

Guidelines for intimate scenes

in film and drama productions



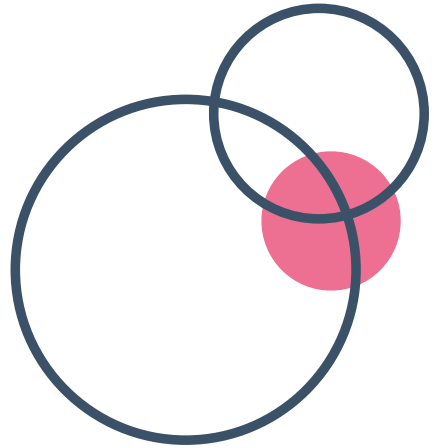


Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to increase the level of knowledge in Swedish film and drama productions to ensure a safe, healthy working environment when filming intimate scenes. The guidelines are intended to provide support for people in roles of responsibility (e.g. producers and directors), for actors and other crew members involved in planning and carrying out the production.

Intimate scenes should be treated like any other risky scene (e.g. stunts and action scenes). Therefore, risk assessments related to filming intimate scenes should be part of the systematic occupational health and safety management of the production. If the production contains intimate scenes, hiring a qualified intimacy coordinator (see below under definitions) or someone else with similar expertise is recommended.

These guidelines are drawn up by the Swedish Film & TV Producers Association and the Swedish Union for Performing Arts and Film, supported by SF Studios, and with input from two experts and a reference group representing the following professional categories: producer, director, actor, makeup artist, costume designer and lawyer.



Definitions

Intimate scene

Whether a scene should be defined as an intimate scene is based on an objective assessment of its content, context, and what it aims to convey. A scene can be intimate both when an actor is in the scene alone or with other(s). The assessment also includes the scene's context and the actors' experiences and interpretations.

There are different types of intimate scenes. Some examples are given here.

Sexually charged scenes

This could involve simulated sex, making out, kissing, masturbation, strip teases, dancing, sexual assault, nudity, etc.

Scenes that are not sexually charged

Scenes that are not sexually charged may still involve intimate touching that we do not usually engage in with just anyone, for example of the stomach, inner thighs, etc. This could include massage, washing someone, dancing closely, scenes with scantily clad people, nudity, gynaecological exams, childbirth, etc.

Intimacy coordinator

A qualified intimacy coordinator works mainly with the actors, director, producer and other department heads to ensure that intimate scenes are shot in a safe, secure and respectful manner. An intimacy coordinator is a dialogue partner for the director to tell the story they want to tell safely, through scenery, camera angles and choreography. This process includes pre-production, rehearsal and presence during filming.

This includes, for example:

- breaking down the script
- conducting risk assessments
- developing procedures
- planning with the director
- talking with actors and other crew members involved
- coordinating between departments
- choreography
- providing on-set support
- follow-up
- feedback to producer

Procedure for intimate scenes

The producer needs to identify early on whether a production contains scenes that can objectively be defined as intimate and thus require a risk assessment and management, in order to minimise physical and psychosocial risks.

The procedure for intimate scenes may vary. Collaboration and continuous dialogue are needed between different functions, such as the producer, director, intimacy coordinator, costume designer, makeup artist, actors, FAD and others. Defining in advance what the process should look like for each individual production is recommended. Examples of questions to ask and decisions to make are described below. Who, when and how are adapted based on the circumstances.

The best option is to hire a qualified intimacy coordinator or someone with similar expertise as early in the process as possible. The producer is responsible for making sure the person hired has the relevant knowledge.

If the production is carried out without an intimacy coordinator, someone should be clearly designated as responsible for intimate scenes, which should be communicated to everyone involved in the production. It is also important to have the budget to ensure that an intimacy coordinator or someone with equivalent expertise can be hired for productions with intimate scenes.

Script breakdown

Examples of questions and potential risks to be considered:

- Does the scene contain kissing and/or simulated sex?
- Does the scene involve sexual or physical assault, emotional violence or abuse?
- Are intimate body parts touched and/or exposed?
- What is the intensity and duration of the activity?
- What is the level of emotional intensity in the scene?
- Does the scene include one, two, or more actors?
- Does the scene include body doubles or untrained actors?
- Does the scene contain particular content (e.g. BDSM/fetish)?
- Will prosthetics or genital guards be used?
- Are any of the actors underage or particularly vulnerable?

- Is there a power imbalance (e.g. age difference, experience, actor/extra, status)?
- Is the scene set in a public place?
- Is the intimacy being described justified, or could this part of the story be told differently?

If potential risks are identified, discuss different solutions to ensure safety within the scene. For example, this could be visual, through physical tools (such as modesty garments, barriers, privacy screens, etc.), the content of the script, or established procedures. If you haven't yet, consider whether to hire a qualified intimacy coordinator or someone else with equivalent expertise for further assessment and/or support for the production. It is important to ensure a budget is available for this and for relevant measures and solutions.

Additional risk assessments and solutions should be carried out before and during casting/auditions, rehearsals, recording, post-production, marketing, etc.



Casting

If the role includes intimate scenes, the actor must be told in advance.

It is not appropriate for a first audition to include intimacy, nudity, or simulated sex. If a second audition involves intimacy (however, never nudity or simulated sex), the actor must be told at least 48 hours in advance and has the right to be accompanied by someone for support. The venue and time should be adapted to be as safe as possible. Limit the number of people present to those who are necessary only (e.g. casting director, director, support person, intimacy coordinator). Filmed material should be stored safely, shown only to those who need to see it, and destroyed after filming.

A self-tape (video recording made by an actor) may never contain intimacy, nudity, or simulated sex. This should be stated in the instructions given to actors.

Negotiation and drafting of contracts

To enable the actor to make an informed decision about participation, they need access to the complete script and should be able to talk to the director about the details of the intimate scenes, such as the vision, rehearsal process, etc.

Examples of what to cover in the dialogue between the producer, actor, director and intimacy coordinator include: specific details on how intimate scenes may be filmed and what the actor's boundaries are; degree of nudity; what body parts should not be shown; specific descriptions of the type of touching, kissing, or other behaviour that will be filmed; what will be told in the scene and how it will be portrayed; whether the scene involves objectification and whether guards, barriers, or modesty garments will be used; and how the material may be used (e.g. not for marketing purposes), etc. This dialogue should also include a discussion of how any changes should be handled during production. Next, a contract is signed.

If extras or body doubles are performing in intimate scenes, the process should be the same.

Rehearsal

Intimate scenes should always be rehearsed in advance and planned based on the risk assessment and related measures that are drawn up as part of the “Script breakdown” step. Consideration should be given to the actors’ experience and capabilities. When rehearsing intimate scenes, someone with explicit responsibility for intimate scenes should always be present, such as a qualified intimacy coordinator or someone else with equivalent expertise.

Examples of what to consider:

- That sufficient time is allocated for rehearsal
- To avoid fatigue and stress, do not schedule intimate scenes near the end of the day
- Intimate scenes should be choreographed
- If intimate scenes are improvised, procedures should be in place to ensure the rehearsal is safe and secure
- A suitable venue with only the necessary people present
- Actors should never rehearse alone
- Actors should be told who will be in the room
- Photography with a personal device is not allowed
- If the costume designer, makeup artist, or anyone else needs to photograph an actor, consent must be obtained. All images must be destroyed after the production is complete
- Actors should have had a chance to try different options (barriers, modesty garments, etc.) well in advance and should be involved in the decision.

Filming location scouting

If the filming location could impact the safety and security of a planned scene, the location should be scouted and assessed to determine how to film the scene.

Risk assessment

The producer is responsible for ensuring that a scene-specific risk assessment is carried out before filming by a qualified intimacy coordinator or someone else with equivalent expertise.

A risk assessment should contain:

- a brief description of the specific intimate scene, in order to be communicated to key members of the production crew, such as the HOD, site manager, or FAD
- a risk and impact assessment
- description of measures to take and solutions to use (e.g. screens, modesty garments, etc.) to reduce the likelihood of the identified risks occurring
- The risk assessment should also indicate whether special experts/people should be present to provide support while filming, such as an intimacy coordinator, psychologist, or personal support person.



During filming/on set

Intimate scenes should be rehearsed and as a rule, no changes should be made the day of filming. However, if changes are made, everyone involved must be notified at least 48 hours before filming. It should be clear who is responsible for intimate scenes, preferably a qualified intimacy coordinator or someone else with similar expertise.

Examples of what to consider on the day of filming:

- To avoid fatigue and stress, do not schedule intimate scenes near the end of the day
- Communicate important information before each day of filming (e.g. limited number of people on set, availability of privacy, modesty garments, etc.)
- Remember that several people may be involved (sound engineer, photographer, etc.) who should be notified in advance about filming an intimate scene
- Ensure that everyone uses a shared professional language when discussing intimacy (situations, body parts, etc.) to avoid misunderstandings and prevent discomfort and uncertainty
- If changes are made to the scene for any reason, clear information about how to handle them must be given to the people involved
- Information about any support people present on set (e.g. intimacy coordinator, psychologist, support for the actor, etc.)
- If the costume designer, makeup artist, or anyone else needs to photograph an actor, consent must be obtained. All images must be destroyed after the production is complete
- Check-in (a chance to discuss how everyone is feeling that day etc.) and check-out (a chance to discuss what did not work well, to sort it out, and get support afterwards) with only the actors involved and a qualified intimacy coordinator or someone else present with similar expertise
- Someone in charge of reporting back to the producer (what worked, what didn't, any corrective measures to take in the production moving forward, etc.).

Consent

Sometimes, it can be difficult to know when an agreement has been made between the producer/director and actor, or between the actors regarding an intimate scene. So it is important to be as clear as possible at an early stage. There are five aspects of consent that are helpful guidance for the people involved, such as the producer, director and actors.

They are:

- **Voluntary** (no threats, ultimatums, manipulation, persuasion, etc.)
- **Consent can be revoked** (even on the day of filming, and even if the person has previously acted based on this consent)
- **Informed** (understands what the scene involves, with the chance to have time to reflect)
- **Explicit** (it should be clearly expressed)
- **Specific** (the intimate scene must be described in detail, for example, consent obtained to be filmed while nude from behind does not mean consent has been given to be filmed from the front)





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