Code of the Clapboard

What is the clapboard and why is it so important?

The clapboard, also called a "clapper" or "slate", is a **visual** and **sonic** tool used in film and other moving media. It has two main functions:

- Assisting with syncing separately recorded sound and image
- Visually labeling and identifying individual takes

In its first capacity, when sound and image are recorded separately, the clapboard acts as a bridge between the two so that they may be synced later in post-production. In post, the editor(s) will look for the exact moment in the recorded images when the clapboard shuts. They will then listen to the audio for the exact moment when the clapboard "claps." By properly aligning the two, synced sound and image can be produced.

In its second capacity, the clapboard contains pertinent written information relative to each take. This information may or may not include, but is not limited to:

- Scene number
- Take number
- Tape number
- Camera angle number

In post, the editor(s) will refer to this information for the purposes of distinguishing individual takes from each other.

When used correctly, the clapboard makes life a lot easier for the editor(s). However, when the clapboard is used incorrectly, it becomes useless, and makes the editor(s') jobs of syncing sound with image, and identifying takes, extremely difficult.

The instructions below are meant to clarify how to operate the clapboard properly.

1. Depending on the production and the take, all appropriate information on the clapboard must be updated prior to every new take.

   The person operating the clapboard will need to coordinate and communicate with other crew, including, but not limited to, the director, script supervisor and soundman.

2. Prior to every take, the clapboard <u>must</u> be placed in the middle of a framed shot. It should be at a distance where:

- All information on it can be clearly read
- Its entire range of motion is visible

If the clapboard's full range of motion is not visible, or it cannot be read, then it will be ineffective as a visual aid for:

- Assisting with syncing separately recorded sound and image (because the moment when the clapboard shuts cannot be seen)
- Visually labeling and identifying individual takes (because the information on the clapboard cannot be read)
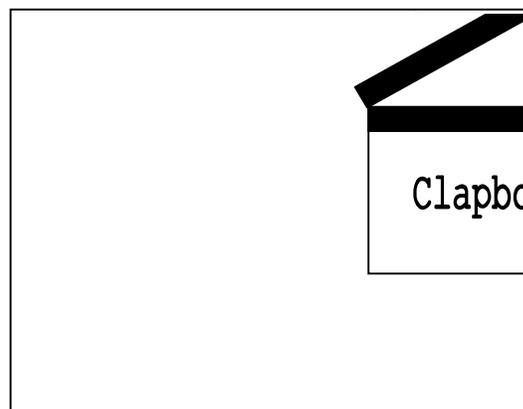
A correctly-framed clapboard should <u>always</u> look like this:

Camera Frame
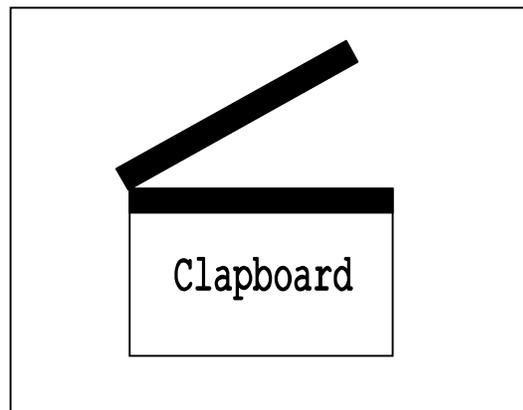
It should <u>not</u> look like this:

Camera Frame

3.   Once the clapboard is centered in the frame, the person in charge of it will call-off in the appropriate order. The call-off order will sound something like this:

    a)   Director – "Camera"
    b)   Camera Operator – "Rolling"
    c)   Soundman – "Sound"
    d)   Clapboard – "Scene 1, Camera 2, Take 3", etc. Clapboard claps.
    e)   Director – "Action"

4.   Once the clapboard has called-off, the clapboard should be "clapped" shut.

The "clapping" of the clapboard must be made with the clapboard as stationary as possible. The clapboard must not be jerked out of the frame while the "clapping" motion is made. If the clapboard is jerked out of the frame while "clapping" shut, it is next to impossible to see when the clapboard closes.

The rule is when "clapping" the clapboard, hold the clapboard still.

To prevent jerking the clapboard out of the frame, the "clapping action" must be done with two hands and not one hand. If the "clapping" action is made with one hand, there is a tendency to jerk the clapboard out of the frame. Using both hands generally prevents this.

5.   Once the director has called "cut," the person running the clapboard will re-enter the camera frame with the clapboard upside down.

It should look like this:

Camera Frame
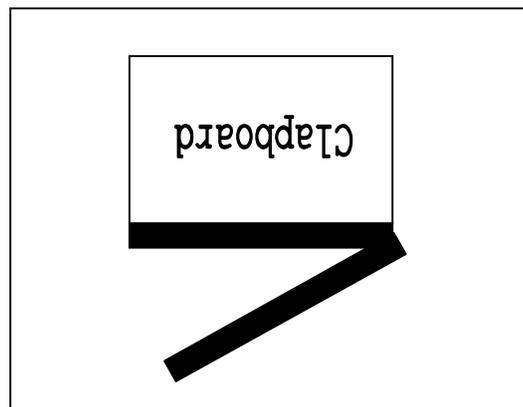
Once again, the clapboard <u>must</u> be placed in middle of a framed shot. It should be at a distance where:

- All information on it can be read
- Its entire range of motion is visible

The person running the clapboard will now clap the clapboard once again, making sure to <u>hold the clapboard still</u>.

For this final clap, the person operating the clapboard does <u>not</u> need to call out the scene, take, tape, camera number etc. He needs only to "clap" the clapboard.

Once this final clap is complete, the camera operator will stop rolling tape.