unnecessary euphemisms should be avoided. It is good to remember that this is a technical performance for the actors. People often try to lighten awkward shoot situations with humour, but members of the crew should only joke while shooting an intimate scene at the instigation of the actors, if at all. Humour may seem inappropriate or even offensive to the actors.

The use of language in describing an intimate scene should also be taken into account, and offensive, degrading and objectifying terms should be avoided. In addition, unless your job specifically requires it,

- Avoid looking at actors when they are underdressed or naked, and
- Do not comment on the nature of the intimate scene, the appearance or performance of the actors (even in positive tones or with humour).

¹ 'Closed set' means limiting the presence of crew when the scene is filmed.

Inappropriate behaviour should always be addressed

Actors are often underdressed or naked when shooting an intimate scene, and are therefore particularly vulnerable to inappropriate behaviour or sexual harassment. If you experience or observe inappropriate behaviour or sexual harassment, report it immediately to the producer, your supervisor, the industrial safety delegate or your trade union.

In addition to the director, the intimacy coordinator and actors can also interrupt the shoot. It may be difficult for other crew members to know when inappropriate treatment is taking place as opposed to, for example, an agreement or mutually agreed method between the actors, so the primary means of intervention for crew members should be to report the matter.

If the inappropriate behaviour or sexual harassment is obvious and severe, it is also possible and necessary for crew members to halt the shoot.

You can learn more in the guidelines for preventing sexual harassment in the film and TV industries, which you can download on the websites of The Finnish Film Foundation and Audiovisual Producers Finland APFI.

Intimate scenes do not belong in auditions

Simulated sex scenes and scenes involving nudity or underwear do not belong in auditions, and kissing scenes should also be avoided in auditions. During the audition phase, trust between the actors has not yet been built, and the director is in a position of power over the actors. Therefore, actors may find it difficult to police their boundaries, and the situation may feel unsafe.

It is possible to test chemistry, sexual tension and physical courage between actors in auditions without the need for actors to simulate sex, kiss or undress.



Actors' boundaries must be respected

It should not be assumed that actors are prepared to do intimate scenes or that nudity is easy or simple for actors, even in scenes involving everyday nudity (e.g. sauna, swimming or shower scenes) or if the actor has done intimate scenes in the past. Intimate scenes involved in the role must be discussed with the actor at the audition stage or when the role is offered.

Attitudes towards nudity in front of the camera are individual: Some actors are prepared to reveal everything, while others want to keep their intimate areas hidden. Every actor has the right to define their boundaries with regard to nudity and have them respected.

Actors' boundaries should be discussed already at the casting stage or when offering a role, and should also be stated in the actor's contract. A separate nudity rider may also be drawn up in connection with the contract, specifying the type of nudity or sexual content the actor agrees to in the production in question. Sometimes boundaries have been specified for each scene in more detail.

If the actors' boundaries affect the director's original plans for intimate scenes, they should try to find a way to do the intimate scenes while respecting the actors' boundaries. An intimacy coordinator may be useful already in the negotiation phase.

Genital contact does not belong in intimate scenes

Genital contact between actors, i.e. bare genitals touching, must never occur in intimate scenes. Genital contact can be avoided by means of choreography, modesty garments and camera angles.

Use of intimacy coordinators in the industry should be increased

An intimacy coordinator² is a professional hired specifically for intimate scenes. The job description includes planning intimate scenes, choreographing and ensuring the actors' safety during rehearsals and shoots.

The intimacy coordinator collaborates with actors, the director and other HODs³. Hiring an intimacy coordinator is recommended when the production involves intimate scenes or when actors request the hiring of an intimacy coordinator.

The use of an intimacy coordinator is especially important in productions involving violent or more complex intimate scenes or physical scenes with children, young people or other vulnerable people. It is also advisable to hire an intimacy coordinator when there are many intimate scenes or when the intimate scenes have complex choreography.

² Intimacy coordinators are also referred to as intimacy choreographers and intimacy directors.
³ HOD means Head of Department.

2. Guidelines for actors

Define your boundaries for intimate scenes: what are you ready to show and do? The decision is personal and your boundaries may vary depending on the production, role or situation. If you want, you can completely refuse to do intimate scenes in one production and define your boundaries more broadly in the next. Remember that you can halt the shoot at any time.

Auditions

- ▶ Intimate scenes do not belong in auditions.
- ▶ You have the right to refuse to perform sexual, nude and underwear scenes in auditions. Your refusal should not affect whether or not you get the role.
- ▶ If kissing scenes are suggested for auditions, it must also be possible to resolve them in an alternative way (e.g. by kissing the cheeks or kissing past). Agree on the alternative method of kissing before the audition.
- ▶ Auditions must be arranged in premises suitable for the work, and besides the actor and the director there must also be others present. If you want, you can invite a support person to the audition.
- ▶ Discuss the intimate scenes required for the role already at the audition, and state your boundaries regarding nudity, simulated sex and touch.
- ▶ If the role involves a lot of nudity, you may be asked questions about your body (such as scars, tattoos, or the effects on your body of having had children). Even in this case, there is no need to undress during the audition.

Before accepting the role

- ▶ Read the script carefully, discuss the intimate scenes with the director and consider whether you are ready to do the intimate scenes required for the role.
- ▶ If the script is incomplete and no information on intimate scenes is available at the time of accepting the role, your boundaries must be recorded in your contract and intimate scenes must be resolved within your boundaries.
- ▶ Ask who your co-star will be and consider whether you are ready to do the intimate scenes required for the role with them.
- ▶ Doing intimate scenes with extras or amateur actors should be considered carefully, as mutual trust may be more difficult to achieve.
- ▶ Ask the producer how the safety of intimate scenes will be ensured and, if it seems necessary, ask whether an intimacy coordinator could be hired for the scenes.
- ▶ If you feel uncomfortable with the nudity or content of the intimate scenes required for the role, talk to the director and work together to find a way to resolve the scenes so that your boundaries can be respected.
- ▶ If the director is unwilling to make any changes to the scenes, carefully consider whether you wish to accept the role. Overstepping your own boundaries may weigh on you for a long time after.
- ▶ Do not accept the role if you and the director cannot agree on how to resolve the intimate scenes or if you are not ready to do the intimate scenes required for the role.

Before the shoot

- ▶ Discuss the intimate scenes and how to play them with the director and your co-star well in advance of the shoot. Go over the following things: the content of the scene, the choreography of the scene, the use of modesty garments, the actors' boundaries with regard to nudity, simulated sex and touch, the safe word or method of halting the scene, and the method of kissing (what kind of kiss is it, whether tongue is used, etc.). Also state your other wishes for the work situation (for example, if you want the co-star to cover your intimate areas in a scene).
- ▶ If you are nervous about getting a physical reaction during the shoot, you should talk about it in advance with the intimacy coordinator, costumer, director or co-star.
- ▶ If you have special requests regarding the composition of the closed set or the crew members around the monitor during the shoot, discuss your requests with the producer before the shoot.

- ▶ If the intimate scene involves violence, the scene must be rehearsed in advance, and a stunt coordinator and an intimacy coordinator must be present during the rehearsal and shoot.
- ▶ Discuss the costume and modesty garments for the intimate scenes with the makeup artist and costume designer.
- ▶ Do not go to a shoot without a contract, even when the job is unpaid.
- ▶ The contract must state that the production includes intimate scenes. You can also request that the details of the intimate scenes or nudity boundaries be stated in the contract. Examples of contract clauses:
"The intimate parts of actor x shall not be shown in the finished material."
"The role shall not include full frontal nudity."
"Individual scenes and their content shall be negotiated separately."
"Intimate scene material shall not be used for marketing purposes."
"No stills shall be taken of intimate scenes."
- ▶ You can also draw up a separate nudity rider to go with the contract.

On set

- ▶ Take care of hygiene before the shoot.
- ▶ Review the functioning and suitability of the modesty garments with the makeup artist or costumer. Remember, genital contact does not belong in intimate scenes.
- ▶ Review scene implementation and choreography on set with the director, cinematographer, co-star (and intimacy coordinator).
- ▶ Only the nudity shown in the shot is justified. You should be provided with a dressing gown or covering that you can wear when rehearsing the scene, before and between shots and after the shoot. Find out who is responsible for your covering and discuss how and when it will be taken away and brought back.
- ▶ The scene should, in principle, be carried out as agreed in advance. Any changes must be discussed separately and need the consent of all parties.
- ▶ If your boundaries are not respected, ask for a time-out and, if necessary, ask for the producer. You do not have to agree to changes that overstep your

- boundaries, even if production is behind schedule and you are feeling pressed.
- ▶ When shooting an intimate scene, do not do things that have not been agreed or surprise your co-star. If the possibility of improvisation in a scene is preferred, it must be agreed in advance.
- ▶ If you experience harassment or inappropriate behaviour during a shoot, halt the shoot if necessary and ask for the producer or industrial safety delegate. Cases of harassment must always be reported to production and, in serious cases, to the authorities.
- ▶ If you feel uncomfortable or experience a physical reaction, you should also halt the shoot. The reason for the interruption need not be stated.
- ▶ After shooting the scene, check with your co-star to make sure everything went well.



3. Guidelines for directors

Intimate scenes should be planned and discussed with actors and artistic directors (especially the cinematographer) well in advance of the shoot. When planning and implementing a scene, actors' boundaries must be taken into account, and actors must never be pressed into overstepping their own boundaries, especially while shooting or on the grounds of lack of time.

During the scriptwriting and audition phase

- ▶ If you write or co-write the script, describe the intimate scenes with as much detail as you can (i.e. not just “they make love” or “have sex”).
 - ▶ If you are working with someone else's script, find out what actually happens in the intimate scenes and what you want to show.
 - ▶ Never make actors do intimate scenes or undress in auditions. Remember that in an audition situation you are in a position of power over actors!
 - ▶ It must also be possible to resolve any kissing scenes in an alternative way (e.g. by kissing the cheeks or kissing past). Agree on the alternative method before the audition.
 - ▶ Auditions must be arranged in premises suitable for the work, and there must be others present besides you and the actor.
- ▶ Inform actors of the intimate scenes in the role and their requirements during the audition phase or before offering the role.
 - ▶ If it is essential for the role to learn more about the actor's body (e.g. muscles, scars, tattoos or the effects of having had children), you can ask the actor. Even in this case, there is no need to undress during the audition.
 - ▶ Discuss your wishes regarding intimate scenes openly with the actors. If the actors' boundaries affect your original plans, try to find a way to do the intimate scenes while respecting the actors' boundaries. An intimacy coordinator may also be useful in such situations. Do not make actors overstep their own boundaries.



Before the shoot

- ▶ For intimate scenes, it is a good idea to draw up a storyboard.
- ▶ Get in touch with the actors of the intimate scenes in good time and carefully discuss the content of the scenes, choreography, the use of modesty garments, the actors' boundaries with regard to nudity, simulated sex and touch, the safe word or procedure for halting the scene, and the method of kissing. If you have drawn up a storyboard, go over it with the actors.
- ▶ Discuss things in advance with all actors involved in intimate scenes (including minor roles and extras if absolutely necessary for intimate scenes).
- ▶ If the intimate scene involves violence, the scene must be rehearsed in advance, and a stunt coordinator and an intimacy coordinator must be present during the rehearsal and shoot.
- ▶ If possible, plan the scene sequence in such a way that the amount of nudity is minimised (for example, by shooting close-ups before the master).
- ▶ Have a discussion with the HODs so you can agree on policies and responsibilities for intimate scenes. Discuss at least the following:

- How are the intimate scenes to be played and filmed?
- What are the actors' boundaries when it comes to nudity?
- What does 'closed set' mean, who is allowed to be present, should the monitors be closed?
- Who is responsible for arranging the closed set?
- What is the costume for intimate scenes?
- What modesty garments are needed for intimate scenes and who is responsible for obtaining them?
- What is the safe word or method of halting the shoot?

On set

- ▶ On set, once again go over how the scene is to be played, its choreography and the storyboard for the intimate scene with the actors and the cinematographer (and intimacy coordinator).
- ▶ The scene should, in principle, be carried out as agreed in advance. Any changes must be discussed separately and need the consent of the actors.
- ▶ If it is absolutely necessary (for example because of the location of the shoot) to change the scene or the storyboard in a way that increases the actors' nudity,

discuss it with the actors. Remember the actors' nudity boundaries and do not ask them to overstep them. Changes can be discussed within the actors' boundaries. However, never press actors to accept changes.

- ▶ If your working method involves giving instructions while the camera is rolling, discuss it with the actors before the shoot and check that the actors agree to this method. While shooting, do not give instructions that will change what has been agreed or increase nudity.
- ▶ Do not ask actors to surprise each other during intimate scenes unless such a method has been agreed in advance.
- ▶ Only the nudity or action shown in the shot is necessary for intimate scenes.
- ▶ Make sure that there is a closed set during the shoot.
- ▶ If you observe any harassment or inappropriate behaviour during the shoot, halt the shoot and resolve the situation. Ask the producer or industrial safety delegate to come to the set. Cases of harassment must always be reported to production and, in serious cases, to the authorities.
- ▶ If actors halt the shoot, do not make a big deal out of it or demand the reason for it. It may be personal and sensitive. If the

actor is unwilling to continue the shoot, take a time-out and discuss it privately with the actor.

- ▶ After shooting a scene, check with the actors to make sure everything went well.

Post-production phase

- ▶ During the editing phase, only use material that has been agreed upon for use.
- ▶ If you want to use material in the final production where the level of actors' nudity exceeds what was agreed, you need the consent of the actors. Have the actors check the material, if necessary.
- ▶ Do not add other material to intimate scenes without the permission of the actors if it could be confused with the material of the scene (e.g. additional material made with body doubles).

4.

Guidelines for producers and production managers

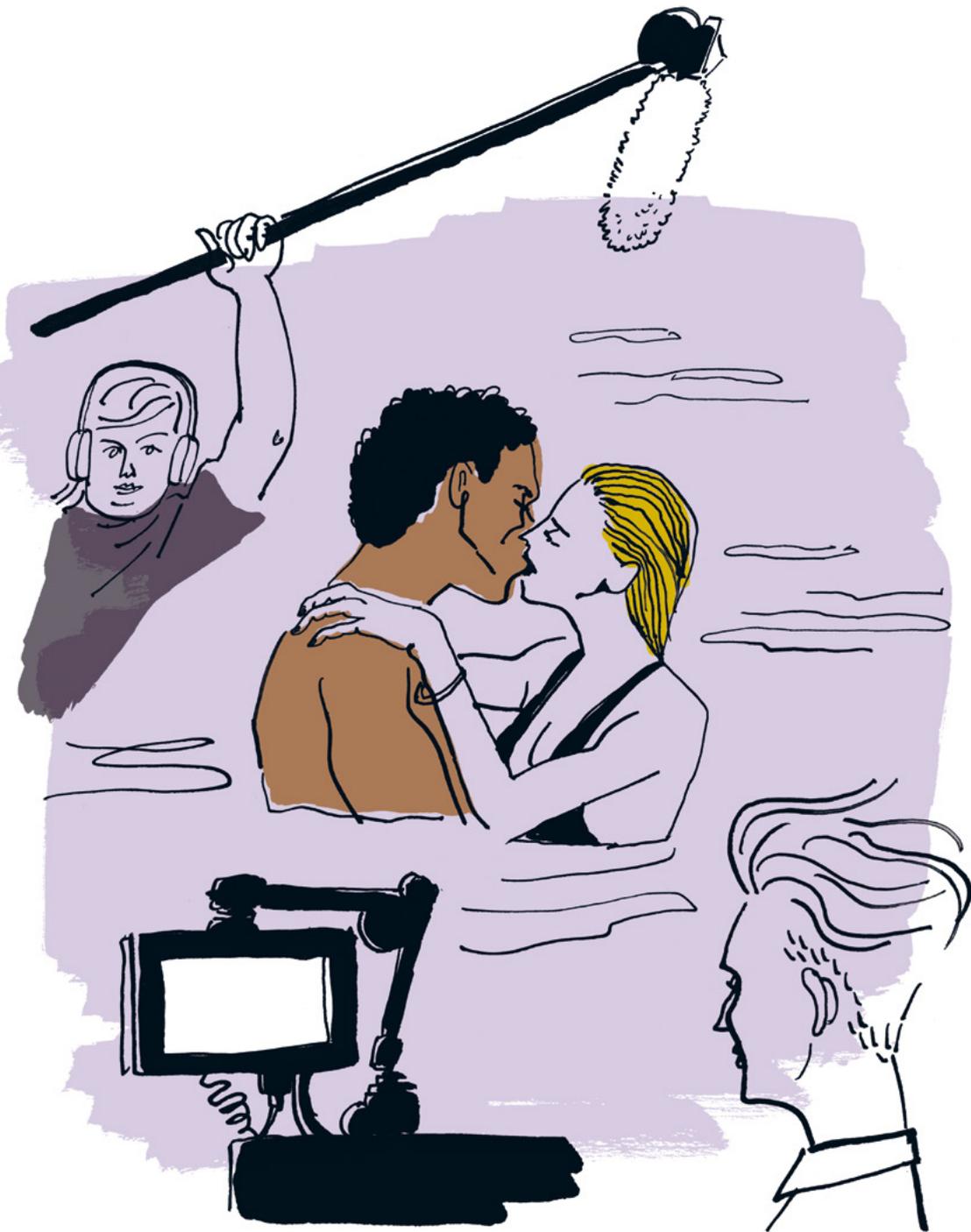
It is the producer's responsibility to ensure that actors are aware of the intimate scenes of the production. The producer should also make sure that the involved parties have had a discussion about the scenes well before the shoot. Intimate scenes should also be mentioned in the actors' contracts.

Before the shoot

- ▶ Go over the production's intimate scenes with all the actors.
- ▶ Do not sign a contract with an actor until the actor is aware of the requirements of the role. However, a contract must be signed before the filming.
- ▶ If the actor's role includes intimate scenes, they must be mentioned in the actor's contract. Examples of contract clauses:
 - "The artistic outcome will show nudity or intimate parts."
 - "Actor X accepts the content of the script (version x.x)."
 - "The film contains nudity/sex."
 - "The role includes nudity."
 - "The role shows intimate parts."
 - "The role shall not include full frontal nudity."
- ▶ If the actor requests other clauses related to intimate scenes in the contract, check with the director that the scenes are feasible within the additional clauses. You can also draw up a separate nudity rider with the actor to go with the contract.
- ▶ Make sure that the director has discussed the intimate scenes with actors and HODs before the shoots.
- ▶ Ensure that the cast and crew are aware that there is an industrial safety delegate

in the production, and give everyone the industrial safety delegate's contact details. Also ensure that a shop steward is selected before production begins.

- ▶ In the case of productions featuring intimate scenes, try to ensure a fairly balanced gender ratio for the crew.
- ▶ When drawing up the budget, try to take the following into account:
 - No extras or amateur actors for intimate scenes (or if it cannot be avoided, it must be done with the consent of the actors).
 - It is advisable to hire an intimacy coordinator for productions containing intimate scenes.
 - If the intimate scene involves violence, the scene must be rehearsed in advance, and a stunt coordinator and an intimacy coordinator must be present during the rehearsal and shoot.
 - ▶ Scheduling:
 - Try to schedule intimate scenes for the middle or final stages of production, so that trust has already been built between the actors and the crew.
 - Try to schedule the intimate scenes in such a way that there is sufficient time to do them (not, for example, to the end of the day).

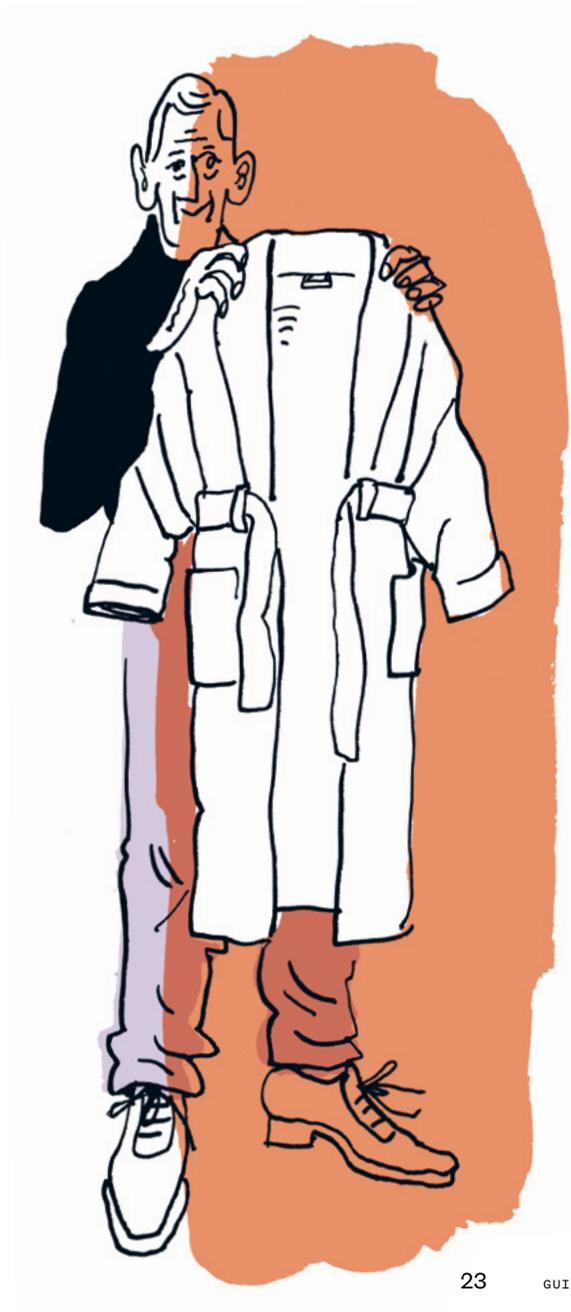


On set and after the shoot

- ▶ Make sure that the call sheet mentions the closed set for intimate scenes.
- ▶ Make sure that the crew is aware of who stays on set or at the monitor and who organises the closing of the set.
- ▶ Make sure there are no visitors (financers, still photographer, 'making of' crew, etc.) on the set or at the monitor when shooting intimate scenes. Ensure the director and actors have been asked for permission if the presence of visitors is necessary for some reason.
- ▶ If the location cannot be closed (e.g. outdoor or public), try to shield the actors as much as possible from the eyes of outsiders.
- ▶ If an intimacy coordinator is not employed for the production, make sure that a production representative is present at the location during the shooting of intimate scenes and can be contacted if problems arise.

- ▶ If you observe or hear of harassment or inappropriate behaviour during the shooting of an intimate scene, halt the shoot and remove the person who acted inappropriately from the set or location. Do not press the actor to continue the shoot if they feel unsafe. Do not ignore or belittle the issue. The issue must be dealt with afterwards and, in serious cases, the authorities must be contacted.
- ▶ If material from intimate scenes is wanted for use in marketing materials, check already at the contractual stage whether its use will be permissible.
- ▶ Take care not to add material that could be confused with the material of the scene (e.g. additional material made with body doubles) to intimate scenes at the editing stage without the consent of the actors.

5. Guidelines for costume and make-up departments



- ▶ Check with the director about the actors' nudity boundaries, and design the costumes for intimate scenes, taking the actors' boundaries into account.
- ▶ Agree whose responsibility it is to acquire and care for barriers and modesty garments.
- ▶ Review the costuming and modesty garments for intimate scenes with the actor, preferably in fittings but at the latest at the beginning of the shooting day.
- ▶ If the intimate scenes involve nudity, ask the actor about body tattoos, scars and piercings and discuss with the director the need to cover them up.
- ▶ During pre-production, agree who is responsible for covering the actors between shots.
- ▶ If you are responsible for covering the actor between the shots, discuss the appropriate course of action regarding the coverings with the actor, and stay close.

On The Finnish Film Foundation's website, you can download the Guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment in the film and television industries (ses.fi).

Intimate scenes are scenes involving sexual acts or nudity by one or more persons. Intimate scenes also include scenes with partial nudity (e.g. underwear, nightgowns, swimsuits).