

HOW TO READ A FILM BUDGET

Below is an explanation of each column in the attached budget:

ACCT

Assign these any way you wish. They're there to help you assign each receipt, so that when you total your expenses, you know which line item each expense belongs to.

DESCRIPTION

Column indicates what or who you're paying for.

AMNTS & UNITS

The units signify how you measure the rate. Is the fee per hour, per day, per week? "Allow" means you negotiate or estimate a flat fee.

The amounts signify how many of these units you're paying for (how many hours, days, weeks etc.)

X

How many of these people or things are you paying for? For example, if breakfast costs \$5 per person, you write in the X column how many people you're buying breakfast for. You might only have one DP, but depending on the shoot, you might need 3 grips, or 5 PA's etc.

RATE

Self-explanatory!

SUBTOTALS & TOTALS

Multiply "Amount" by "X" by "Rate". This is your subtotal. Your total column adds all the subtotals.

ACTUALS

Your totals are an estimate of what you expect to pay. Once the shoot is over and all the receipts and expenses have been recorded and organized, you use the Actuals column to record what you actually ended up spending.

VARIANCE

Subtract your "total" from your "actual" to find out the difference. Did you spend more than expected? Or less? Your variance column indicates the difference between your estimate, and what you ended up spending.

TOP SHEET

	Totals	Actuals	Variance
WRITER	0	0	0
PRODUCER	0	0	0
DIRECTOR	0	0	0
TALENT	0	0	0
TOTAL ABOVE THE LINE	0	0	0
PRODUCTION	1250	1004	-246
CAMERA / G&E	4200	4035	-165
SOUND	650	600	-50
ART & WARDROBE	800	786	-14
HMU	100	450	350
LOCATIONS	0	200	200
FOOD	1475	1521	46
TRANSPORTATION	750	311	-439
TOTAL BELOW THE LINE	9225	8907	-318
EDITORIAL	240	321	81
POST SOUND	2000	2000	0
MUSIC	0	0	0
FILM FINISHING	2385	2000	-385
TOTAL POST PRODUCTION	4625	4321	-304
PUBLICITY	1000	1764	764
Total above the line	0	0	0
Total below the line	9225	8907	-318
Total post production	4625	4321	-304
publicity	1000	1764	764
Insurance	1000	706	-294
Contingency	500	0	-500
Loss & Damages	500	0	-500
GRAND TOTAL	16850	15698	-1152

**Comparing sections of an
\$18K short
vs. \$6K short**



PRODUCTION

In green are the line items that cost the same. In orange are the line items that differ.

Notice that the resources between the two projects are roughly the same. The difference is that one is paid for with money, and the other relies on favors, barter, and creative incentives that are not financial.

\$18K short

Acct #	Description	Amounts	Units	X	Rate	Subtotal	Totals
2100	Production Staff						
	Scripty	3	day	1	200	600	
	1st AD	3	day	1	0	0	
	Prod Manager & Coordinator	3	day	1	0	0	
	Key PA	3	day	1	100	300	
	PA	3	day	2	0	0	
	wrap PA	1	day	1	100	100	
	Crafty	3	day	1	100	300	
	unit supplies	1	allow	1	100	100	
							\$1,400

\$6K short

Acct #	Description	Amounts	Units	X	Rate	Subtotal	Totals
2100	Production Staff						
	Scripty	3	day	1	0	0	
	1st AD	3	day	1	0	0	
	Key PA	3	day	1	100	300	
	PA	3	day	1	0	0	
	wrap PA	1	day	1	100	100	
	Crafty	3	day	1	0	0	
	unit supplies	1	allow	1	50	50	
							\$450



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CAMERA & SOUND

\$18K short

Acct #	Description	Amounts	Units	X	Rate	Subtotal	Totals
2200	Camera						
	DP	3	day	1	200	600	
	1st AC	3	day	1	200	600	
	2nd AC	3	day	1	0	0	
	Gaffer	2	day	1	200	400	
	DIT & AE	3	day	1	200	600	
	Camera package	1	allow	1	750	750	
	Lenses	1	allow	1	512	512	
	G&E	1	allow	1	400	400	
	Insurance	1	allow	1	705	705	
							\$4,567
2400	Sound						
	Mixer w/ equipment	3	day	1	250	750	
	Sound expendables	1	allow	1	50	50	
							\$800

\$6K short

Acct #	Description	Amounts	Units	X	Rate	Subtotal	Totals
2200	Camera						
	DP	3	day	1	0	0	
	1st AC	3	day	1	200	600	
	2nd AC	3	day	1	0	0	
	Gaffer	1	day	1	200	200	
	DIT & AE	3	day	1	200	600	
	Camera package	1	allow	1	0	0	
	Lenses	1	allow	1	0	0	
	G&E	1	allow	1	0	0	
	Insurance	1	allow	1	0	0	
							\$1,400
2400	Sound						
	Mixer w/ equipment	3	day	1	250	750	
	Sound expendables	1	allow	1	50	50	
							\$800



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ART & LOCATIONS

In "art & locations" the \$6K shoot relied entirely on found objects, favors and barter, while the \$18K shoot paid for locations and help. The difference is not in the amount of resources, but in what was and wasn't gotten with money.

\$18K short

Acct #	Description	Amounts	Units	X	Rate	Subtotal	Totals
2500	Art & Wardrobe						
	Art Director	3	day	1	100	300	
	Costume Designer	3	day	1	100	300	
	Set & Props & wardrobe purchases	1	allow	1	150	150	
							\$750
2700	Make-up / Hair						
	Make-up	1	allow	1	650	650	
	Make-up kit	1	allow	1	0	0	
							\$650
2800	Locations						
	Millie's kitchen	1	allow	1	0	0	
	Cafeteria	2	hours	1	100	200	
	Livingroom	3	hours	1	100	300	
	Park permit	1	allow	1	300	300	
	Rooftop	1	day	1	50	50	
							\$850

\$6K short

Acct #	Description	Amounts	Units	X	Rate	Subtotal	Totals
2500	Art & Wardrobe						
	Art Director & costumes	3	day	1	0	0	
	Art PA	3	day	1	0	0	
	Set & Props & wardrobe purchases	1	allow	1	200	200	
							\$200
2700	Make-up / Hair						
	Make-up	1	allow	1	0	0	
	Make-up kit	1	allow	1	50	50	
							\$50
2800	Locations						
	Classroom	2	day	1	0	0	
	Street 1	2	day	1	0	0	
	Street 2	1	day	1	0	0	
	Livingroom	3	day	1	0	0	
							\$0



Not ready for a \$6K short...?

Start with a 6 dollar short.

Click here for my article:

[How to Make a Movie with \\$6](#)

Happy filmmaking!

Ela Thier

TheIndependentFilmSchool.com



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