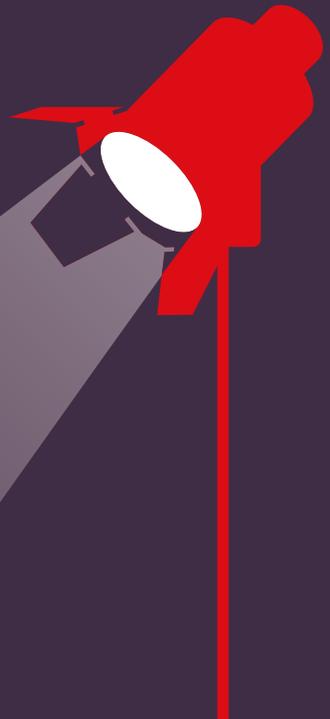


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# Directing Nudity & Simulated Sex

Creating a Safe Environment  
for Daring Work

**A Quick Guide  
for Screen Directors**



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**Directors UK has recognised the need to provide directors with clear and practical guidance on directing nudity and simulated sex.**

**These guidelines will help to ensure that everyone in the casting suite and on set shares an understanding of how this kind of work will be handled, and that they feel safe to create daring work.**

Embracing a duty of care is vital in all aspects of directing, but even more so when directing nudity and simulated sex. These guidelines address concerns around the vulnerability and consent of those involved in capturing this material.

We hope these guidelines will support and develop the craft of screen directing by equipping directors with a practical and creative way of working with nudity and simulated sex.



## A collaborative approach

**As well as consulting with our members, we've approached colleagues from across the sector for their best practice – including performers, casting directors, agents, intimacy coordinators, sister unions and guilds, and production companies. With the input from all these disciplines, we've set clear and shared expectations about how this kind of work should be handled.**

### **Why we need guidelines:**

- Working environments should be both safe and professional.
- Health and safety policies and risk assessments help, but so does an evolution in the way directors engage with performers.
- Professionalism, courtesy and respect are not budget dependent.
- Performers are rightly beginning to challenge some historic on-set and casting behaviours around nudity and simulated sex, and so other creatives need to adapt.
- Guidance can positively rebalance the power dynamics between performer and director.
- Intimacy coordinators are available, but how does a director work with them?
- Directors must be able to manage this process when budgets can't accommodate intimacy coordinators.

Creating guidance isn't about censorship or preventing storytellers from breaking new ground or pushing boundaries. It's about telling those stories that demand nudity or simulated sex in a collaborative and safe manner.

## **Creating a positive environment**

This guide is intended to:

- Provide directors with enhanced craft skills in directing nudity and simulated sex.
- Provide performers with a safe environment that values and respects dignity, especially when a narrative requires nudity or simulated sex acts.
- Give performers genuine agency in what actions their characters take.
- Support producers in their work to create a safe production environment.
- Give agents and casting directors confidence in the safety of the working environment.
- Show directors how to reassure performers that they should never feel expected to offer nudity or simulated sex in order to get work.

## Working with producers

**Because the producer is usually the employer of the production, the director has little or no influence over the production's mandatory provisions or policy for health and safety. However, directors are still bound by these provisions.**

Specifically, directors are responsible for ensuring that health and safety is maintained within their own tasks (which can include managing nudity and sex scenes with performers) and being qualified to direct (with appropriate knowledge for the task). The producer will also require directors to ensure all production health and safety policies and procedures are followed.

- Be fully informed about the health and safety responsibilities you share. Meet them.
- Work in accordance with the producer's health and safety policy and risk assessments.
- Ask the producer what support is in place for cast and crew who are filming this content.

### **Work towards a consensus approach**

- Review the script together. Discuss the necessity and the tone of these types of scenes.
- Discuss whether an intimacy coordinator is right for the production, and if not, what support is the production able to give the director, performers and crew?
- Commit to a continuous exchange of information around performer safety, including any narrative changes that might be needed.

### **Develop your knowledge of what's acceptable**

- Use the Directors UK guidance on best practice.
- Be aware of the clauses performers have in their contracts. Talk to them and understand what aspects of scene physicality might hold issues for them. Plan shots accordingly.

## Working with writers

**Review nude and simulated sexual content with the writer. Sometimes the complete visual detail of a scene is necessary to tell the story; sometimes it isn't, and other actions can serve the story better.**

- Nudity and simulated sex should only be in the script if they're essential to the story.
- If the script isn't finished, the writer can tell you what they expect it to contain and why.
- As the originating author, the writer is well placed to support the director with truthful alternative actions.
- Do events (like sexual violence) need to be shown in detail? Would suggestion be enough?

Don't underestimate the audience's level of screen literacy; they can piece together the on-screen clues, so we don't always have to put performers through traumatic acts to reveal a character.

Sometimes issues arise during filming that require a change of plan. Knowing the key purpose of the scene, the reason for the action and the intended result for the character can generate creative blocking to convey intense connections or conflicts.

### **On-set challenges you may encounter:**

- A performer changes their mind
- A performer gets sick
- Performers decide they can't work together
- A location isn't safe
- Time is running out
- A last-minute rewrite changes the nature of a scene
- Coverings and prosthetics get lost in transit
- Local authorities impose restrictions

Never stop thinking about alternatives – they can save your schedule, preserve the nature of the story and they might be better than what was originally planned (but don't forget to check with the producer!).

# Working with casting directors

**By their nature, auditions are based on a power imbalance. Some performers can feel obligated to agree to uncomfortable requests to get a job. Casting directors are therefore rightly concerned about performer safety and issues of consent.**

To help ensure a professional environment and enable the director to believe that a performer's 'yes' is freely and confidently given, the following suggestions should be considered.

## Auditions

- If a role requires simulated sex or nudity, the casting brief should detail this, enabling the performer to make an informed decision about participating in the audition.
- Auditions and casting should only take place in professional spaces, within working hours.
- Acknowledge the practical challenges these scenes present and detail the support available.
- Never assume a performer is comfortable with nudity or simulated sex, even if they've done it before.
- Don't treat 'adult film' performers differently; everyone deserves consideration and respect.
- When making an offer to high profile performers who've not auditioned, it's key to brief the agents fully. Performers need to know they will be working in a safe environment.
- There's no need to use scenes of sex or violence to reveal character in first auditions. If this material is used, there should be no physical contact between performers and a stunt coordinator should supervise the handling of simulated violence.
- If call backs require sex scenes, these should be done fully clothed and should be planned collaboratively with performers beforehand.

## Undressing

- No full nudity in any audition or call back. If a performer's body needs to be seen, request bikinis or trunks.
- No semi-nudity in first auditions. If semi-nudity is needed in recalls, give the performer notice so they can bring a chaperone with them who can stay in the room during the session.
- If a recall requires semi-nudity, give the agent and performer 48 hours' notice and supply the full script. If the project is secret, NDAs covering script content are acceptable.
- If semi-nudity is to be filmed or photographed, the production needs to obtain explicit consent, in writing, from the performer.
- Any filmed or photographed material of semi-nudity must only be made available to essential crew (director, producer, casting director).
- Filmed or photographed material of semi-nudity must be stored in a GDPR-compliant way, must not be available for download and must be destroyed on the signing of the contract.
- Never ask performers to put themselves on tape using semi-nudity or nudity, and never ask for simulated sex acts. This should never be expected or desired.

## Working with agents

**In order to protect their clients, agents should be champions of health and safety policies and risk assessments. Nude or simulated sex scenes need to be discussed with agents before contracts are signed.**

- Be prepared to brief agents with notes and storyboard references around intentions for framing and lighting; these will help agents understand the project and brief their client.
- Discussions with agents need to be ongoing, particularly if the script is still in development. E.g. ask about performer boundaries: what body parts can be filmed and how?

Agents will also raise other issues you have not considered and may need to – particularly if this is a performer whose involvement is required to get the project financed.

For example:

- Previous related trauma in a performer's life
- Risk of images being leaked to social media
- Impact of scenes on personal reputation
- Impact on international reputation in conservative territories

Open discussion with agents can provide insight to help you accommodate these issues.

## Working with wardrobe and make-up departments

**Work with wardrobe and make-up departments should begin early in the process, in order to ensure that everything is in place that you might need to make performers more comfortable. Their expertise and experience can help safeguard performers.**

- In advance of filming, ask heads of wardrobe and make-up how they can support these scenes. What covers, barriers and prosthetics do they have or can they make?
- When working with intimacy coordinators, put them in touch with the wardrobe and make-up teams.
- Share what you hope to achieve in the scene and identify what access they'll need to performers. Plan their involvement sensitively.
- Brief them on your plans for shots and lighting. As creatives, they will be able to advise on which items, such as merkins and synthetic body parts, will be suitable and look good.
- Bring the wardrobe department into rehearsals so that they can introduce any modesty patches, barriers and pouches they will be using.
- Before filming, confirm the support provisions and review performer requests (e.g. hiding a birth mark). If possible, get these in writing and signed by the performer. Ensure the wardrobe team is briefed and performers know who is supporting them with robes.
- Give the make-up and costume experts enough time to 'dress' the performers and ensure the assistant director will accommodate this.

# Working with performers

**Stay focused on open communication, mutual respect and collaboration. Emotional props such as humour, and unacceptable props such as drugs and alcohol, undermine the integrity of the process.**

## Rehearsal

- Set time aside to plan and rehearse intimate scenes. If you have an intimacy coordinator, include them at this stage.
- There should be no nudity or semi-nudity in the rehearsal – only once the cameras roll.
- Rehearsals need to be held in professional spaces, within working hours.
- Jot down your ideas and lay the groundwork for an open discussion with performers.
- Discuss the scene as a group. What's important to the character? Where's the power?
- Talk through possible blocking before anyone touches anyone. Invite the 'no' from performers (this identifies which actions and contact are OK). Get everyone's consent.
- Ask about performer requirements that may not be in their contract riders.
- Make it very clear that a performer can call stop if they are unhappy about the blocking.
- Don't give 'secret' direction to any one individual about the practical mechanics of the scene.
- Leave embarrassment at home. Use proper biological terms for body parts – call a penis a penis – and collectively agree terms for physical actions. Don't joke around.
- If there is simulated sexual violence in the scene, you must involve a stunt coordinator.
- Collectively come up with alternative 'Plan B' blocking, in case 'Plan A' needs to change.
- Performers shouldn't grab someone and 'demonstrate' what they're thinking. Similarly, a director should never act out what they want with a performer.
- Plan movement, touching and kissing in advance. When kissing there should be no 'tongues', unless the performers and director agree. Agree on sucking, nibbling, duration, pressure etc.

## Filming

- Brief crew on what the scenes are about. Highlight what behaviour you expect and explain what support is available.
- Ensure sets are closed (no mobile phones) and strip the crew back to essential personnel.
- Give performers a word or phrase they can use to indicate there's an issue during a scene.
- Don't improvise physicality on the day. Use the plans you made with the performers.
- During simulated sex acts, performers must have barriers to ensure no genital contact.
- Robes are mandatory for all naked or semi-naked performers. These must stay on until the camera is rolling and must go back on when 'cut' is called. Give direction when robes are on.
- Check that performers are OK after each take.
- In the morning, remind the crew about any closed sets so they can plan rigging, lighting etc.
- It's not OK for performers to walk around nude between takes. The crew need courtesy too.
- Coordinate crew positions considerably to help performers and crew feel safe.
- Brief assistants to treat everyone who's nude the same; principles and day players alike.
- Take your time. Don't rush. Make sure everyone is prepared and feels safe.
- Be mindful. If you sense a performer feels unsafe, check. Don't proceed until they do feel safe.
- If circumstances force a change, get performers (and the intimacy coordinator if you have one) together and talk it through. Double down on character focus – what alternatives would still be truthful?
- Afterwards, when everyone is dressed, call them together and take a few minutes to debrief. Thank everyone. Check if they're OK. If there are any issues, notify your producer.
- If a scene involves sexual violence, support the 'perpetrator' as well as the 'victim'. You may recoil from that character, but you need to be there for both performers. Signpost cast and crew to any available aftercare.
- Help performers disconnect from the character with something light and real. Ask them to share what their next job or favourite film is. Get them back to themselves.

## Working with intimacy coordinators

**Intimacy coordinators (ICs) are not hired to take over the direction of critical scenes in a project; they are a department head, akin to a stunt coordinator, and are there to help deliver the director's vision.**

They advocate for safe practice for performers and crew. They:

- Undertake a risk assessment.
- Facilitate open discussion around what might be achieved with the performer's OK.
- Check with performers which actions and language might be 'triggering' for them.
- Help to establish personal boundaries and freedoms between performers.
- Work with the director and performers to choreograph specific character body movement that propels the storytelling.
- Can suggest substitute actions and contact, utilising safe practice techniques.
- Keep nudity and simulated sex performance 'on plan' and, where changes are required, ensure that these are negotiated.
- Advocate for performers and crew, which also provides some protection to the production company and director by demonstrating that duty of care has been taken seriously.

### **Getting the most out of your collaboration with an intimacy coordinator**

- Review the IC's previous work and testimonials so that you understand their experience.
- Share the script, and your vision of it, with the IC as early as possible.
- Hold a planning meeting with the IC to discuss tone and objectives; share ideas.
- Introduce them to the other Heads of Department so they can start collaborating.
- As with any screen collaborator, develop and maintain a respectful relationship with them.
- The IC should be present at rehearsals of intimate scenes to help plan blocking and contact.
- The IC and director should work together with the performers.
- On the day of filming, explain to the crew who the IC is so that everyone knows they are authorised to be there and can engage in any safe practices needed on the day.
- On the day of filming, give the IC time and space to make their final 'safety' checks – just as a stunt coordinator would. Ensure your assistant director knows to accommodate them.

## Need more help?

Contact Directors UK at [communications@directors.uk.com](mailto:communications@directors.uk.com) or call us on 020 7240 0009 with your questions.

Alternatively, visit the campaign page on our website for more in-depth guidance: [directors.uk.com/campaigns](https://directors.uk.com/campaigns)

If you're making films, read the British Board of Film Classification Guidelines on what content can feature under each rating: [bbfc.co.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/BBFC%20Guidelines%202019.pdf](https://bbfc.co.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/BBFC%20Guidelines%202019.pdf)

If you're making TV, read Ofcom's Broadcast Code (particularly pages 10–15) on what material is appropriate for particular time slots: [ofcom.org.uk/ \\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/132073/Broadcast-Code-Full.pdf](https://ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/132073/Broadcast-Code-Full.pdf)

## Version 1

This guidance was compiled in collaboration with colleagues from BBC Films, Carey Dodds Associates, Equity, The Casting Directors Guild, The Writers Guild of Great Britain, and with the kind assistance of Vanessa Coffey (Intimacy Coordinator), Yarit Dor (Intimacy Coordinator, Intimacy Directors International UK), Ita O'Brien (Intimacy Coordinator, Intimacy on Set) and Kristina Erdely (Casting Director, CSA).

**Directors UK** is the professional association of UK screen directors. It is a membership organisation representing the creative, economic and contractual interests of over 7,000 members — the majority of working TV and film directors in the UK. Directors UK collects and distributes royalty payments and provides a range of services to members including campaigning, commercial negotiations, legal advice, events, training and career development. Directors UK works closely with fellow organisations around the world to represent directors' rights and concerns, promotes excellence in the craft of direction and champions change to the current landscape to create an equal opportunity industry for all.

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