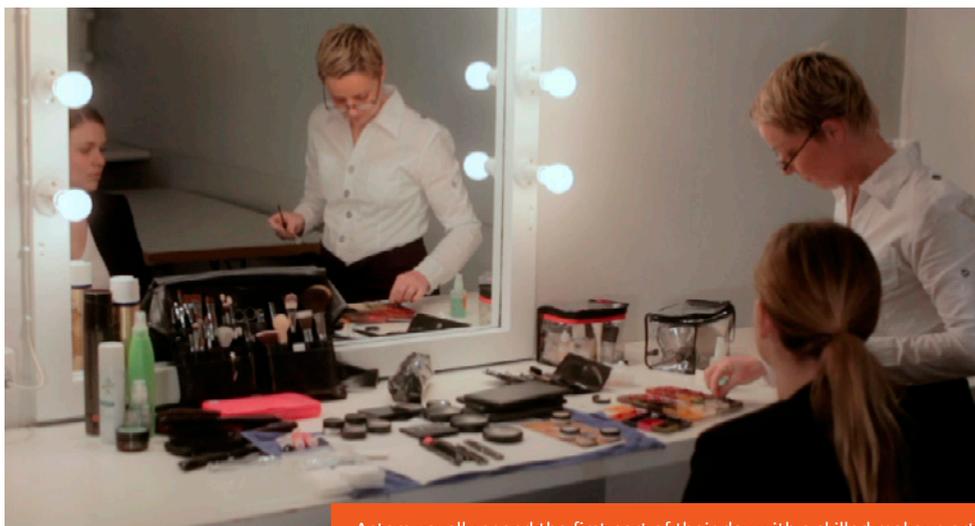


## What is a hair and makeup artist?



Actors usually spend the first part of their day with a skilled makeup artist

An actor's first hour of the day is often spent in hair and makeup. In many ways, this is one of the most important parts of the day as, with the help of accomplished hair and makeup artists, they begin to inhabit the character who will appear on screen.

The makeup and hair department is usually much smaller than other departments on a film. They work closely with the actors physically and emotionally.

On a very big film, with a larger makeup and hair crew, the main actors may each have their own exclusive makeup artist. Very big stars bring their makeup artist with them from shoot to shoot and a specific makeup artist and hairdresser will be nominated as part of the star's contract.

The makeup and hairdresser crew have usually completed an apprenticeship or specialist training, working in salons, before they join the film or television industry. Some people who make the change find it a terrible shock. Like many jobs in the film industry, there is no "glamour"; the hours are long and they often find themselves working in extreme conditions, such as heat or rain.

For those who love it, it's a delight. There's always a new challenge, new stories to interpret and new characters to create. Working with a dedicated team, they are creating

a product that will move, excite and entertain audiences worldwide.

The makeup and hairdresser crew start full-time work fairly late in pre-production, but they are sent the script once the job is confirmed. This gives them time to analyse the script, break out its key elements, and begin to explore the characters.

If the film is a period drama like *The Great Gatsby* or has a definite visual style, the key makeup artist and hairdresser will do extensive research and planning. In some cases, like *Dances with Wolves*, they may have to do historical or anthropological research.

If they are available, makeup and hair crew may be paid a small fee to attend early script and production meetings to monitor the decisions and start planning. Does a character age over the span of the story? Is there substantial filming in water? Are wigs required for stunt doubles? Will blood and bruises be required for fight scenes? Does the actor need to gain or lose weight?

The key makeup artist and hairdresser start full-time pre-production when casting is confirmed. First they meet with the actors and directors to tease out the nature of the character. At the same time, they break down the script in detail, especially changes that occur as the story proceeds – ageing, injury, hair growth, beard growth – so they can track the exact story day for each scene, and [maintain continuity](#) on hair and makeup.

The makeup artist and hairdresser then have a longer meeting with the actor, who contributes his or her suggestions for the character, based on their interpretation and research. The meeting also covers practicalities such as allergies and preferences, and identifies any preliminary work required. The actor may need salon facials to improve skin condition before close-ups, a hair colour change for the shoot and wigs or hair extensions. All these arrangements and appointments are put in place.

Once the overall style is set, the actors come in for a preliminary makeup and hair session and present some “looks” to the producer, director and production designer. The chosen looks are photographed and kept for reference for the shoot.

In the last week of pre-production the cast comes in for a full makeup session that is recorded in camera tests, for the final approval of the producer and director. The makeup and hairdressing crew pack their specially fitted out caravan and are ready for a very early start on the first day of shooting.

During the shoot, the days have a regular pattern for the makeup and hair team. They are called to set at least an hour and a half before the main crew call, and start preparing the actors in the order that the second assistant director has set out on the call sheet.

As soon as one of the makeup and hair crew has finished with the last actor, they remain on standby on set, keeping an eye on the makeup and hair as the day proceeds and attending to the actors just before each shot when the first assistant director calls for final checks.

Other work may be required for that day’s scenes. A fight scene needs blood and bruises applied, and later scenes with this character will have to show wounds and bruises healing, even if they’re scheduled to be shot before the fight.

On occasion a specialist makeup artist is employed to create, for example, a scarred face or a ghastly wound. These are prosthetic makeup artists. They work closely with the special effects crew and the visual effects team.

Once the shoot is over, the makeup and hair crew give all the reference and continuity photographs to the production department, in case there are any pick ups or re-shoots. They wash their brushes and sponges, tidy up the makeup caravan, pack their kit and go off to replenish their supplies and, like many others on the crew, wait for the next phone call.

[Click here to view interview with hair & makeup artist Bec Taylor](#)

#### Useful resources:

- [How movie makeup artists work](#)
- [Creative Skillset: Makeup Artist](#)



Hair and makeup artists play a crucial role in achieving a character's 'look'

Creative Content Australia is a not-for-profit organisation committed to raising awareness of the significance of copyright, the value of screen content and the impact that downloading and streaming pirated films and TV programs has on the creative industries: [www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au](http://www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au)

Creative Content Australia develops and distributes free online education resources to schools throughout Australia to stimulate classroom discussion about copyright and promote the value of creative content and good digital citizenship online [www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info](http://www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info)

