GRANARY DIGITAL

Tracking markers and plate shooting checklist

Tick through this list before the day, on the day and at wrap, so the visual effects team gets plates they can use.

Tracking markers and clean plates only help if the visual effects team can use them, and that depends on the records as much as the markers. The visual effects supervisor, not this list, decides what a specific shot needs.

Before the day

- [ ] **Agree the camera move, the lens and the tracked area with the visual effects supervisor, in writing.**
  Keep the answer in an email, so there is a record.
- [ ] **Decide whether the shot needs markers, a clean plate, or both.**
  Static shots and simple, fully planned moves may need neither.
- [ ] **Check the screen or wall where the markers go is clean, flat and free of anything that will move.**
- [ ] **Plan the marker positions on a drawing or a photograph.**
  Keep them clear of where actors stand and where the camera passes.
- [ ] **Confirm the lighting plan.**
  Lighting that changes during the plate causes problems in the composite.
- [ ] **Book time for a clean plate, and agree who clears the set for it.**

On the day

- [ ] **Lock the camera height, position and lens for each plate, and note them on the slate.**
- [ ] **Record the camera settings: shutter, frame rate, white balance and any exposure lock.**
- [ ] **Place the markers, then photograph the set with the markers in place.**
- [ ] **Shoot the take with the actors, then the clean plate with the same camera, lens and light.**
- [ ] **Note the distance from the camera to the subject and to the back wall, in metres.**
- [ ] **Check the first take on a monitor for markers that have moved, been covered or fallen off.**
- [ ] **If a lens grid or reference chart is available, shoot it with the same lens before the day ends.**

At wrap

- [ ] **Check every plate has a matching take on the camera report.**
- [ ] **Send the records and the photographs to the visual effects team the same day.**
- [ ] **Remove the markers that are not needed, and mark the ones that must stay for the next setup.**

Plate record

One line for each plate. Write the lens and the heights in the same units every time.

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Scene and take	Lens	Camera height (m)	To subject (m)	To back wall (m)	Shutter, frame rate, white balance	Clean plate (Y or N)	Photo ref

Common mistakes

- Placing markers where an actor will stand, so they are covered or removed.
- Changing the lighting between the actor take and the clean plate.
- No record of the lens or camera height, which makes the move impossible to match.
- Skipping the clean plate to save time, then needing it in post.
- Leaving markers on the screen when the next shot needs a clean background.

Worked example

A car interior, shot on a green screen with a window plate to follow. The 35 mm lens is locked with the camera at 1.2 m height, 2.4 m from the windscreen frame. Markers sit on the window frame and the dashboard, not on the seats. The clean plate is shot with the car interior empty, using the same lens, height and light. The slate for each plate records the take, the lens, the camera height and the distances, so the visual effects team can match the window plate to the camera move.

For the screen side of an LED wall shoot, see the pixel pitch and moiré guides on the Granary Digital site.

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