

Audition Guide

Preparing for an Acting Audition

This is a job interview. Treat it accordingly.

10 Quick Steps to a Successful Audition

- 1. Read the Audition Announcement Carefully**
- 2. Find a Monologue and a Song**
- 3. Research the Theatre Company**
- 4. Rehearse, Plan, Prepare**
- 5. Bring a Resume and Headshot**
- 6. Be Early**
- 7. Be Flexible**
- 8. Be Positive**
- 9. Be Confident**
- 10. Close the Deal – Follow up!**

“As a director, I look for actors who will show me how they work, their process, rather than attempt to give a ‘perfect’ or ‘finished’ performance.”

~ Robert Barry Fleming, Director
Theatre Arts Program

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Preparing for the Audition

What to Know

- Find out everything you can about the company, the show, and the people you are auditioning for. With so many resources now on the internet, there is no excuse for not being prepared.
- It is also a good idea to find out what the auditioning staff wants to see. If the information is not provided in the audition materials, regarding what specific traits or talents they are seeking, you should contact the company or theater, or go to any workshops that they may offer.

How To Choose Audition Monologues

- Pick material that reflects your strengths, suits your age, and demonstrates the image you wish to create.
- Choose an active monologue that has a change in the character from beginning to end. This shows range of acting and an understanding of monologue beats.
- Choose an audition monologue that is appropriate for the show you are auditioning for. If you are auditioning for Shakespeare, don't use a contemporary monologue. If your audition for a musical requires a monologue, do your best to find a monologue that suits the material.
- Do not choose an audition monologue that requires an accent unless it is specifically asked for.
- Never speak two characters' lines, as if you are having a conversation with yourself.
- Do not use monologues from movies for a theatre audition.
- Do not use monologues that were written as stand-alone monologues from unknown sources, we want to see you do something from a play or playwright we have heard of.
- Do not perform a monologue in an audition without reading the play it is from. When you are asked questions about the play you will look like a complete idiot if you cannot answer the questions.
- Avoid monologues from audition anthologies. We have heard them too many times already.
- Do not select pieces that attempt to shock with their use of bad language or obscene physical action.
- Pay strict attention to time requirements – most monologues should be one minute or less.
- Get feedback from a trusted coach, friend, or director on your audition.

Contrasting Monologues

What are contrasting monologues? Two completely *different* characters from two different plays and play genres. One classical and one contemporary piece is the norm. Make one a comedy and the other dramatic.

A Monologue Repertoire...

Keep a file of every monologue you ever work on, and keep it handy. You never know when you will be asked, "Do you have anything else?" Every actor should have a monologue from the following genres (a minimum of 4):

- **Comedy** (Neil Simon, etc and Durang etc)
- **Drama** (Something very contemporary, "edgy" and something more straightforward)
- **Classical** (Chekhov, Greek, etc)
- **Shakespeare**

Thoughts on Auditions from your USD Professors

If the director asks you to do the piece a different way, do it with grace and an open mind. Don't be tentative and don't argue; the director may just want to see how flexible you are and how easy to work with. Don't be afraid to ask the director a question for clarification.

If you're auditioning for a specific play, read it first and get some ideas about the characters.

Be respectful of everyone: the Stage Manager, assistants, fellow actors. Don't view other actors as competition. Wish everyone well, knowing that each actor is unique and whether or not you get the role is a matter of how well you match the director's vision. Negative energy will do you no good. Don't compare yourself to other actors. You are you, and that's enough.

After the audition, praise yourself for what you did well first, then think about improvements for next time (without beating yourself up), and then put the whole thing out of your mind and do something else.

Don't ever be hostile to the auditioning process. Enter the room with warmth and pleasure, and enjoy these few moments of performing. Don't be late for your appointment, and call if you have to cancel. (Terry Glaser)

Braden's Guide to a Happy Audition

By Braden McKinley

Here are a few pointers to making your audition a pleasant experience for all parties involved. The whole audition process can be rather nerve wracking, confusing and just plain stressful. You need not experience any of these emotions when auditioning. I mean, last I checked, this whole theater thing is supposed to be fun. So hopefully these brief pearls of wisdom will be of use to you.

1. Always sing the song you sound the best singing.

This requires being honest with yourself. If there's a song you just love but know deep down that it doesn't do justice to the caliber of your voice, don't sing it.

Likewise, if there's a song you may not like as much, or you've sung it a billion times and are tired of it, BUT you know it thoroughly and sing it well...SING IT!

2. Pointers regarding song choice.

Some people believe that it is better to sing a song that is more obscure and less commonly used. While it's nice as an auditor to hear something new and different it truly doesn't matter what song you sing. What matters more is what you do with the song that you have- that it sounds good in your voice and you act it well, while being age/gender appropriate. Ex. I'd rather hear a very commonly sung song such as "Over the Rainbow" done well and with conviction than some obscure Off- Broadway song sung poorly and dull.

3. If you're auditioning for Musical Theater, sing something from a Musical.

No pop, no R&B, no Hannah Montana. However, if you're auditioning for a rock musical (i.e. Jesus Christ Superstar, Rent, Hair... ect.) the director may ask for rock/ pop. But otherwise, it's a bad idea.

4. What does it mean when they ask for a 16- bar cut?

Many directors ask for a 16- bar cut when you audition. This, to me, has always seemed a little confusing. Do they literally mean 16 bars exactly? Not always. Typically it simply means that your audition piece needs to be under a minute. Remember that the director just wants to get an idea of what you sound like, so it doesn't need to be long.

In my opinion, you shouldn't attempt to have your piece clock in at exactly a minute. Because: most likely it's going to take longer than a minute to sing when you actually do the audition in which you'll get cut off by the auditors. Which then, of course, will make you lose your poise, get flustered and awkward and thus feel bad about your audition. By no means is that a win- win situation.

5. Props

It may seem pointless to say this, but avoid using props. They distract the directors from what they want to see: You!

I once was at an audition where a woman decided to use her pet chicken as a prop. No joke. Talk about distracting...

6. Follow Instructions

If the Director or Music Director gives a specific request as to what kind of song they want to hear, (I.e. something by Stephen Sondheim, something Pre- 1970s ect...) they mean it. So follow instructions. It shows a general professionalism and work ethic that makes a positive impression.

7. Etiquette regarding layout of your sheet music and dealings with your accompanist.

1. Please copy your music and have it double-sided in a binder. Don't make your poor accompanist have to deal with those stiffly bound music books that don't want to stay open. As an accompanist I can tell you, it's really annoying.
2. No loose sheets of music. They are equally annoying.
3. Have your beginning, ending and cuts very clearly marked in the music.
4. There is always the possibility that your accompanist is less than stellar, thus potentially botching up the music. If this happens, (which I'm sure it won't here at USD) just stay focused and keep singing.
5. Overall: this is another way the directors get to see your professionalism. So if you walk into an audition with a bunch of unmarked, loose sheets of music flying around everywhere, that doesn't look very professional, now does it?

8. Remember: The whole point of your audition is so that the directors can...

1. Find out whether you can, in fact, sing and act.
2. Get a sense for your stage presence.
3. Discover your personality and professionalism.

All other aspects of the casting process are left to the callback.

FINAL PEARL OF WISDOM: Relax! We are on your side. We want you to make our job easy, and most of all, we want to see you succeed! So, have fun! You are brilliant! (BM)

Additional Information on Songs

"I don't recommend lesser-known material because it's lesser known, but because it won't be the 14th time I hear 'She Loves Me' or 'Almost Like Being in Love.' "

- Michael Lavine (vocal coach, musical director)

- Avoid overly familiar material. If it is a popular karaoke choice, it's probably going to bore us.
- Avoid songs associated primarily with particular artists. "New York, New York" is Liza's song, "Don't Rain on My Parade" is Barbra's and "Over the Rainbow" is Judy's. Comparisons are inevitable.
- Avoid the current hit from the current Broadway smash or revival. These songs are simply performed too often at auditions to work to your advantage.
- Don't present a choreographed routine or imitate famous performers. Dance skills are evaluated at the dance audition. DO, however, approach the material with a free body and move whenever appropriate.
- Select material suitable for you. Many singers hide behind phony elderly voices and mannerisms. Remember, we want to see who you are.
- Beware of choices that are difficult to perform under stressful conditions. Many patter songs require careful coordination between pianist and singer, and are hard to perform under the competitive circumstances of an audition. Avoid excessively emotional pieces. It is difficult to build a sentiment quickly and convincingly.
- Don't argue if you are cut off in mid-note, or be evasive about your voice, range or experience. Answer questions in a truthful and straightforward manner.

Always have extra things in your book offering a wide variety, because you never know when they're going to ask to see some other things.

What to Wear and Bring to an Audition

- Make sure your clothes are appropriate both for your personality and for the company for which you are auditioning. For general auditions or cattle-calls, it is a good idea to wear something that helps the director identify you (a certain color leotard, for example); however, you shouldn't be overly flashy. Most importantly dress comfortably and bring a change of clothes for dance or movement auditions.
- For a dance or movement audition, invest in some basic dance wear -- an ensemble that will show your figure or physique in action. Appropriate footwear must be worn for every audition. Character shoes, ballet slippers, pointe shoes, jazz shoes, tap shoes, sneakers, or bare feet may be expected. Inform yourself in advance by contacting the company.
- Bring water and a towel to dance auditions.

Resume & Headshot

Your resume should be attached directly to the back of your headshot. This may be the only representation of you after you have left the room at audition. Think carefully about how you represent yourself. Never lie.

Resume

- Your resume should never exceed one page – be selective.
- What to include on your resume: contact information, personal info (height, weight, hair color, etc.), experience (theatre, film, etc – most relevant first), education/training, special skills
- Special skills may include: Accents, Languages, Dance, Athletics, Hobbies, Tricks, etc.

Regarding Headshots:

- Whatever you do, don't use snapshots.
- Don't use photocopies. While agents and casting directors may pass photocopies themselves, it looks really unprofessional (and cheap) if you provide only a photocopy of your headshot.
- No Glamour Shots. Don't use Glamour Shots, Olan Mills, Sears Portrait Studio or any other chain photographer for your headshots.
- Act Your Age. Don't try to get your headshot to make you look younger (or older) than you really are.
- Use Black and White. Headshots, for the most part, are still shot in black and white. for your run-of-the-mill basic headshot, black and white photography is fine.
- Be Yourself. Remember that people want to see you in a headshot, the real you.

Pre- Audition Checklist

- ◆ **Specific Audition Requirements (a copy of the announcement)**
- ◆ **Information about Company, Names of Directors**
- ◆ **Directions to the Audition**
- ◆ **Monologues and Songs**
- ◆ **Read the Play**
- ◆ **Prepare Sides**
- ◆ **Shoes**
- ◆ **Water Bottle, Snack**
- ◆ **Schedule**
- ◆ **Resume and Headshot**

Thoughts on Auditions from your USD Professors

Remember that this is not a competition. You should not be out to win. This is an interview. Are you right for the part? Is the part right for you? Get all of the information you can, and evaluate your options. Use your experience at auditions as a guide. Don't assume that things will be different in rehearsal. (Carrie Klewin)

The Audition

Arrival

- Consider your deportment from the moment you arrive at the audition to the moment you leave. You are being evaluated by everyone you encounter – especially the assistants and stage managers!
- Check in as soon as you arrive.
- Stay within ear shot for your name to be called, let someone know if you leave the area for any reason.
- Be confident. Be proud of who you are. Make us want to hire you.
- Ask questions about the company if you have them. You are auditioning the company too.

Warm-up

I (and most directors) get a strong impression within the first 30 seconds about an actor - suitability for the role, flexibility, performing warmth, etc. Sometimes, it takes even less time. Do enough preparation (even if it's just mental) outside the room so you can start your piece fully immersed in the character. A few moments of meditation before you enter the room is helpful. It clears the system and gets rid of nerves. Just focusing on the breath coming from your stomach centers you, and you can do this anywhere. (TG)

Monologue at the Audition

- Greet the panel warmly and with confidence when you enter the audition room.
- Take a brief moment after personal introduction to prep the moment before your monologue/song/etc. This also should be rehearsed and prepared. If not, taking that moment will only result in self critical thought and perhaps more anxiety and analysis rather than focus. (GY)
- Don't look at the auditors to tell you when to begin. After your introduction, just compose yourself and start.
- Don't ask to start over if you make a mistake or apologize. Just try to pick up right away and continue as if it didn't happen.
- Stay within your allotted time limits.
- Don't rush. You have earned your audition, enjoy it.
- If the auditioners should cut you off before you finish your prepared piece, it does not mean that they are not interested in you for the part. It could mean that they know they like you. Many times, they will be able to tell whether they want you in their production from the moment you walk out onto the floor or stage.

DON'T

1. Don't make excuses.
2. Don't apologize.
3. Don't be insulted.
4. Don't make the auditioners uncomfortable.
5. Bring weapons as props into the audition.
6. Be really really weird, scary, or moody (check your attitude at the door).
7. Get the title of the play, or your character wrong.
8. Mumble your name.
9. Mumble a thank you at the end and run off stage.
10. Be defensive, argue or complain about anything or anyone.
11. Stand too close to the directors / or stand too far away (how to find that magic place in the room)

Thoughts on Auditions from your USD Professors

I would say the one big thing for me is as Ana Deavere Smith says "...Smile. A lot!" And then, don't look me directly in the eyes when delivering your monologue. This is not a Brechtian exercise. (Evelyn Diaz Cruz)

Singing at the Audition

- Give the accompanist your neatly organized and properly marked music.
- Introduce yourself and the songs you will be singing in a clear, confident, voice and look directly at the auditors when doing this.
- Know the names of the composers who wrote your selections and what shows the pieces are from.
- See above, most tips for Monologues can also be applied here.

Dancing at the Audition

- About dance attire, it should never be inappropriate or overly sexy. Too many times I see people show up practically wearing bikinis. Attire should also reflect the type of role as much as possible. While most dance attire are pretty standard, you can still choose certain styles i.e. more balletic, or something like capris for a 50's style show, etc. It should always be neat and not torn or dirty. Choose attire that flatters your body type the best.
- Bring all dance shoes, because you never know. Unless it's obvious, like you wouldn't need tap shoes for a "Phantom" audition.
- Make sure hair is not going to cover your face or get in your way.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum, and wear none at all if the audition requires partnering.
- Warm up even if it's just a "movement" call.
- You are still acting while dancing. After you get the steps down, work on incorporating the character as soon as possible.
- Pick up the steps as quickly as possible, but don't compromise your character. If you mess up a step, just keep going as you would in a performance.
- Always be respectful of each other's space. Never dance in front of someone or too close.
- While waiting your turn to dance, don't sit or slouch. You are still being watched.
- Refrain from side conversations with peers.
- Pay attention to the quality of the movement as demonstrated by the choreographer or assistant. Listen closely to what he/she has to say about what they are looking for.
- Don't look to see if the auditors are watching you. They can see you looking and that is breaking character.

Remember to have fun! (AL)

Leaving the Audition/After the Audition

- Thank the auditors at the end of the audition and wait to see if they have any more instructions for you before leaving the room.
- Don't ask if you are getting a callback.
- Make sure you have filled out all paperwork, checked schedules, and have all of the information you need to decide if the role is right for you if you are selected.
- Make sure you are not needed for additional audition time before you leave. Check with the stage manager or assistant to find out if you are free to go, and when they might be contacting you if you are desired for callbacks. Thank the people who helped you.
- If you are really interested in pursuing the part or the company, write a thank you note to the director. Follow up with postcards about upcoming projects.

Audition Checklist

- ❖ **Silence Cell Phone**
- ❖ **Check-In**
- ❖ **Fill Out all Required Paperwork**
- ❖ **Warm-up**
- ❖ **Act, Sing, Dance**
- ❖ **Check-Out**
- ❖ **Get a Callback? Rinse & Repeat!**
- ❖ **Thank You Note**

Now that the audition is over, think carefully about whether you want to commit your life to this director and this particular project for 6 weeks! Never commit to a project without reading the script or a full understanding of the project. (CK)

Before an audition, an actor must prepare mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Be prepared. Be early. Be confident.

Thoughts on Auditions from your USD Professors

- Be prepared. Get as much info about the company as possible. Who will you be working with, what is the history/mission of the company, what kind of theatre do they do? Find out how to get there, be on time, (so you have time to collect yourself and prepare mentally, physically, emotionally for the audition and adapt to any curves/changes that you may be thrown). Sometimes the theatre will provide copies, or a chance to read the script. The audition starts when you enter the parking lot. If you are cruel to the stage manager or production personnel while driving in, he/she may remember you when you audition. If you want the part . . . go for the part. Some people are afraid to fail, some people are afraid to succeed. (I've seen actors here in San Diego year after year audition for All City and never get a part. I get the sense the like to do it as a hobby, but in the end are horrified of actually working.)

In addition to seeing if you have the basic skills and presence for a part/call back, the directors are also considering if this is a person whose temperament will fit in with the rest of the company/cast. Can you control this? Not really. But, many will say just be yourself.

It's a job interview as well. So, those moments outside the actual performing are all part of getting the job.

If they ask you do "try it again" don't do the same thing. Play alternate actions and show another side of character. Yes, you can ask for clarification, but if you don't get the note, or take the note it may reflect, in the director's mind, that the rehearsal process is going to be a bear.

They are looking for great people to fill the part. All directors want the next person walking through the door to be the right person. If it's season auditions, there may be multiple directors all very confused thinking about 20 different things. They are still paying attention to you as best they can. Some are smarter and more organized than others. (George Ye)

Based upon the several years of auditioning actors in San Diego, I would say that the actor needs to remember that an audition is very much like a job interview and a first date. I think it's Brian O'Neill (Acting as a Business) who wrote that the actors job is to get the callback, not the role. An actor gets the role because the casting director or director makes a decision to give that person the role based upon who the hell knows what. But to get the callback you have to have done your work well. So, just as on a date, you really just want a second date. And like a job interview, you really just want to get a second interview. That is the only measure of success for the actor, which seems like I'm telling people to aim low. But I am not. I think it's important for younger actors to remember that the law of averages does apply to auditioning. If I am continually NOT getting callbacks, then I have to accept that I need to improve my audition skills or change my audition piece, etc., any number of things, but I have to accept that something is not going well when I walk into the room. But if the actor is getting callbacks regularly, the law of averages demands that sooner or later the actor will get cast in something. There are exceptions, of course, to everything; but this is a good measure.

Also, since it is very much a job interview, it's important to remember that people are also hiring you based upon your demeanor. NO ONE WANTS TO WORK WITH AN "ARTISTIC" TYPE OF PERSON. They tend to be pains in the ass. People want to work with other people who have a sense of humor, a willingness to listen and learn, and an outlook that is positive. Which is really who most people are inside. So rather than trying to prove that he/she is a talented actor, it's important that the actor remember to behave like himself or herself. And along those lines, the actor doesn't have to know everything. Very often in auditions I get disappointed because it's as if the actor auditioning isn't, cannot, or refuses to listen to what I have to say. I know they don't intend to do this, but they are so focused on how they are coming off and what I think of them that they cannot fully participate in a conversation or take adjustments. If you don't understand something that the director offers, don't just simply agree or say "got it" and take a wild at guess at what the director wants; ask questions. Don't aggressively challenge the director or casting director, but engage in a dialogue.

Secondly, it takes hard work, gutsy determination to audition - because you are auditioning all the time, either formally or informally. A professional's job, when unemployed or facing unemployment, is to find another job, put herself or himself out there. And most actors can take advantage of staying in touch and contacting those theatres or directors they wish to work with. It's very important to keep your face in front of casting directors and directors. They forget very easily because they see and meet so many people, and they are usually underpaid and overworked. So the more you can put your face in front of them by mail or email the better. They do appreciate that. In moderation of course, every four to six months, or when the theatre is casting a production that the actor thinks they should read for because they are right for the part (right age, right ethnicity, right "type").

Thirdly, and generally, you get the part the minute you walk through the door. You are either too thin, too fat, too short, too tall, too young, too old, too light, too dark, etc., etc., or JUST RIGHT. And after that it's a matter of proving that you can walk and talk at the same time. That sounds oversimplistic, but it's really intended to take the pressure off of the actor and to encourage the actor (or dancer or singer) to not take things personally EVER. The only thing that the actor can control is his/her work. (Francis Gercke)

Contributors to the Audition Information Packet – Robert Barry-Fleming (RF), Terry Glaser (TG), George Ye (GY), Evelyn Diaz Cruz (EC), Carrie Klewin, Braden McKinley, Soroya Rowley (SR), Francis Gercke (FG), Andrea Leigh (AL)

Recommended Reading: *Audition*, by Michael Shurtleff
 The War of Art, by Steven Pressfield
 And Then You Act, by Anne Bogart

Online Sources: http://www.ccm.uc.edu/musical_theatre/dos.htm (auditioning)
 http://www.eperformer.com/features/z/hs_05.htm (headshots)