



American Cinema Editors

BEST PRACTICES Work from Home Guide

INTRODUCTION

Until 2020, a minority of professional editors and assistant editors were consistently working from home. With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the closure of studios and traditional office spaces, editing from home became mandatory for an increasing number of professional editors and assistant editors. The need to work from home hastened the development of technologies associated with remote editing and also created a new paradigm for editors, pushing to the foreground a variety of work-from-home issues for which there were no clear guidance.

American Cinema Editors, recognizing the need for editors and assistant editors to have guidance related to work-from-home issues, conducted a survey of its members in October 2020. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the extent to which its members were working from home, what methods and technologies were being used, how editors were being compensated and/or reimbursed for the use of their home office space and equipment; and other issues of central importance to editors with regard to working from home.

The ability to work from home is here to stay and the goal of American Cinema Editors is to help ensure that editors' rights and responsibilities are respected and that they are compensated fairly. Therefore, the purpose of this guide is to help educate editors and assistant editors regarding financial considerations related to working from home and set forth recommendations for producers, production companies and studios on how to compensate editors and assistant editors for the use of their home office and equipment.

WFH AT A GLANCE

The American Cinema Editors Best Practices: Work from Home Guide provides recommendations for both employers and employees who will be working primarily from home on a project. While each situation has unique circumstances, this guide should provide a framework for effective and efficient work for most circumstances.

- Editors and Assistant Editors should be consulted prior to the beginning of a production to coordinate their preferred method of remote work.
- Editors and Assistant Editors should be compensated and reimbursed for costs incurred from working from home, including but not limited to home office space, office supplies, utilities and necessary internet service upgrades.
- Employers should provide a weekly meal stipend.
- Editors and Assistant Editors should be compensated for the use of any editing workstation not provided by the employer, including but not limited to non-linear editing systems and remote access systems.
- Employers and employees should maintain technical support for all work from home systems.
- Employers and employees should establish a traditional set of work hours prior to beginning a production in order to maintain a healthy work/life balance when both are in one place.
- Per the union contract, no employee shall be required to provide any editing system as a condition of employment.
- Communication is key between employers and employees to make WFH the best possible for all involved.

Please note that for the purposes of this document, the use of the term “Editor” is meant to indicate both picture editors and assistant editors.

A. HOME OFFICE

American Cinema Editors believes that producers, production companies and studios should compensate an editor for the use of their home office when the editor's home office is being used as the primary cutting room and meets either of the following conditions:

- 1 The editor is required to work from home for health, safety or other reasons.
- 2 The production company or studio is not providing an alternative safe office space for the editor to perform their work.

EXPENSES

Some of the expenses associated with maintaining a home office include:

- Communications: Internet and phone service (mobile and/or landline)
- Utilities: electricity, gas and water
- Annual membership fees for cloud services (used for cut viewing, file transfer and backup), including: Dropbox, Google Drive, Frame IO, Vimeo, etc.
- Cleaning and sanitation
- Alarm service
- Office supplies: printer paper, binders, printer toner, pads, writing implements, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 American Cinema Editors recommends that producers, production companies and studios pay **no less than \$135.00 per week*** for the use of an editor's home office, either as a supplement to an editor's weekly salary, or as a direct additional stipend.
- 2 ACE recommends that studios and production companies reimburse editors directly for office supplies purchased by editors.
- 3 ACE recommends that editors keep an itemized list of home office expenses and receipts (as proof of these expenses) so that they can be submitted for reimbursement.
- 4 ACE recommends that editors to seek the advice of a qualified tax professional or CPA to discuss whether they are entitled to take a home office deduction (or other itemized deductions) on their tax returns.

* According to the survey, editors report receiving a wide range of stipends for the use of their home office (not including editing equipment) ranging from from \$0 to \$200 per week, with the median being approximately \$135 per week. Some editors report receiving an additional stipend when a significant upgrade to their internet service was required in order to provide sufficient bandwidth to perform their work from home.

B. EDITING EQUIPMENT

American Cinema Editors believes that editors should be compensated for the use of their personal equipment when the editor's personal equipment is used in the course of performing their editing work on a project. Many editors report using their personal equipment and not receiving any additional compensation. This is not acceptable.

Because the tools editors use are so varied, attempting to comprehensively categorize each one is beyond the scope of this guide. For this reason, ACE has decided to focus on two of the most commonly used technologies cited in the work-from-home survey:

- 1 Non-Linear Editing System
- 2 Remote Access System (aka Zero Client System)

1. Non-Linear Editing System

A Non-Linear Editing System (also known as a "full system") is typically comprised of a computer (Mac or PC) running editing software (Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premier, Resolve, etc.), two (or more) edit monitors, professional viewing monitor, speakers, audio mixer, console and chair. Many such systems include additional peripherals and software according to the editor's specific needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 American Cinema Editors recommends that producers, studios and production companies (in conjunction with their vendor or in-house tech department) make a good-faith effort to evaluate the suitability of an editor's personal editing system before insisting that an editor use a vendor's or studio's equipment. Most editors are willing to upgrade or modify their systems to meet the technological or security demands of production companies or studios. Most editors do not have room for additional equipment, let alone additional full systems, to be installed in their homes.
- 2 American Cinema Editors recommends that producers, production companies and studios pay **no less than \$550.00 per week**** (or a rate comparable to what a vendor charges for a similar system) for the use of an editor's Non-Linear Editing System, either as a supplement to an editor's weekly salary, or as a direct additional stipend.
- 3 The recommended weekly allowance should be considered a **base price**. Since the technical specifications and pricing of editing systems can vary greatly, ACE recommends that editors submit a detailed quote to producers, studios and production companies, detailing equipment specifications (hardware and software) and pricing for their specific system. The use of additional equipment, hardware (such as storage devices and streaming hardware) or software should merit additional fees.

** According to the survey, editors report receiving between \$0 and \$1,000 per week for the use of their system with the median price falling between \$500 to \$600 per week.

2. Remote Access System

A Remote Access System (also known as a “Zero Client System” or “PC-over-IP System”) is minimally comprised of a computer (Mac or PC), two monitors, speakers, console and chair, running software that allows the “client system” to connect to a “host editing system” whereby the editor remotely operate the “host system” to perform their editing work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** As with a full Non-Linear Editing System, American Cinema Editors recommends that producers, studios and production companies (in conjunction with their vendor or in-house tech department) make a good-faith effort to evaluate the suitability of an editor’s personal editing system before insisting that an editor use a vendor’s or studio’s equipment. Most editors are willing to upgrade or modify their systems to meet the technological or security demands of production companies or studios. Most editors do not have room for additional equipment to be installed in their homes.
- 2** American Cinema Editors recommends that producers, production companies and studios pay **no less than \$225.00 per week***** (or a rate comparable to what a vendor charges for a similar system) for the use of an editor’s Remote Access System, either as a supplement to an editor’s weekly salary, or as a direct additional stipend.
- 3** The recommended weekly allowance should be considered a **base price**. Since the technical specifications and pricing of editing systems can vary greatly, ACE recommends that editors submit a detailed quote to producers, studios and production companies, detailing equipment specifications (hardware and software) and pricing for their specific system.

*** According to the survey, editors report receiving between \$0 and \$300 per week for the use of their system with the median price between \$200 to \$250 per week.

C. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Technical support and maintenance are necessary for the proper functioning of equipment used by an editor to perform their work. This can include troubleshooting technical issues, connectivity issues, replacement of defective equipment, upgrading software, plugins and more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** American Cinema Editors believes that it is the responsibility of editors who are working from home, and being compensated for the use of their home equipment, to properly maintain their personal equipment so that it remains in good working order and suitable for the workflow requirements of their production. This is one of the main reasons why ACE strongly recommends that editors receive proper compensation for the use of their personal equipment.
- 2** If special circumstances arise in which an editor is required to contract technical support, or perform an upgrade which is far in excess of the norm, then ACE recommends that productions compensate editors for the cost of the required technical service. Alternatively, ACE recommends that studios or production companies consider contracting with a qualified vendor to provide technical support to their editorial staff who are working from home and using their personal equipment.
- 3** ACE believes that it is the responsibility of editors to contract with their local ISP to provide stable, fast internet sufficient to enable them to work from home. In circumstances where an editor is required to upgrade their internet service to work from home, ACE recommends that productions pay for fees associated with an internet service upgrade, either as a supplement to an editor's weekly salary, or as a direct additional stipend.

D. MEALS

Many producers, production companies and studios budget an in-office meal allowance for editors. Therefore, American Cinema Editors believes that producers, production companies and studios should pay an additional meal stipend to editors who are working from home.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1** American Cinema Editors recommends that producers, production companies and studios pay a meal stipend which is commensurate with their typical in-office budget as a supplement to an editor's weekly salary, or as a direct additional stipend.
- 2** Due to the special circumstances and hardship of the pandemic, ACE recommends producers, production companies and studios consider paying a meal allowance to all editors who do not normally receive a meal allowance, in the amount of \$75.00 per week (\$15.00 per day) as a supplement to an editor's weekly salary, or as a direct additional stipend.

E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Equipment - Additional

- American Cinema Editors believes that editors (in conjunction with their assistant editors) should be the primary voice in discussions between editors, producers, production companies and studios and equipment vendors when determining the tools and conditions for their workflow and equipment. Whether working in a traditional office, or from home, most editors have a good understanding of what tools are necessary for the projects they are working on.
- ACE maintains that an editor should not be forced to work on a studio- or production-owned system. Often these systems are outdated, poorly maintained or just generally subpar. That said, if a studio or production company offers to provide suitable equipment to an editor, but the editor instead opts to use their own system, then the editor may not be entitled to payment for their system.
- ACE encourages all editors to negotiate a fair price for the use of their equipment and recommends that studios and production companies make a good-faith effort to compensate editors for the use of their equipment.
- ACE recommends that editors negotiate the terms of their equipment rental over email in order to retain a written record. If done over the phone, ACE recommends that editor write a summary email to producer, production or studio personnel stating the agreed upon terms of the equipment and rental fee.
- ACE recommends editors and assistant editors consult colleagues working on the same project or for the same studio to ensure parity between work from home arrangements.

2. Work Hours

- Because working from home removes the traditional barrier between work life and home life, American Cinema Editors recommends that editors set specific work hours and notify producers of their work schedule in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance while working from home.

3. Taxes

- American Cinema Editors recommends that all editors educate themselves regarding the tax benefits and consequences of working from home and/or owning their own equipment. Many editors report that they work as a “loan out” employee from their own corporation and also rent their personal equipment through said entity. ACE recommends that editors seek the advice of a qualified tax professional and/or attorney to see whether they would benefit from this type of structure.

COMPENSATION EXAMPLES

Example 1:

Editor working from home using studio or vendor supplied Editing System

Home Office	\$135.00/wk.
Meals	\$75.00/wk.
Total	<u>\$210.00/wk.</u>

Example 2:

Editor working from home using personal Remote Access System

Home Office	\$135.00/wk.
Meals	\$75.00/wk.
Editing System	\$225.00/wk.
Total	<u>\$435.00/wk.</u>

Example 3:

Editor Working from home using personal Editing System

Home Office	\$135.00/wk.
Meals	\$75.00/wk.
Editing System	\$550.00/wk.
Total	<u>\$760.00/wk.</u>

Note: Office supplies to be reimbursed separately.

FEEDBACK

American Cinema Editors will be continuing to update the Best Practices: Work From Home Guide.

If you would like to provide feedback, or have information regarding current rates and arrangements, please contact jasmine@americancinemaeditors.org.