

Auditioning for a Part

Every actor needs to learn ‘how’ to audition. Think of auditions as a mini-performance and an opportunity to work on your acting skills. Think of the jurors as an audience, eager to see a show. Some choices for roles are the result of what the director is looking for – height, hair color, age range, special features or skills – not how well you do in reading lines or interacting with others.

No matter what – keep auditioning. You may not get the part this time, but next time you might be just what the director is looking for. Every time you audition, you will be improving your acting skills and growing more comfortable in front of an audience, and with the all-important business of being an actor.

When you audition, bring a portfolio of your work – several photos of yourself and a résumé of your work and experiences. Also bring a calendar in case the director wishes to invite you back for another look – a ‘callback.’

Preparing for an Audition

If you are auditioning for a particular play, you might want to get a copy from the library or bookstore and read it beforehand.

If you know which role you are trying to land, study the part closely and make some decisions about how you want to play it.

1. Imagine how the character looks, moves, and sounds.
2. Determine whether he or she is confident, sad, timid, and if the character moves with ease or with awkward physical stress and strain.
3. Decide if his or her voice is whispery and soft, loud and abrasive, or somewhere in between.
4. Make sure that your character interpretation and portrayal reflects the playwright’s intentions as you understand them.
5. Also, learn as much about the production as possible.
6. Come to the audition with a prepared monologue or two – one funny, one serious. Choose material that is age and gender appropriate; also shows the range of your skills as a performer.
7. Come to the audition for a musical prepared to sing – prepare a song or two.

Now, here you come to the audition all prepared to recite your monologue or sing your song, and the director says – ‘take this script and play Louis (Louise) starting on page 15.’ You have never seen this script before and don’t know the storyline. What do you do?

1. Ask to take a quick look at the script to get a feel for the character you are reading. Not knowing the story means you will have to make some quick decisions and take some courageous steps to bring the character to life. [This is exactly what the director is testing – how willing and creative are you as an actor to take the assignment.]
2. Ask yourself some questions –
 - a. What are the character’s motivations?
 - b. What is he or she trying to do, and how?
3. Imagine or glean from the script, if you can, a bit of your character’s inner life – thoughts that might contribute to his or her behavior, personality, or attitude.
4. If you have time, use these thoughts to project a sense of the character’s physicality (posture, gait, and gestures) and voice (quality and volume).

Your goal at this audition is to proceed with confidence and demonstrate your acting abilities. It is not about right or wrong. Your approach will reveal to those holding the audition a great deal about your abilities – Can you think on your feet? How do you react when the situation is fluid? How you handle yourself?

How to Handle the Nervousness Associated with Auditioning

Use this nervousness to your advantage – convert those nerves to energy and make the experience a positive one. Use common sense in your preparation.

1. Give yourself ample time to prepare for the audition – physically and mentally.
2. Be sure your portfolio is in order well in advance of walking out the door.
3. Choose comfortable clothing, but, remember you are meeting people you do not know, impress them with your presentation.
4. Give yourself ample time to get to the audition without needing to rush because of traffic jams or parking.

Once you have reached your destination –

1. Review the venue for the audition
2. Find a quiet place to prepare – take deep breaths, collect your thoughts, and warm-up your voice [whether you are singing or not]
3. Review your presentation – monologue, dialog, song
4. Try not to be distracted by the others waiting to audition.
5. Remind yourself of your name and how old you are – these are two of the most commonly forgotten facts when you are overcome with nerves.
6. When it is time to audition, walk into the venue, give the judges your portfolio, then find your positioning on the stage – there should be a spot pre-marked with tape on the floor; or the judges will tell you where they'd like you to stand.
7. Introduce yourself and your audition selection
8. When you are finished, say thank you, answer any questions, and leave with head held high and walking with confidence. The first impression is the most important one; the last impression may not get you the part, but it surely will lose it for you.