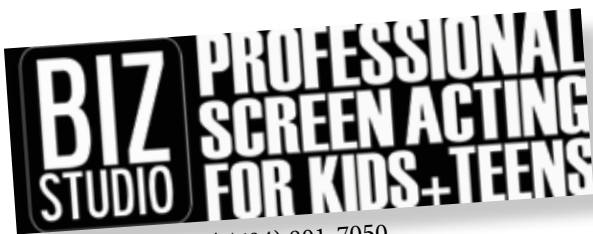


Confidence on Camera 4th Ed.

by Michael Bean
Owner & Head Coach
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Acting Terms

Terms in *italics* are defined in the glossary on p.44, and additional definitions and URLs are listed at the bottom of each page.

Confidence and Casting Directors

“My favourite quality to see in an audition? Confidence.”

Laura Brooke
Casting Director

“The actor’s most important tool in an audition is confidence.”

Michelle Allen
Casting Director

“Confidence is the first thing we see in your auditions.”

Candice Elzinga
Casting Director

Confidence

Confidence *n.* A feeling of self-assurance arising from one’s appreciation of one’s own abilities or qualities.

Performing of any kind starts with confidence—the feeling that no matter what happens you’ll do well; that the work you do will be worth watching. In essence it is the actor’s degree of certainty that the work will be successful, established through a history of successes. Each little success in class, in the *audition* or on *set* helps build the body of experience that (a) makes for a professional quality performance and (b) comes across on camera as confidence.

To establish a history of success requires dedicated practice. The working environment in film, television and commercials is always changing, so actors have to practice a hundred ways, in a hundred different situations, a hundred times. An aspiring professional actor should put at least ten hours a week into their craft: on stage, in front of the camera, taking classes, reading scripts+plays, dancing, singing, voice training, going to the gym, etc. That’s the professional *work ethic*.

Good habits help you make the most of your practice. The more your practice habits match the needs of the working environment, the more each success will prepare you for your next *audition*, or for your next day on *set*. So learn as much as you can about auditions and about being on set. Read extensively. Take classes taught by working actors. Get a coach. Get an agent. Audition for everything. Do student films. Do theatre. Put yourself out there. And practice, practice, practice.

Success = Practice x (Work Ethic + Good Habits)

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Vancouver or Los Angeles?

LA has twenty times as much film production as BC, and twenty times as many actors—most of SAG's 100,000 members live in LA, compared to 5000 members in the UBCP.

We're Number 3!

"BC is the third largest production centre in North America, after Los Angeles and New York."

Karen Lamare
BC Film Commission



The Actor's Food Chain

- #1 Producer
- #2 Casting Director
- #3 Talent Agent
- #4 Actor

#1 The Producer

The *Producer* is a businessperson with a sack of cash responsible for making a movie, TV show or commercial. The producer hires almost everyone, including the *Director*. The producer and director watch the tape from the *audition*, choose which actors to bring in for a *callback* and make the final decision on which actor to *book* for the role.

There are between six and twenty projects in production in BC at any one time, including *commercials*, *industrials*, TV programs (*episodics*), TV movies-of-the-week (*MOW's*) and *feature* films. Each project has one to six producers.

Production Company: *The company actually responsible for making a film, TV show or commercial.*

#2 The Casting Director

The *Casting Director* is hired by the producer to find actors who fit each role. When a casting director receives a script they create a short description of each character *role* called a *breakdown* and send it out to provincially licensed *Talent Agents*.

Casting directors may receive 100-400 *submissions* for each role and choose 10-40 of those actors for a first audition. They only have time to see a small percentage of professionally *represented* actors, so they only choose actors they think are appropriate for the role. Every actor who goes in 100% prepared and does a good audition makes the casting director look good. That helps them decide to call you the next time.

Auditions are always held on-camera, with the exception of a *prescreen*, which is a pre-audition just for the casting director. There will be at least two people in the room for the first audition: the casting director and the *Camera Operator*. For film and television auditions there will also be a *Reader*, an actor who stands beside the camera and reads all of the other characters' lines.

Often there will be a second audition called a *callback*. The director and producer(s) will often sit in on the callback. The expectation is usually that a callback will be identical to the first audition—same *wardrobe*, same hair, same quality of performance. One actor will *book* the part and be cast in the role.

There are approximately twenty casting directors in total working out of Vancouver.

Casting is on your side.

“If you make it into the room, you’re essentially a finalist... If you’re coming into the room, there’s a really good reason for it.”

Judy Lee
Casting Director
Vancouver, BC

#3 The Talent Agent

A *Talent Agent* is a professional talent manager who represents actors for film, television and commercials and helps them find and *book* work. When casting directors send out the *breakdowns* for their projects, they only send them to provincially licensed talent agents.

A real agent only makes money when their actors book work, so they're taking a risk by *signing* new *talent*. A typical agreement gives the agent 15% of whatever income their actors make. There should be no up front cost to join a talent agency. Any "agency" that asks for an up-front fee is doing something unethical, and possibly illegal. For information on how to choose a talent agent, plus sample formatting for *resume*, *cover letter* and *headshot*, download "Choosing a Talent Agent" at www.confidenceoncamera.com

There are approximately two hundred agents in total working at the 80+ talent agencies registered in BC, and each agent represents 50-100 actors of various ages, looks, skill levels and ethnicities.

ESB Talent Agencies List

Talent agencies have to register with the BC Employment Standards Branch before they can submit their actors for professional auditions.

www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/talent/list.htm



Casting Workbook: *An online database of actors used by casting directors and talent agents* www.castingworkbook.com

#4 The Actor

The *Actor* is both an artist and a businessperson, and to be successful in the industry it is necessary to do both jobs very well.

It is the actor's job as an artist to truthfully portray a person on film or television in a way that feels real to the audience, with the technical skill to look good on camera. It's your job to do the work well: be 100% prepared for every single audition, train hard, push yourself, practice practice practice.

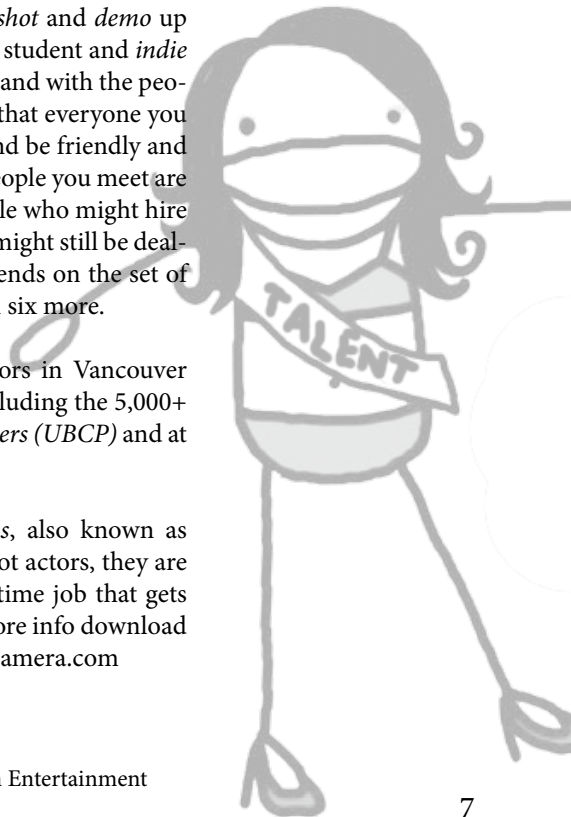
As an actor you are also running a business, and that business is you. It's your job to find the work: choose a good agent, keep your *resume*, *headshot* and *demo* up to date, do your own research, act in student and *indie* films, and network with other actors and with the people you meet on set. Always assume that everyone you meet in the industry is connected, and be friendly and professional at all times. Often the people you meet are just a phone call away from the people who might hire you. Throw a tantrum once and you might still be dealing with fallout years later. Make friends on the set of one movie, and you might get cast in six more.

There are approximately 15,000 actors in Vancouver with professional representation, including the 5,000+ members of the *Union of BC Performers (UBCP)* and at least 10,000 *non-union* performers.

These figures do not include *Extras*, also known as *Background Performers*. Extras are not actors, they are set decoration. It's still a great part time job that gets you on a professional film set. For more info download "Extra Work" at www.confidenceoncamera.com

"There's no such thing as talent; you just have to work hard enough."

David Mamet
Writer+Director
New York, NY





Feel It or Fake It

“Acting is all about honesty. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made.”

George Burns
Comedian &
Actor; 1 Oscar,
90 years as an
entertainer
(d.1996)
Beverly Hills, CA

Acting Basics

The goal of acting is to deliver a performance that looks, sounds and feels real. All acting shares some basic foundations.

1. Enjoy Yourself

The more you enjoy it, the more the audience will enjoy you. Especially for *commercials* it is possible to book work based purely on how much fun you have in the audition room, and learn all the camera technique and acting you need once you’re on *set*. Have fun, find the spontaneity in your script and play. Make eye contact with the casting director and say hello in a nice clear voice when you walk into the room, and say goodbye when you leave. Talk to people. Keep your body relaxed and open. Uncross your arms, take your hands out of your pockets, jump up and down before going into the audition room and then keep all your fidgets inside while you’re acting. Stay open to whatever you’re feeling.

Habit: *A settled or regular tendency or practice; an automatic reaction to a specific situation.*

2. Honesty

The most important thing for film and television is that you come across on camera as a real person. It's more important than any "acting" that you do. If you don't come across as a real person, you can't work professionally. So start simple. Stand how you stand, talk how you talk. You're not performing and you're not an actor, you're a real person in a place doing a thing. Be ruthless about demanding that all your lines sound 100% like a real person talking. Trust that the camera can see everything through your eyes. Never try to use your face or voice to show the camera what you're thinking or feeling. This is called *indicating*, and it will always look like false, amateur acting.

3. Commitment

The actor has to maintain the illusion that they are not performing. To maintain that illusion the actor has to commit 100% to the lines, the activity, events, and imaginary world of the script. Any hesitation will read as false, amateur acting. This means that it is absolutely critical that the actor stay *in character* no matter what happens. No matter what. Forget your lines, mess everything up, but stay in character. Do that in your auditions and you can still *book* the part. Do that on set and they can still use the take. Acting involves feeling things, making mistakes and being vulnerable, and so it's very normal for actors to feel uncomfortable, exposed and uncertain. That's the way it's supposed to feel, so don't panic. Keep going. Stay in character. Never apologize for your acting. Never make excuses. Nobody cares. You either are prepared or you're not. Either way you have to give 100%.

All About You

"Acting is not about being someone different. It's finding the similarity in what is apparently different, then finding myself in there."

Meryl Streep
Actress; 15 Oscar
Noms, 2 Wins;
23 Golden Globe
Noms, 6 Wins
New York, NY

Actor Training

“The actor has to develop his body. The actor has to work on his voice. But the most important thing the actor has to work on is his mind.”

Stella Adler
Actor & Teacher
New York, NY

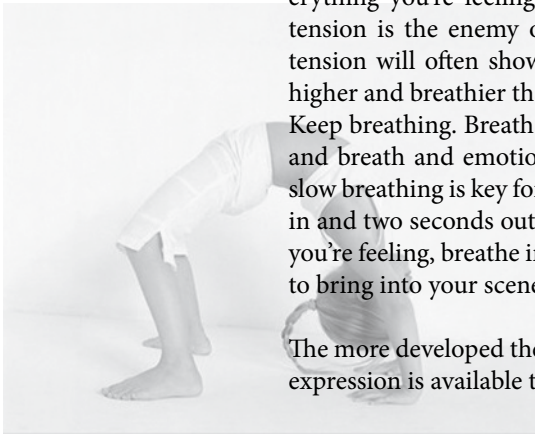
4. Body+Voice

Your body and voice are your *instrument*. A look, a smile, a movement of the eyes, your volume or tone of voice—these things tell the camera how you’re feeling more than the words that you say.

Train your body with dance, martial arts, yoga, sports, circus arts, gymnastics, *Alexander Technique* or any activity that helps you build strength, flexibility and body awareness. Your body communicates as much as your words, and tension is the enemy of clear communication. Applied body awareness is the key to addressing any kind of tension. Do you rock from foot to foot? Do you move your mouth unconsciously? Do you have tension in your eyebrows or eyes? Once you bring awareness to your body tension, it will start to go away. Body awareness can also be an important part of character building and emotional access.

Train your voice with singing or voice lessons until you have a clear, strong voice that communicates everything you’re feeling. In the voice, as in the body, tension is the enemy of clear communication. Vocal tension will often show up as an “acting voice” that’s higher and breathier than your normal speaking voice. Keep breathing. Breath is important for voice support, and breath and emotion are deeply connected. Deep, slow breathing is key for releasing tension, two seconds in and two seconds out. Breathe into whatever tension you’re feeling, breathe into whatever emotion you want to bring into your scene.

The more developed the instrument, the more range of expression is available to the actor.





Camera Technique

A professional quality performance requires a finely tuned technical ability to present for the camera.

1. Eyeline

The camera needs to see your eyes. The magic of film is that the audience is so close that they can see through your eyes into your brain; when it's done right they see everything you're thinking and feeling. Your *eyeline* is the imaginary line between your eyes and the thing you're looking at. Keep your eyeline right beside the camera.

Especially for auditions always choose your eyelines before you start acting, and use real physical objects in the room. Placing eyelines in midair doesn't work on camera. If there are two people or objects in your scene you can place one on each side of the camera, but be specific. Never look directly at the lens of the camera unless instructed to do so. Every time you look at the lens you're looking right into the eyes of the people watching. It's a little creepy.

Cheat (for the Camera): To adjust an actor's position, props, action, eyeline, etc to make the shot look better for the camera.

Feel Uncertain Do it Anyway

"If the actor opens his mouth on cue and speaks even though he feels uncertain, the audience have witnessed the true lost art of the actor."

David Mamet
Playwright &
Director
New York, NY

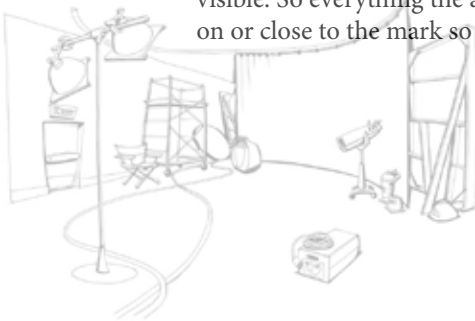
2. Mark

In an audition or on set there will almost always be a tape *mark* on the floor that shows you where to stand. The mark is important, it shows the actor where the lighting is best, where the microphone will pick up the sound and where the camera is in focus. Stand on the mark.

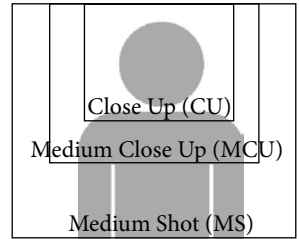
If you're going to move around, *cheat* your movement so that it stays within a few feet to either side of the mark. In an audition, never move forward from the mark. If you need to, you can walk back from the mark. Always inform the *camera operator* if you're going to be making any sudden movements, especially changing the level (i.e. sitting, standing, lying down) so they can follow you. Don't change the level unless you have to, because it often looks sloppy on camera. In an audition you always have a professional camera operator whose job it is to keep the camera on you, and a little bit of movement keeps the scene looking real.

3. Frame

The camera only sees a rectangle of the world, the *frame*. Everything in the frame has to look good, and help tell the story. Everything outside the frame is invisible. So everything the actor says and does has to be on or close to the mark so it stays in frame.



The usual frame for auditions is a *medium closeup*, which generally goes from about armpit level to the top of your head, with a little space on either side. Keep your acting inside the frame. In an audition if you're going to use a simple *prop* then practice bringing it into the frame, and if you need to *mime* then make sure it stays outside the frame (waist level is a good rule of thumb). Keep your script just below armpit level and directly between you and the *reader* so that when you need a line you can drop your eyes to the script without moving your head. This technique is called *sight reading* and when it's done well it looks like you're thinking of what to say next instead of looking at your script. Never say any part of a line while looking at the script, never look at the script while the other character is talking, always keep the script directly between you and the reader. Always bring your script into an audition.



4. Slate

When auditioning for commercials and for some film and television projects you may be asked to introduce yourself directly to camera. This is called a *slate*. The standard slate is name, age if under eighteen, and *agency* (i.e. "Hi I'm First Name Last Name, I'm YearsOld, I'm with XYZ Talent"). It's important to listen to the casting director, because every session may require a different kind of slate. Sometimes you may be asked to slate just your name, sometimes you'll be asked to slate your height, talk about yourself, show your hands to the camera, or do *profiles* where you turn sideways for a few seconds to show the side of your body and face to the camera. If you ever get confused just ask. Better to look stupid before the camera rolls than to look stupid on the tape that the director and producer see.

Take Risks

"I always like a little bit of danger."

Candice Elzinga
Casting Director
Vancouver, BC

Risk: *To expose oneself to danger or the possibility of the unexpected. Uncertainty+Action = Risk. Risk keeps us watching.*



It All Starts With The Script

“I’m going to teach you acting from the beginning, and the beginning is script analysis.”

Larry Moss
Acting Teacher
Los Angeles, CA

The Art of Acting

There is a real art to taking words off a page and making them truthful and your own.

1. Read Carefully, Make Choices

Script analysis requires actors to use a combination of practice, experience, and intuition. The *script* is the most important resource that you have as an actor. Everything that you need to know about the story, the characters and their lives comes directly from or is inspired by the pages of your script.

Start by reading everything in the script out loud to yourself at least twice. Read the lines for all of the characters, all the stage direction, the scene heading, everything on the page. Then start to go through and pick out all the facts and the clues that tell you about the story and about your character. Some information you will get directly from the script, and some choices you will have to make as part of your interpretation of the character. As a baseline, all your choices should be *bold*—loaded with bold feeling, relationship or action, *personal*—meaningful and connected to your life, and *appropriate*—fitting for both the script and the style.

Backstory/Character History: *A character’s background, preferences and life events that precede the written script.*

Questions to Start With

- Where does the scene take place?
- Who is in the scene? What do I as a character know about the other characters in the scene?
- What are my relationships with them, both literally and emotionally (how I relate to them)?
- What do the other characters say about me? Given what the script tells me, is it true? What do the other characters do to me? How do they treat me?
- What do I know about myself that is relevant to the scene (my background, my attitudes) as I enter?
- What does my character literally do in the scene? What literally happens to my character in the scene?
- What does this scene tell me about who my character is: their age, physical condition, or any other defining details, including socioeconomic class, that is vital for the scene to work?
- Why is my character in this particular scene? What would be missing if I weren't in it?
- At the beginning of the scene, what's my character's point of view? How and why does it change, if it does?
- What's my *objective*? What do I want/need/demand/require/desire from the other character(s)?
- What are the *stakes*? Why is the objective important?
- What's the *obstacle*? What's standing between me and what I want from the other characters?
- What are my *intentions*? How do I try to overcome the obstacle? What do I try to make the other characters feel/do/understand to get what I want?
- Where are the *beats*—the changes in the emotional tone of the scene, the discoveries, the new thoughts?



Details, Details

“You’re always going to have a moment before, you’re always going to have a moment after; add some things to make it your own.”

Jackie Lind
Casting Director
Calgary, AB

Moment Before/After: *The mental, physical and emotional circumstances that precede and follow the written scene.*

“As If” You’re Really There

“Acting is the ability to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances.”

Sanford Meisner
NY Acting Guru

2. Imagine Yourself in the Part

The character is you. The history, circumstances, relationships, etc. are different, but ultimately the character is you. Imagine the scene in detail “as if” you were really there. Use the circumstances of the script to build the imaginary situation that makes you want to *do/say/feel* the events of the script.

Real feelings of any size are better for camera than big feelings that have to be forced or exaggerated. Play the situation, not the feeling, and trust that the camera can see everything you’re thinking and feeling through your eyes. Never use your face or voice to *indicate*, to show the camera what you’re thinking or feeling.

Personalize the events and the people in the script so that each one means something to you and has a piece of your unique history and life in it (i.e. who do I talk to in my life the way my character talks to this person; when in my life have I felt something like my character is feeling now; etc.). Imagine yourself in the character’s situation and find your own way of approaching the action of the scene. Tweak the words a little, find the pacing and rhythm that works best for you, find how the character moves, find yourself as the character. The more detailed and specific your imaginary world is, the more truthful your acting will be.



3. Learn Your Lines

Memorizing lines is not acting, it is simply one of the basic requirements of the professional actor. An actor has to know their lines in order to give 100% of their attention to acting, and the better you know your lines, the more acting you will be able to do.

Memory is a muscle that improves with use, so start practicing now. A professional *work ethic* will help you in every *audition*, and on *set*. Learn your lines. No excuses. No apologies. Whatever it takes, learn your lines so well that you can do them while sorting a deck of cards into red and black, washing and drying the dishes, or doing cartwheels.

To make the most of your time practice in a space with few distractions, and practice again just before you go to bed to help the lines “set” in your memory. To make memorizing easier put the other characters’ lines on tape and rehearse while listening instead of looking at the script. Practice *sight reading* even as you memorize, never look at the script while you’re talking, never look at the script while the other characters are talking.

It’s important that the performance stays flexible, so learn the words but practice many ways of saying them.

4. Slow Down

A professional audition or performance has to be full of life, so slow down. Take the pauses, and take the time to see or hear the things that make your character want to say each line. Keep listening, keep watching, and react to what you hear and see. Slow down, slow down, slow down.

Breaking It Up: *In acting, the pauses, looks away, hesitations and beats that help a performance look+sound spontaneous.*



Stay Flexible

“Don’t bog yourself down working it one particular way... it’s an absolute certainty that you will be asked to do it differently, and if you can’t be flexible, the director will never choose you.”

Deb Green
Casting Director
Calgary, AB



25 Point Audition Checklist

Auditions are in many ways more demanding than actually working on set in film and television. Each audition is short, and you're expected to perform well under pressure with very little preparation time. Sometimes you will receive a script an hour before your audition, or be handed a script when you walk into the waiting room and be expected to *sight read* it ten minutes later. This checklist should help you get started.

Confidence + Having Fun

“Go into the room prepared & confident and enjoy every minute of it... always make sure you are having a good time.”

Aaron Alexander
King Talent
Vancouver, BC

1. Have Fun

Listen to what the *casting director* asks you to do in the audition room and then have fun doing it. Everybody wants to be in the audition room, and on set, with an actor who's really enjoying themselves. The more you enjoy your own acting, the more the camera (and whoever is watching) will enjoy you. It's one of the simplest things you can do to help yourself book the job.

Direction: Instructions given to the actor, either in the audition room or on set (i.e. “Can the actor take direction?”)

2. Be prepared.

Your agent will send you a few pages from the script to prepare (*sides*) and a short character description (*breakdown*). Learn your lines. Practice sight reading—the ability to drop your eyes quickly to the script and then look up and say your line. Practice out loud. Keep it flexible. Stay in character no matter what. Never apologize for your acting. No apologies. No excuses.

3. Always bring your script with you.

Always bring your *sides* to the audition with you. It's better to look at your sides than it is to blank out in the middle of your audition.

4. Dress in character (a little bit).

The clothes you wear should reflect your choices about the character. Keep your *wardrobe* simple and don't overdress or come in costume; remember you have to come across as a real person. Don't wear too much pattern and don't wear shirts with prominent words or logos. Don't wear sparkly things, and actors with long hair should bring a hair tie in case they want to see your hair up. Keep makeup simple, and avoid shiny lip gloss. The best colours for clothes are jewel tones (blue, green, red, amethyst, sapphire), pastels and earth tones. Stay away from neons unless the part requires it, don't wear all black, don't wear all white unless you wear something over top of it. Newer clothes are better, they look crisper and generally have a better shape. Show up looking and feeling good. Write down what you're wearing and what your hair looked like so if you get a callback you can duplicate the look exactly.



Preparation and Casting

“Of twenty actors, maybe half will be prepared. Of those ten maybe one will get it on the first take, maybe three more will get it in the first couple of takes. If you're prepared and you know what you're doing, your odds just went from one in twenty to one in four.”

Tiffany Mak
Casting Director
Vancouver, BC

Start With You

“The person that you are is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor you could ever hope to be.”

C. Stanislavski
Director, Moscow Art Theatre
(d.1938)

5. Plan to arrive 15-20 minutes early.

Casting directors are very busy, and sometimes only have a few minutes for you. Messing with their schedule is a bad way to start. Never be late.

6. Sign in when you arrive.

The *casting assistant* will often have a sign-in sheet for you to record your name, the role you're coming in for, and your *call time*. Be nice to the the assistant—a lot of them become casting directors later on.

7. Fill out a sheet with contact info and sizes.

Know your sizes: pants, shirt, collar, sleeve, shoes, inseam, hips, chest, dress size for women and jacket size for men. You'll also be asked for your height, weight, eye and hair colour, agent's name and phone number, and your contact info.

8. Always bring *headshots* and *resumes*.

Always have extra copies with you in case casting asks for them. Always, always, always. Carry a few extra in your bag, keep some in your bicycle pannier or in the trunk of your car. A professional must always have the tools of their craft on hand.

9. Check for changes to the script.

Especially with commercials there are often last-minute changes to the script. Ask the casting assistant if there have been any changes, and look over a copy of the script if you can.

10. Wait until they call for you, and stay focused.

Be prepared to wait 30min or more, and don't book anything important right after your auditions. You can't be late, but casting directors can be, and that's just how it is. Do what you need to do to stay focused and ready. If you're feeling anxious then plant your feet and take at least three deep breaths (two seconds in, two seconds out). If you're tired, jump around a little to get your blood flowing. If you talk to other actors in the waiting room talk about anything except acting. Feel free to bring headphones and listen to quiet music while you wait if that will help you stay focused.

11. Give the reader directions as needed (film & television only).

Before you walk into the audition room, ask your *reader* for anything you need them to do while reading with you. If you want a pause before or after one of your lines, if you're starting or finishing the script differently from the way it was written, or if you're changing anything in the script this is the time to tell the reader about it—before you're in the audition room.

12. Walk into the room with confidence.

Your audition starts the moment you step into the room, and it lasts until the moment you leave. Walk in, make eye contact with the casting director and anyone else in the room and say hello in a nice clear voice. "Own the room" a little. You don't need to ask permission. If you need a chair, grab it. If you're going to step in, tell the *camera operator*. Never apologize for your acting. Never make excuses.

Acting Truthfully

Acting a scene truthfully is an art, and most actors spend their whole lives getting better at it.

Camera Technique

Camera technique is a practical skill. Anyone can learn the basics with a few hours of practice.

Don't Fidget

Extra hand movement, chewing your lip or rocking from foot to foot may not feel big, but on camera it looks big.

13. Shaking hands.

If they offer to shake hands, do. Otherwise, don't.

14. Stand on the mark.

The first thing you should do when you walk into the room is stand on the *mark*. It is usually a simple line on the floor of the audition room that shows you where to stand so the camera can see and hear you. While standing on the mark, take the time to observe where the camera and microphone are, and to see who's in the room. This way, while you're talking to the casting director the camera operator can set the *frame*.

15. Be yourself.

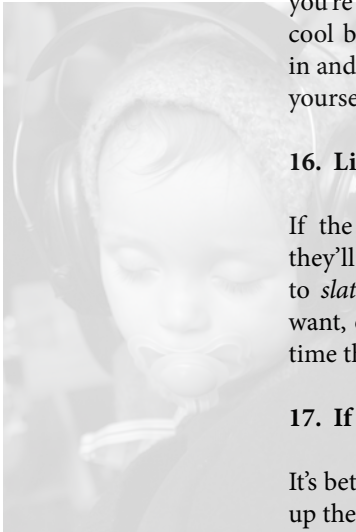
If it's your style to be funny and talkative, a very short story about something fun/strange/exciting is okay. If you're anxious, don't even pretend to be relaxed and cool because you won't fool anybody. Instead just go in and focus on doing the best audition you can do. Be yourself.

16. Listen to the casting director.

If the casting director wants something from you, they'll tell you. They might tell you how they want you to *slate*, give you notes on actions or reactions they want, or tell you how to change your read the second time through. Listen carefully.

17. If you don't know, ask.

It's better to ask a stupid question than to risk messing up the tape that the *director* and *producer* will see later.



18. Repeat the direction.

Whenever a casting director gives you direction, repeat it back to them in your own words. It helps you remember and understand, and it helps the casting director make sure you're about to do the right thing.

19. Slate for camera (commercials only).

Most commercial auditions start with you introducing yourself to whoever is watching the tape, usually the director and producer. For the *slate*, look directly at the camera and say your first and last name, your age if you're under 18, and the name of your talent agency (i.e. "I'm Firstname Lastname, I'm Age, and I'm with XYZ Talent"). Keep the personality, and lighten up! Actors often make the mistake of being too flat or too serious in their slate. Remember, you want the people watching the tape to think "Wow, that actor is really interesting, I want to see more of them."

20. Let the camera see into your eyes.

The camera needs to see your eyes to know how you're feeling, so keep your *eyeline* close to the camera (just slightly to one side or the other). Keep your hair out of your face, and don't wear a hat that will shade your eyes. Don't look directly at the camera unless the casting director tells you to. For commercials you will often be told to look directly at the camera. If you're ever confused about where your eyeline should be, ask the casting director.



Don't Look at the Camera

Never look at the camera in a film & tv audition. If you look at the camera, it breaks the "reality" of the scene that you're acting out.



**Audition
Anxiety**

Remember to breathe. Breathing deeply—two seconds in, two seconds out—helps to settle and relax the body and voice.

21. Slow down. Take your time.

If you rush you'll look anxious. Keep breathing. Take five seconds before you start your scene, take a deep breath and get focused. You have to make your time in the audition room count, whether it's a ten-minute scene or a single line. Take the time you need to do a good job.

22. Deal with mistakes gracefully—do nothing!

It's happened to every actor: it's going really well, then suddenly a word comes out wrong, or you forget a line, or say the wrong line, and suddenly you think "I ruined it." So what do you do? The answer is do nothing. Stay 'in' the scene and maintain the reality of the scene by not reacting to the mistake. What happens in conversation when we stumble over a word, or say the wrong thing? We just go on with the conversation. We keep talking, or correct ourselves in an easy, natural way. Any reaction to the 'mistake' breaks the reality of the scene. Most of the time if you've got the feeling right and you're enjoying the work, the casting director won't even notice the mistake. So the next time you make a mistake (because it will happen), do nothing!

23. Exit with confidence.

When you're done, wait for a word from the casting director and then calmly and quickly leave the room. Make eye contact and say goodbye. You want their last image of you to be of a confident actor.

24. Don't take it personally.

Sometimes they cast the best actor, sometimes they cast the model who looks best for the role and sometimes they cast the *producer's* niece — that's the industry. Do the best audition you can and then let it go. Forget about it. If you did a good job then even if you're not perfect for this role the casting director will bring you in again for another role. Remember that you were chosen for the audition in the first place over a lot of other actors! The casting director already likes you, they like your look, they want to see you do well.

25. Take notes.

Keep a journal and take notes every time you have an audition. Write out the direction you got, what worked and what didn't, and what you want to do next time. Keep it positive and action-oriented.



Casting Notes

“In an audition I look for three things: the journey of the character, if the actor can take direction, and if the actor is right for the part.”

Stuart Aikins
Casting Director
Vancouver, BC

Feedback: *Casting Directors rarely give feedback on auditions. It's your job to take notes, learn, and stay motivated.*

Glossary of Terms

Actor: A person whose profession is acting on stage or screen.

AD: Short for Assistant Director. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd AD's coordinate the actors, extras, and film crew under the supervision of the *director*.

Agency: See *Talent Agent*.

Alexander Technique: An educational method to coordinate breath, posture and movement, originated in the 1890's by Frederick Matthias Alexander.

Audition: An interview for a particular role or job as a singer, actor, dancer, or musician, consisting of a practical demonstration of the candidate's suitability and skill.

Background Performer: People that appear in the background of a shot to make a film set look more real by sitting, walking, driving, riding bicycles, etc. (see *extra*)

Beats: In the context of acting for film, a beat refers to an event, decision, or discovery that alters the way the character pursues his or her goal. When the term is used in a script, it also usually refers to a pause in dialogue.

Book: To engage an actor for a role (i.e. "He *booked* four days on the film.")

Breakdown: Details of a character the casting director is trying to cast (i.e. "STUDENT, age 14-16, riding a unicycle"). Sent to licensed talent agents via casting services like Breakdown Services or The Casting Workbook.

Buy Out: Film, television and commercial fees are paid partly for work done (the session fee) and partly for the use made of the final product (the buy out, or use fees). In Canada these are paid in advance for a period of use (1 yr, 3 yrs, etc.) in one part of the world (one market). Instead of a buy out, US actors are paid ongoing *residuals* as long as that product is in use.

Call Back: A second or later audition for the same job.

Call Time: The time an actor is scheduled to be on set or in an audition.

Camera Operator: A person that operates a film or video camera for the purpose of recording a production to film, video, or a computer storage medium.

Casting Assistant: The assistant and/or personal secretary to a casting director.

Casting Director: The person responsible for finding actors to fill roles in a film, television or commercial project.

Cheat (for the camera): To adjust an actor's position, props, action, eyeline, etc to make the shot look better for the camera (i.e. "Can you *cheat* that into frame?")

Close-up: A camera shot of just an actor's head.

Commercial: A television or radio advertisement.

Cover Letter: A letter sent with, and explaining the contents of, a submission from an actor to a talent agent seeking representation.

Credit: When an actor books a day on a production registered with the Union of BC Performers they can register that job to receive a *credit* toward becoming an apprentice member (1 credit) or full member of the union (6 credits). See *UBCP*.

Crew: The production staff working on a film set.

Demo: A demo or "demo reel" is the motion picture or video equivalent of an artist's portfolio. It is typically used as a tool to promote the artist's skill, talent, and experience in a selected field, such as acting, directing, cinematography, editing, special effects, animation, or video games and other graphics.

Director: The head of the crew, in charge of making key decisions about actors and action.

Episodic: A television program broadcast as a series of installments.

Equity: "Canadian Actors' Equity is the professional association of performers, directors, choreographers, fight directors and stage managers in English Canada who are engaged in live performance in theatre, opera and dance." (www.caea.com)

Extra: A background performer.

Eyelight: The light reflected in an actor's eyes—it makes you look alive on camera. Your eyes are the “shiny thing,” so people will look there first.

Eyeline: Where an actor is looking on camera—as if there were a straight line between your eyes and what you're looking at. (i.e. “Where's your *eyeline*?”)

Feature: A full-length film.

Frame: The imaginary line around what the camera can see. (i.e. “Step a little more into *frame* please.” or “Your left ear is out of *frame*.”)

Headshot: An actor's eight-by-ten-inch (8”x10”) publicity photo.

In Character: In acting, a performer who maintains the continuity of the character they are portraying (i.e. “She forgot her lines, but she stayed *in character*.”)

Indicate: In acting, the use of face, voice and body in a deliberate attempt to show the camera or audience the internal life of the character (i.e. “I didn't believe the scene at all, there was so much *indicating*... did you see the faces he kept making?”)

Indie: An Independent Film—any film not produced by a major studio or production company, or any low-budget or no-budget film.

Industrial: A TV production or commercial for a company to use in-house for employee training, etc.

Instrument: Commonly used to refer to the actor's body, voice and expressive ability (i.e. the actor's *instrument*).

Intention: In acting, actions taken and tactics used by a character to try and accomplish their *objective* or overcome the *obstacle*.

Mark: A line on the floor to indicate where an actor should stand for the camera.

Medium Close Up: A camera shot of an actor's head and shoulders

Medium Shot: A camera shot of an actor's head and torso (to the waist).

Mime: Pretending to use imaginary objects, or interact with imaginary things and situations. Keep it to a minimum in auditions.

Moment Before/After: The mental, physical and emotional circumstances that precede and follow the written scene.

Monologue: One actor speaking. For audition purposes usually 1-2 minutes.

MOW: Movie of the Week—a movie made for television only.

Non-Union: An actor or production that is not registered with a professional acting union (see *Union*; *UBCP*).

Objective: The strongly motivated need/want/goal of a character.

Obstacle: The circumstances in the script that prevent the character from achieving their *objective*, and the source of dramatic tension in a scene.

Personalize: To connect a choice to the actor's own life in order to make it personally meaningful and add depth (i.e. asking "How am I like the character?")

Pilot: The first episode of a new TV series. Often a production company will make a pilot in an attempt to secure funding to produce more episodes.

Prescreen: A pre-audition "look see" for a new actor with a casting director so that they can see you before giving you an on-camera audition.

Producer: The business person who runs the production company and oversees major aspects of a production.

Profiles: Turning to show the camera both sides of your face and body (i.e. "Slate and give me *profiles*, please.")

Props: Any object (not furniture) used by an actor.

Reader: The person who reads the scene opposite an actor in an audition. The casting director often acts as the reader for commercial auditions.

Representation: Referring to actors on the roster of a professional talent agent (i.e. "Do you have *representation*?" or "I'm currently seeking *representation*.")

Resume: A one-page summary of an actor's experience, skills and training.

Role: An actor's part in a play, film, television show, commercial, etc.

SAE: Skilled Actor Extra, an *extra* hired to perform a special skill on camera. Can be anything from lifting weights to juggling to walking in high heels.

SAG: Screen Actors Guild is the union for film & TV actors in the USA.

Script: The written text of a play, movie, commercial or television program.

Script Analysis: The actor's art of preparing a performance based on cues and clues in the script.

Set: Any location prepared for filming (i.e. "Let's get the actors to *set* please!").

Short: A short film. Typically two to ten minutes long. Generally showcased online and at film festivals.

Sides: Only those pages of a script that contain a particular actor's lines (i.e. "Your agent will send you your *sides* for the audition.")

Sight Reading: The ability to give a professional-quality performance while reading from a script.

Signing: To obtain *representation* with a *talent agent*.

Slate: In an audition, when an actor is asked to introduce themselves to the camera and to state their name, age (if under 18) and agent for the benefit of whoever is watching the tape (i.e. "Hi, I'm FirstName Lastname, I'm Age, and I'm represented by XYZ Talent.")

SOC: Silent on Camera—an audition or role where the actor doesn't speak.

Stakes: The importance of the character's *objective* (i.e. What will the character do to achieve their objective? What do they stand to gain or lose?).

Stand In: A person hired to "stand in" for the main actors so that the production crew can set up lights, etc. Also called "second team" by the AD's (i.e. "First team you can relax, let's have second team in here.").

Stunts: Anybody who falls, tumbles, climbs, swings, lifts heavy things, sets themselves on fire, or in any other way does something potentially dangerous on-camera. If you're interested, start learning the skills now—martial arts, gymnastics, dance, stage fighting, how to take a fall, firearms, stunt driving, etc.

Submissions: Actors suggested by *talent agents* in response to a *breakdown* issued by a *casting director* (i.e. “How many *submissions* did you get for that *role*?”).

Talent: An actor or other performer.

Talent Agent: An agent and personal manager for actors. Each agent is the exclusive representative for a small number of actors, called the agent's *roster*.

UBCP: “The Union of B.C. Performers is a trade union in the Province of British Columbia and the B.C. branch of the ACTRA [Association of Canadian Television & Radio Artists]. UBCP protects the rights of professional performers to fair remuneration and the fundamental respect for their craft and artistry.” (www.ubcp.com)

Union: Usually refers to the Union of BC Performers (UBCP), a member of that union, or a production that has registered with UBCP and so has to hire mostly union actors (i.e. a *union* production). Productions that do not register with the union cannot hire union actors.

Wardrobe: A costume or outfit worn by an actor. Simple, appropriate wardrobe helps casting see you as the character.

Work Ethic: A set of values based on hard work and diligence.

Wrangler: The production staff in charge of looking after children, extras, or animals (i.e. “Where's the extras wrangler?”). As an interesting side note, the term “wrangler” is taken from the word for someone who herds cattle for a living.

Wrap: Film talk for “Finished with.” or “to finish with” (i.e. “You're *wrapped*.” “It's a *wrap*.” “A *wrap* party.”).

This Glossary is Wrapped.

BIZ STUDIO PROFESSIONAL SCREEN ACTING FOR KIDS+TEENS

"It tells me something if an actor is taking classes, if an actor is taking workshops, it means that this person believes in themselves enough as an actor to invest the time, to invest the money, to train, to work on themselves."

- Judy Lee, Casting Director, Vancouver, BC

Biz Studio is a professional screen acting school for kids and teens. Working actors teach small classes and workshops for ages 5-7, 8-11, and 12-17 in a simulated audition environment. Classes are fun, with an emphasis on doing professional-quality work and developing a strong work ethic. Practical, professional, small-group classes that help young actors book work in film+television.

For classes, info, and audition listing for kids+teens, visit www.bizstudio.ca



The Author: Michael Bean, Owner+Head Coach at Biz Studio.

"Kids that study with Michael seem to book more work, and isn't that the goal!"

- Brenda Wong, Agent, Talent Co.