

The 40+ Items Every Photography Assistant Needs Now

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For the past 10 years, professional photography assistant and [Los Angeles-based photographer Shawn Corrigan](#) has traveled the world assisting and shooting. So in that decade-long time span, has Shawn gained much street cred? Don't take our word for it – [adventure photographer Corey Rich](#) told us that **Shawn Corrigan is “the hardest working photography assistant I have ever had!”**

Shawn got his start working for [commercial photographer Jeff Sacks](#), based in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Sacks and Corrigan were both alums of the Antonelli Institute, and had mutual friends through Shawn's uncle. From the beginning of his career, it was apparent to Shawn just how important mutual friends and personal connections are in the photography industry.

The very first day on set assisting Jeff, he also realized how little he knew despite his specialized photography degree. Echoing the same sentiment as many of his peers, he admits he learned far more in the field than he did in the classroom. He stayed on with Jeff for a while, traveling both for photography assisting and shooting on his own. At some point, he decided to make the major move to New York City.

“One connection to one person ended up with me having a pretty strong photography assisting career in New York,” says Shawn.

“The one thing that people don't realize is that the world is so tiny, everybody knows everybody.”

Shawn started out as a second photography assistant and worked his way up from there. “I'm like-minded with a lot of people I work with, so before they ask me for something I'm handing it to them,” he says. “When you are around, it gives them peace of mind, and they can just think about being creative.”

He also brings one of those **“everything but the kitchen sink, plus the kitchen sink”** bags to set. As the resident helper/problem-solver, Shawn says that you will definitely need a kit. As for what you need to put in your bag, tool

belt, or backpack, the two things assistants absolutely must bring to every shoot are a **leatherman** and a **light meter**. Below is a checklist of additional items you should consider packing:



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| <input type="checkbox"/> A fully charged iPod with at least 3-4 daylong playlists | <input type="checkbox"/> Advil, Tylenol, Aleve |
| <input type="checkbox"/> iPod cables | <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gaffer's tape in multiple colors | <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy-duty gloves |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black sharpies | <input type="checkbox"/> Triangular door wedge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Screw driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Ziplock bags |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tape measure | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra compact flash cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Various phone chargers | <input type="checkbox"/> Card reader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exacto knives | <input type="checkbox"/> Swatch book of gel colors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paint markers | <input type="checkbox"/> Book of seamless colors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple sizes of converters for tripods | <input type="checkbox"/> Valid passport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pens | <input type="checkbox"/> Circuit testing plug |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notepads and/or loose paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Blow drier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USB cables | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra gels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firewires | <input type="checkbox"/> Lens cleaning cloth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tethering cables | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-outlet adapters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Level | <input type="checkbox"/> Manfrotto light stand fittings/adapters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breath mints | <input type="checkbox"/> Pocketwizard cords for common gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tums | <input type="checkbox"/> Allen wrench set – metric and standard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Band-aids | <input type="checkbox"/> A leatherman and a light meter |

Items from Shawn's tool kit

In his 10 years of working, 2011 was the first year where the majority of Shawn's income did not come from photo assisting. But, he is not quite done with it yet. When asked to describe what he has learned from assisting Shawn says, "There's so much. Right now, a really great thing is that it's still teaching me. That's why I keep doing it. As you get older, you start developing these really great relationships with your photographers and they start sharing insights with you that you would never, ever see otherwise."

Takeaways

- You are ultimately there to put the photographer at ease so he/she can focus on the creative.
- While on set, always be asking yourself, "What if?" and "What's next?"
- Your entire assisting career can start with one person. Don't miss any opportunity to make a connection.