

“VIRTUAL AUDITIONS”

Written By:

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You can thank technology and film incentives in the Southeast for changing the way actors audition for film and television. By auditioning via digital tape, you will save time and the expense of having to travel for the first round of auditions. Depending on the project you might be hired directly from your audition, but you must be prepared to travel for a director and/or producer callback.

There are positive and negative sides of Virtual Auditions. Getting hired is difficult in this competitive business. The opportunity to audition for any role you are right for provides the opportunity to work on your craft and establish contacts in the business. Virtual Auditions are like playing the lottery. If you don't play, you don't win.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR SELF- TAPED AUDITIONS

- Use a good digital video camera or the HD Flip camera. Don't use a web cam.
- If you are using Quicktime (.mov) the following settings should be used; Video Capture: Better quality (H.264), Video Compression: Medium-High quality (640 x 480 VGA).
- If you are using Windows Movie Maker (.wmv) the following settings should be used; Export presets Video for LAN (768 kbps), or Video for Broadband (340 kbps).
- You must have great lighting where you can see your skin tone and eye color.
- You must have great sound. Make sure the reader isn't louder than the actor who is auditioning.
- Use a solid color background. A light to medium blue or periwinkle color works best. Do not have pictures, blinds, windows, or any other clutter in the background. Make sure you don't wear a color that blends into the color of your backdrop.
- The reader is very important. If you are not comfortable having the camera operator read then ask another actor to read opposite you to ensure a great audition. The reader should stand beside and behind the camera. The actor and the reader should be the same distance from the camera for equal voice level. The reader should never be seen on camera.

- Bring an extra copy of your sides for the reader along with any special taping instructions, including email addresses for the recipients.
- The beginning slate should be a tight frame, mid-chest (between breast and shoulders) to the top of your head, and should consist of your name, role and agent. Your end slate should be a quick full body shot (not moving up and down, but a solid full body shot) with your name and height. The slate is a way of introducing who you are and is the first impression the viewer will see. Keep it short and to the point.
- Tape your audition close up, mid-chest (between breast and shoulders) to the top of your head.
- Send your best take only unless casting has specifically requested otherwise.
- Auditions must then be sent to your agent who will make sure your performance is good enough for the casting director, studio, and network approval. You will not do yourself any favors by sending an audition that is not your best. Trust your agent to make this decision on your behalf. If you do not trust them then get another agent. Unless you are told otherwise your agent will e-mail or upload your audition to casting.
- Files should be sent in QuickTime or WMV format. Files smaller than 13 mb can be e-mailed directly to your agent. Anything larger you can send thru www.yousendit.com. Very large files might not be watched so compress the file as small as you can without losing quality. Do not post auditions on YouTube.
- If you are reading for more than one role send each in a separate file.
- Label your file with your FirstNameLastName.Role.Project.Agent unless specified otherwise. For Ryan Gloriso name the file ROLE_FIRST_LAST_AGENCY. For Jackie Burch slate in the beginning in written form not verbal and put name role agent city you are from and height. Only put age and birthdate if you are a minor.
- Deadlines to accept auditions exist for a reason. The sooner you get your audition to the agent the better chance you have of being seen first. If your audition is being uploaded to Eco-Cast submissions will not be accepted past the deadline posted on the breakdown. When you are done with your audition send a text or call your agent letting them know they will be receiving your audition soon.

PROFESSIONAL TAPING SERVICES VS. TAPING AT HOME

Your agent is busy and most likely will not have time to tape you, but they can recommend professional taping services in your area. Professionals invest in high quality equipment. For a nominal fee they tape, read with you, edit and send your audition to your agent. The advantage is you can concentrate on your audition and let the service take care of the technical aspects. Taping at

home will require that you invest in a good camera, lighting and backdrop, and that you have a wall space that is clear of windows, pictures or furniture, etc. It does offer more flexibility in your schedule allowing you to tape at your own convenience; however the quality must be good enough for studio or network approval. If you tape at home do not use overhead fluorescent lights as they tend to make your skin tone look yellowish-orange. Ideally, use two incandescent lights. One as a key light, set off the side of the camera and pointed at your face and one as a fill light, set to the opposite side of the camera a little farther away and pointed at your side. If your space is small, you may be able to get by with one light.

The choice is yours to make as to whether you use a professional service or self-tape.

YOUR PERFORMANCE

You must have your script memorized. Looking down at your script tells the person watching that you were not prepared. It is by far the worst thing you can do that you have control over. If you can't put the time and effort into memorizing the script you will never be able to concentrate on the character and deliver a great performance.

If you do not receive the full script, read the sides that were sent for all of the characters. This will give you more information on the project as well as more insight into your character.

Trust your gut instinct on how you would play the character. You will rarely receive instructions from casting on what the director is looking for prior to taping. Treat your taped audition the same as you would if you were physically in the room with the casting director.

TIPS FROM CASTING DIRECTORS

Brent Caballero: "It is very easy to be hesitant about your choices when taping because you are aware that you can tape take after take, this lack of confidence shows in the performance no matter how many takes you do to get what you think is perfect. You should treat video auditions the same as you treat live reads except you don't have to deal with the nerves of being in the room with the CD. Always go with your instincts. And always listen to your reader; it is the tapes I go back and view to see how good an actor listens. Listening is crucial to acting. And lastly remember that the CD /Actor relationship is just that a relationship – I am not a good CD without good Actors so always bring your "A" game when requested to go on tape".

Craig Fincannon: "As the internet continues to invade our profession ever further each year, the actors that are net-savvied have a clear advantage over all others".

Mark Fincannon: "Do not overact! The problem with most auditions is overacting. Many times when the scene just has 2 or 3 lines an actor has the tendency to make those 3 lines feel like the most crucial moments in the movie. This generally is not the case. Keep your performance simple, real, everyday life."

Richard Futch : "Always know specifically to whom you are talking and specifically what your relationship is to that person. We feel differently about different people and places. See that person (and others) and the place before you begin talking. Make eye contact with the other characters. (Please do not sneak looks at the camera. It is deadly for your audition.) Know specifically where you are. Your house, which room in the house, inside, outside, the smells of the place AND how you feel about the place. If there are others around your place, how does that affect you? Listen carefully and let us see your reaction to information as it is given to you. Be ready for humor to be in your audition at any point. Humor is a great way to give your audition color, peaks and valleys, and keep you away from the dreaded one-note audition. Take a few seconds at the beginning of your audition to get your head where it needs to be. If you slate before you begin your audition, take a few seconds before you start talking. Just because the reader or person running your audition says "action" it does mean you must start speaking immediately. It's very helpful to see the actor thinking before talking. It is equally important for the actor to take a few seconds at the end of the audition. The audition does not end just because you have said your final words. The final words affect you and we need to see HOW they affect you. The Reader is not auditioning. The Reader should be involved in the audition, but it is NOT their audition. It is extremely difficult to concentrate on the person auditioning when the Reader is so over-the-top.

Ellen Jacoby: "Without the script, it might be hard to know exactly what the director/writer/producer wants. . .make your choice and follow through with it, stay in character. . .make the decision and go for it. A solid read is a solid read and we can tell if an actor is good even if the interpretation is different than originally perceived. It does happen also that the director, writer or producer likes this interpretation as this is when they are first seeing their words come to life.

Lori S. Wyman: Remember, each audition is a mini scene. There needs to be a beginning, middle and end. If it makes sense for your character to walk into the scene, look up from a clipboard or turn into it, then do that. Please know that you have to make this audition piece as realistic as possible. The sides you receive were not written as an audition piece. They were written as part of a script and we, the casting directors, take a few pages out of that script and ask you to make an audition out of it. If your particular set of sides has your character looking behind them or down the whole time, readjust that. Even though the script is written one way, for filming purposes, it is important that you look towards the camera during your audition in order for us to determine if you can act or not. We need to see you, no matter how the sides are written.

