

Introduction

Auditioning is a nerve-wracking process for both beginning and experienced actors. What exactly is an audition? Think of it like a job interview for the acting profession. The auditioning process tasks aspiring actors with demonstrating their skillset to the directing team of an upcoming production. It is no secret that auditions can be intimidating but learning proper auditioning techniques is beneficial to both school and future acting endeavors. Below are just a few of the many auditioning tips and tricks to ensure that you have a successful audition.

Key Terms

Before beginning, there are some key terms associated with auditions that must be understood. They are as follows:

➤ **Button**

Physical or vocal definitive end to a monologue or scene that tells the director the performance has concluded.

➤ **Call Back**

An invitation for the second round of the auditioning process.

➤ **Side**

Portion of a script selected by the director for use in an audition.

➤ **Slate**

An actor's introduction at the beginning of an audition.

All Auditions

Now that those are understood, we begin with guidelines applicable to any type of audition. It is important to note that while these guidelines are generally considered standard, final audition practices are determined by the director and should be followed in accordance with their specifications. Also remember that an audition is also an audition for every other show with that director. For this reason, make sure you are confident, polite, and respectful.

➤ Be Confident

Confidence can be the hardest aspect of an audition, especially for young or inexperienced actors. But confidence is also one of the most important keys to a great audition. The guidelines presented on the following pages are designed to teach you how to be well-prepared and to help you understand the auditioning environment, making confidence easier to acquire.

➤ Make a Good First Impression

Your audition begins as soon as you enter the room and does not end until you leave. It is important to conduct yourself respectfully, responsibly, and confidently throughout the duration of the process.

➤ Dress Appropriately

One surefire way to ensure a great first impression is to dress appropriately. Appropriate dress for an audition is professional attire so you want to avoid things like jeans, sweatpants, sweatshirts, baggy clothing, etc.

➤ Be Yourself

Another tip to create a great first impression is to be yourself during your slate. Your introduction gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your personality to the director. The director is interested in your theatrical skillset, but first they view your slate as a glimpse of how cooperative you will be with the rest of the cast and crew.

Another way to impress at your audition is to come prepared. Preparation takes different forms depending on the type of audition. There are four main types of auditions including cold readings (pg. 3-4), prepared monologues (pg. 4-7), musical (pg. 7-9), and improvisation (pg. 9). Combinations of the different types exist as well. If accessing this online, click on the audition type to jump to that information.

Cold Reading

A cold reading is an audition in which actors read from sides assigned to them by the director. Sometimes the actor reads alone and other times they are in groups. One of the most intimidating aspects regarding cold readings is that the actors are unaware of what portions of the script will be selected.

➤ Read the Script

The first step when facing a cold reading is to prepare. For starters, read the script of the show being produced. By reading the whole script, you familiarize yourself with any possible side the director might select. This information will allow you to make informed character choices for the character you are auditioning for and for any additional character the director has you read for.

➤ Do the Research

Another way to be prepared for a cold read is by looking back at previous performances of the show you are auditioning for. You do not want to mimic those performances completely, but seeing the script come to life through their adaptations can help you develop your character choices.

➤ Warm Reading

Lastly, sometimes the director will make the sides available ahead of time in a slight variant of the cold reading known as a warm reading. In this case, reading the sides ahead of time is the best way to prepare.

Once prepared, the next step is the actual audition. Professionally, you are expected to arrive with a headshot and a resume. Following this, you must fill out an audition form. If you are reading by yourself, you will begin with a slate and then read with a designated reader. If you are reading in a group, you typically will not slate. Instead, the director will call you by name based on the resume or audition form provided. Be prepared to answer any questions that the director might ask, but do not be discouraged if they do not ask any.

➤ Stand Out by Making Bold Choices

When reading the sides, be sure to make definitive choices to distinguish your portrayal of the character from the rest of those auditioning. Directors like to see that you are willing to make distinct and unique choices, even if they disagree with them. Do not be afraid to move around the auditioning space, but only move if it makes sense for your

character to do so at that moment in the scene. Additionally, if the director left something in the auditioning space, they did so for a reason. Try to incorporate it into your audition. For instance, if they left a chair in the space, try to use that chair during your reading. Remember to be imaginative. Theatre is about the willing suspension of disbelief and that being the case, a chair does not always have to be a chair. If the character you are reading for requires an accent, or if the director requests one, try it. Even if it is no good, the director will be pleased that you took the risk and went for it. Also, do not be discouraged if you are cut off before the end of the scene. The director may have only needed to see a portion of the scene.

➤ Auditioning with a Partner or Group

There are also a few considerations to be aware of when reading with a partner or group. Firstly, if the director allows you time to talk with your partner, take it. Use that time to collaborate on your plans for the scene. If that time is not allotted, be prepared to roll with the punches. Your partner might make an unexpected choice, but make sure you react to their choices while also making your own. Lastly, do not be discouraged if you do not read as much as someone else in the group. This does not indicate anything.

After the audition is over, be prepared for a call back, but do not be discouraged if you do not receive one. If you do receive one, it might be in the form of another cold reading, but it might also be a different type of audition. Be ready to prepare for it quickly as they typically occur within days of the initial audition.

Prepared Monologue

An audition of this type tasks actors with performing a prepared monologue of a pre-determined length. Monologues – or long passages of text spoken by one character – can be classical or contemporary. They can also be comedic or dramatic.

➤ Read the Script

The first step in facing a prepared monologue audition is to prepare. Preparations should begin by reading the script of the show you are auditioning for. This will give you information on the development of the character you are auditioning for. Additionally, this will be useful when selecting your monologue.

➤ Do the Research

Another way to prepare for a prepared monologue audition is to examine previous performances of the show you are auditioning for. Seeing the show come to life can further your understanding of it, which can be beneficial to your audition.

➤ Select a Monologue

The next step in preparing for a monologue audition is to select your monologue. Typically, the monologue will come from a script other than the play you are auditioning for. Once selected, you will want to make sure that you read the script you have selected your monologue from. The type of monologue (contemporary, classical, comedic, or dramatic) will either be specified by the director or is up to you. Unless otherwise specified, choose a monologue from a play written by the same author or an author with a similar style. Additionally, choose a monologue that mimics the emotions, conflicts, and/or stereotypic type of the character you are going for. You should also keep a monologue of every type in your repertoire in case the director asks to hear more from you. If you do not have a specific role in mind but just hope to make the show, select a monologue that is applicable to multiple characters, so the director can picture you in a variety of roles.

➤ Rehearse the Monologue

Once the monologue is selected, you should rehearse prior to the audition. It must be well-memorized because the director might have you begin at any point throughout the monologue. The backup pieces in your repertoire should be memorized as well.

After you prepare, it is time to arrive at the audition. You should arrive with a headshot and a resume at a professional audition. Before you start you will fill out an audition form with whatever information is requested by the director. Monologue auditions begin with a slate where you will introduce yourself, the play you are performing the monologue from, and the author of the play. Be prepared to answer any questions that the director might ask before starting, but do not be discouraged if they do not ask any.

➤ Be Yourself

As stated earlier, it is important to act politely and be yourself during your slate. This is essential because the director uses your slate to determine the genuine you before you demonstrate your ability to morph into character. They do this to see how well you will mesh with the team environment present in theatre.

➤ Moment Before

Before starting your monologue, you should collect yourself with a simple motion. Most often this takes the form of putting your head down as you get into character. The previous circumstances for your character should be incorporated into your performance. They can be manifested as an emotion, or in some physical way such as a posture change.

➤ Stand Out by Making Bold Choices

When performing your monologue, it is important to make choices that will distinguish you from others auditioning. Unique choices impress directors, even if they disagree with them. See “Cold Reading” techniques above for more help with making bold choices.

➤ Performing the Monologue

When performing your monologue, avoid looking directly at the director. Instead, choose focal points on the wall in front of you. As you are performing, do not be afraid of silences. Sometimes pausing during the monologue can add emotion to the piece. If you forget a line while performing the worst thing you can do is panic. Try to get back on track, but if you find yourself scrambling to recover, end your monologue by saying “thank you.” Avoid using inappropriate language, breaking character, or apologizing as methods to cope with the frustration of forgetting part of your monologue. If you feel you need to start over, it is better to just do it than to ask. The worst they can do is stop you. Also, do not be discouraged if you are cut off before the end of your monologue. The director may have only needed to see a portion of the piece.

➤ Moment After

It is important to remember that your character is going somewhere. This can be seen through an emotion, a movement, or a physical manifestation. Avoid ending your scene abruptly. Instead, end it with a well thought out button (see “Key Terms” for more information on buttons). When you are finished with your piece and your moment after, say “thank you” to the director so they know you are done.

➤ Director Requests

Saying “thank you” does not mean you can run out of the room. Your audition is not over until the director dismisses you. Be prepared for additional questions about yourself, the monologue, and/or the choices you made. The director may even request you run the monologue again, but with a specific direction. If they do not request anything further do not be discouraged. It does not guarantee that you did not land a spot.

Be prepared for a call back once the audition is over, but do not be discouraged if you do not receive one. If you do get one, the director may request another prepared monologue, but it might also be a different type of audition. Be ready to prepare quickly as call backs typically occur within days of the initial audition.

Musical

A musical audition incorporates song and dance into one of the other types of auditions and is only used when a musical is being produced. In addition to either a cold reading or a prepared monologue, musical auditions task actors with performing a song and a dance routine. Typically, the song is expected to be prepared beforehand and the dance will be taught at the facility before the audition.

➤ Read the Script and Listen to the Soundtrack

Like all auditions, the first step in a musical audition is to prepare. Preparations should begin by reading the script, which provides insight on the characters that can be used toward choices made while auditioning. Reading the script should be paired with listening to the soundtrack. This will give you a sense of the style of music featured in the musical, as well as the vocal range of each character.

➤ Do the Research

Another way to prepare for a musical audition is by looking back at previous performances of the show you are auditioning for. Do not completely copy those performances but hearing the music through various adaptations can help you decide which song is best for you.

➤ Select a Song

The next step in preparing for a musical audition is to select which song you will be singing. Sometimes the director will request a song from the show being produced, other times they will prefer a song from a different show. If the director favors the former, choose a song performed by the character you are auditioning for. If the director prefers the latter, select a song that matches the musical style of the show being produced. This song should also demonstrate similar character traits and prove that you have the necessary vocal range to play the character you are auditioning for. In other words, choose something that has both high and low notes that you can hit. Also,

select a backup song just in case the director asks to hear more from you. If you are auditioning for an ensemble role, the song will typically be selected for you.

➤ Rehearse the Song

Once you have your song selected, you should rehearse your song prior to the audition. It is most impressive to have the song memorized. You should also arrange a method of bringing your own music accompaniment to the audition. While the backup song should also be rehearsed, the focus should be the primary selection.

After preparation, the actual audition is next. Professionally, you should arrive with a headshot and a resume. Then, you will fill out an audition form before beginning. Traditionally musical auditions begin by learning the dance routine so come prepared and dress accordingly. After that it will be time to perform the song. You will begin with a slate, introducing yourself and the song you will be performing. Be prepared to answer any questions that the director might ask, but do not be discouraged if they do not ask any.

➤ Don't Sweat the Mistakes

In the dance portion of the audition it is okay if mistakes are made. Remember, in most cases you are learning the dance routine the same day as the audition. With such little preparation it is hard to achieve perfection when doing the dance audition. When mistakes occur when performing the routine, just keep dancing. It is better to try and get back on beat than getting frustrated with yourself. The same advice goes for singing with any missed notes or forgotten lyrics.

➤ Stand Out by Making Bold Choices

When singing, be sure to make definitive choices to make your audition stand out. Directors expect to see acting choices made during singing, as that is expected of musical performers. Do not be afraid to move around the auditioning space, but only if it adds to the emotion or character of the song. Lastly, do not be discouraged if you are cut off before the end of your song. The director may have only needed to hear you hit a certain note.

Depending on director preference, either a cold reading or prepared monologue will precede or follow the song and dance portions to assess your acting ability. After the audition is over, be prepared for a call back, but do not be discouraged if you do not receive one. If you do receive one, they may ask you to sing for a different character, ask you to dance again, ask you to do

another cold reading, or ask you to prepare another monologue. Be ready to prepare quickly as they typically occur within days of the initial audition.

Improvisation

An improvisation audition involves the actor performing an entirely made up scene based off some sort of prompt. These are often combined with other forms of auditions and are often used for shows containing improvisational elements.

➤ Read the Script

The first step for an improvisation audition is to prepare. This might not make sense since this audition type has you make up the material on the spot, but you can still prepare by reading the script. Doing this informs you about the characters and the themes prevalent in the show. This knowledge is useful for helping you decide what direction you would like to take your improvised scene.

Arriving at the audition follows preparation. Professionally a headshot and a resume are required, and an audition form must be filled out. Improvisation auditions begin with a slate followed by the director giving you a prompt. Be prepared to answer any questions that the director might ask, but do not be discouraged if they do not ask any.

➤ Improvising

When making up your audition scene, try to utilize your skillset as much as possible. You are unrestricted by prewritten dialogue, so it is advantageous to demonstrate the extent of your talent. You should try to make the scene fit the themes of the show and the traits of the character you are auditioning for. You should also attempt to give your scene a beginning, middle, and end. Conclude your scene with a button to tell the director it has ended. Additionally, be conscious of any timeframe imposed by the director.

Be prepared for a call back once the audition is over, but do not be discouraged if you do not get one. If you do receive one, the director may want more improvisation, but they might also request a different type of audition. Be ready to prepare quickly as call backs typically occur within days of the initial audition.