

Marking Cues

Before tech week, the Stage Manager should mark all cues in his/her prompt book. It is important to be very specific when writing cues into your book, because this will eliminate any confusion of where or when they are called during the show. You should write your cues into your prompt book as if you are expecting someone else who is a moderately experienced stage manager to call the show. All "Warning" "Stand By" and "Go" cues should be marked in your prompt book.

Here are some guidelines when marking cues:

- ❖ Be consistent and organized.
 - Establish a system of how your cues are going to be written in your script, and stick with it. It may even help you to make a "Cue Key." For example:
 - LQ=Light Cue
 - SQ=Sound Cue
 - STBY=Standby
 - WARN=Warning
 - Traditionally, light cues are called as numbers and sound cues are called as letters in order to distinguish between the two.
 - Visually, all cues written in your book should be only on either the left margin or in the right margin. This allows you to follow the script in a linear fashion instead of looking all over the page for where the cue is marked.
 - Some stage managers like to color code cues as well, so all "Warnings" are in one color, all "Standbys" are in another, etc. Plan ahead if you want to do this.
- ❖ Be specific.
 - If calling a cue off of a specific word, mark in your script specifically what word it is, and you can even be as specific as marking what syllable you call it on.
 - If calling a cue off of a blocking action, make a note of exactly what action that is. Clarify with the actor and director that the actor needs to be sure to take that action every night, as you are calling a cue from it.
 - For musicals, if you are calling a cue from a specific note or beat, be sure to mark that in your script.
- ❖ Make sure your prompt script is complete.
 - All "Warning" and "Standby" cues need to be marked in your script as well.
 - If there are a large number of cues being called in a row, you can group them together when you write in "Warning or "Standby" cues. For example, if Light Cues 1, 2 and 3 and Sound Cues A and B are all called in a short period of time, write the warnings and standbys for them together ("Warning Light Cues 1-3 and Sound Cues A-B")

Here are some guidelines about calling cues:

- ❖ The first time everyone is on headset together, it is a good idea to train everyone on "headset etiquette."

- Headset talk should be kept to a minimum—you shouldn't say anything on headset that you wouldn't be willing to share with a large audience.
- If a crew member must get off headset, always tell the stage manager if you are going off headset, and find someone to take your place in your absence.
- If a "Warning" is called, the pertinent person should respond with "Warned" (i.e. if "Warning Light Cue 1" is called, the light board operator should respond.) If a "Standby" is called, the pertinent person should respond with "Standing."
- If the stage manager is in "Warning" or Standby" no one should talk except for the stage manager. If something important has come to your attention, wait until the stage manager has said "Go" to speak (unless in case of emergency).
- Except for the stage manager, keep your microphone turned off if you know you won't be speaking for long periods of time. Try not to cough, sneeze or yell into the microphone.
- The only time the word "Go" should be used on headset is if the stage manager is calling a cue.

❖ **Always think about timing.**

- "Warnings" should be called about thirty seconds in advance of the cue, and "Standbys" should be called about 1-2 lines in advance of the cue.
 - Say "Warning" and "Standby" BEFORE giving the cue numbers (i.e. say "Warning Light Cue 1" instead of "Light Cue 1 warning"). Call "Go" AFTER the cue numbers (i.e. "Light cue 1 GO" instead of "Go light cue 1"). This will eliminate confusion of the board operators and will help both you and them to get into a rhythm.
- Be aware of reaction time.
 - You want the cue to start exactly when the director and designer want it to start. However, sometimes there are delays in cues, and it takes time for the board operator to press the button. Because of this, you need to anticipate when to call the cue. Figuring out this timing is largely what tech is for, so if you don't feel comfortable with the timing or are confused about when a cue should "Go," don't be afraid to ask questions or to run the cue over again during the tech process.

❖ **Plan ahead.**

- It is useful to practice calling your cues before tech. Find a friend to read the lines of the play, and call the cues the way you think they will be called during the performance.
- If there are cues that are called very quickly together, plan how you will call these. In this case, visual cues along with the verbal cue can be useful as well, so think about if you will need a cue light and inform the board operator of these cues ahead of time.

❖ **Always be patient, polite and pleasant!** "Please" and "Thank you" go a long way in the theatre, and can never be said too many times. 😊