

## **A code of ethics for film and television**

This is a rough draft of what a possible code of ethics would look like for film and television, as well as for the performing arts in general, including commercials, theatre, dance, and modelling. It would also include teaching and training situations, and might also apply to sports in some respects. It may not be relevant for performing artists who are self-employed solo artists not subject to peer pressure.

### **A. Media content — how what's in the script affects performers**

1. No sexualized content, physical or verbal, in the script or job description. If you truly need it in the story, push it off-camera so it is only referred to. Ditto for any other unwanted touching.
2. No smoking. If you truly need it in the story, push it off-camera so it is only referred to.
3. Performers need to have control over any food, drink or other substances consumed as part of the performance. This includes fake blood — the ingredients may make some people sick if they swallow it. Don't force anything like this on people — give them choices.
4. With respect to hair, makeup, clothing and props, treat performers like collaborators rather than people you do things *to*. Performers need to have a basic degree of control over what happens to their bodies. If you respect that, the dressing-up part can be fun rather than potentially dehumanizing or stressful.
5. Proper safety orientation and training for stunts. (One hopes this is already in place.)

### **B. Media content — how what's in the script affects society**

1. No gratuitous or fantasy violence, either physical, verbal or psychological. Violence, by definition, is something that harms people. Showing it to be harmless or making it look unrealistic is harmful to society.
2. No gratuitous or fantasy sexualized content. Push all necessary sexualized content (if any) off-screen, and portray it in a realistic context.
3. No gratuitous or fantasy smoking or alcohol/drug use. Push all necessary smoking, needles, and other non-fakeable types of alcohol/drug use off-screen, fake the rest, and keep the context realistic.
4. Fair and accurate portrayals of vulnerable or otherwise silenced demographic groups, including visible minorities, women, LGBT, disabled, and foreign cultures. If you don't know how to do this, do your research. Don't expect disadvantaged groups to do it for you.
5. An overall tone of respect for people as people, even if you don't respect how they behave.
6. Proper research for any media content aimed at pre-teens, especially for media content aimed at preschoolers (< age 5).

### **C. Working conditions**

1. Directors, producers, teachers, lead performers and others in positions of authority should not get romantically or sexually involved with people under them. Even when everyone means well, these relationships often turn out badly — generally worse for the person with less power. Most work or training is on a short term basis, so it is possible to wait until the project is completely over and go through a waiting period (e.g. three months, or the equivalent of the length of the project) before considering a romantic or sexual relationship with a former underling. Stable relationships that predate the project shouldn't be a problem.

This probably also applies to starting business partnerships or having secondary work relationships not related to the production.

These principles also apply to teachers, therapists, doctors and clergy, for the same reasons. These groups typically have well-developed codes of ethics and commentaries you can study if you need more information.

2. Fair working conditions/hours — probably already a standard feature of union agreements.
3. Full inclusion of women, visible minorities, and disabled people in the workplace, both in front of and behind the camera.

Feedback is welcome. Email me at [anemone\[at\]anemonecerridwen\[dot\]net](mailto:anemone@anemonecerridwen.net).