

# WHAT IS A FILM SLATE



# FILM SLATE

## INTRODUCTION

A film slate is a filmmaking tool used during film production to help synchronize the audio and video in post-production. A film slate is made of two components: hinged clapper sticks and a board. Before a director calls "**Action!**" the second assistant camera (also called the second AC or clapper loader) claps the sticks together to make a loud, distinct "clap" noise. In post, the film's editor ensures that the audio is synced by finding the "clap" in the audio track and matching it to the moment in the video when the clapper sticks close. The board on a film slate displays important information, like the scene number and take number, that is useful for organizing footage.



# TYPES OF FILM SLATES

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# TYPES OF FILM SLATES

- **Standard film slates:** These typically consist of wooden clap sticks on top of an acrylic dry-erase whiteboard.
- **Time code slates:** Also called "smart slates" or "clock slates," time code slates are equipped with a digital clock. This clock displays a time code that is synchronized with the camera and audio recorder. This allows an editor to sync up the audio and video without needing to listen for the clap.



# HOW TO MARK A FILM SLATE

The film slate contains both general information about the production and information specific to each individual shot:

**01** PRODUCTION TITLE

**04** CAMERA

**07** SCENE

**02** DIRECTOR

**05** DATE

**08** TAKE

**03** DP

**06** ROLL



Director of photography also called the cinematographer

# HOW TO USE A FILM SLATE

- Mark the film slate. Fill in every box on the slate with the appropriate information, adjusting the scene and take numbers each time they change.
- **Wait until the camera is rolling.** Get into slating position after the first assistant director (also called the first AD) calls out that it's time to roll on the take. Once the camera operator and production sound mixer shout out that camera and sound are speeding, begin slating.
- Hold the slate in frame. The camera operator will instruct you where to stand and hold the slate so that it's clearly visible in the frame and in focus. Hold the film slate with the hinge facing you, so that you can open and close the clapper sticks with one hand. Once you're in position, open the sticks and tilt the slate forward slightly to avoid reflecting light into the camera lens.



# HOW TO USE A FILM SLATE

- Say the scene and take numbers aloud. Call out the scene number, take number, and then yell "Mark!" When there's a letter in the scene number, say a full word that begins with that letter for clarity. For example, if your film slate reads "scene 5A, take 2" then a proper call out would be: "Scene five apple, take two. Mark!"
- Clap the sticks. After you verbally call out the slate, clap the sticks together. Close the clapper sticks using a moderate amount of force; the sticks don't need to be slammed together to create enough sound. Immediately after clapping the sticks, lower the film slate, and walk out of frame.
- Use second sticks if you make a mistake. In the event you don't slate correctly the first time—maybe you held the slate out of frame, didn't clap the sticks loudly enough, or the sound wasn't recording yet—call out "second sticks" before slating again. This alerts the editor that the first slate was false.



# HOW TO USE A FILM SLATE

- Use a tail slate when necessary. Sometimes you can't slate before a take because of the required lens focus or framing of the shot, so a tail slate is necessary at the end of the take. To perform a tail slate, hold the slate upside down, clap the sticks, flip the slate right-side-up so it's readable, and then call out the information on the slate's board.
- Use soft sticks for closeup shots. When filming a closeup, you may need to hold the film slate directly in front of an actor's face. To avoid disturbing the actor, call out "soft sticks" and clap the sticks softer than usual. This signals to the editor to listen extra closely for the clap sound.
- Indicate M.O.S. for takes without sound. This acronym stands for "motor only sync" or "motor only shot," and it means the take is being filmed without sound. To indicate a M.O.S. take, hold the slate with your hand between the two clapper sticks and refrain from clapping them.





# THANK YOU



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