

Tips for a Great Audition

Other than Opening Night, going to an audition is perhaps one of the scariest parts of theatre work. However, auditioning is a necessary part of being involved in the performing arts. If you or your child wants to be involved in the theatre, knowing how to audition is a skill they will need to learn. While the process is not necessarily difficult, it can be more than just a little nerve-wracking, especially for younger children. The more you understand the process, the easier auditioning becomes.

The most important thing to remember is that you need to make a positive impression on the auditioning panel. Casting teams see so many people during auditions that after a while they all start to look the same. You need to be able to go in and make yourself memorable. You cannot afford to assume that you are going to get a part simply because you were in a previous show, or that you have acting experience with another theatre.

Many times selecting actors for a given role is subjective. There are several factors that play into who is chosen for the part. The most important part is the audition itself, so you do want to get that right, but there are other things as well. Many times the director already has an idea about what kind of person they are looking for (although a great audition can change their mind). They also consider how each of the characters fit with those they will be performing with. For instance, if they are part of a family we have to consider how the family looks together. What that means is, sometimes you may get passed over for a part even though there was nothing wrong with your audition. For one reason or another you just may not have fit in with the director's vision.

For those that have never gone to an audition before, it is helpful to understand a little bit about the process. Knowing how it all works, and what will be required will help you to be more prepared, and have a more successful audition.

When you get to the audition there is a registration table. You will have to fill out an audition form. That form will ask you for contact information (it's very important that we get your complete contact information), previous theatre experience, and if there are any times and dates you will not be available for rehearsals. Your photo will be attached to this form so the director can see your information when you go in for the actual audition. You will be given a small section of script that you will perform before the director and the producer, and possibly the choreographer and the vocal director (if the show is a musical). Although these are all really nice people, going before a panel of strangers can be a little intimidating for some. Knowing what to expect (especially for children) will really help every actor to relax.

Below is a list of things that you should know in order to make the best impression possible, and to improve your chances of getting a part in an upcoming play.

1. Act. Don't just read.

Remember, you are auditioning to act in a play. For children, yes, there are times when simply being a cute little kid is enough, but for the most part, the casting team is looking for actors. So many people stand before the director and read the lines they were given that when someone really tries to act out the part they make a big impression. And that's what you want...to stand out from the crowd.

2. Learn a little bit about the play you are auditioning for.

Most of the plays being produced have been around for at least a few years. With a little bit of searching you can find a brief description of the plays that are coming up. Many times a character list with descriptions or a link to a website like StageAgent will be posted on the theatre's website or Facebook page. The more you understand the play and the characters, the more you will be able to do with the piece of script you will be given to audition with.

3. Take the time you need to prepare.

Remember Rule #1 – Act. Don't just read. Once you are given your piece of script, take some time to get familiar with the part you are given to audition with. Don't worry that it isn't the part you want in the play. Parts will be assigned after the auditions. The casting team just wants to know that you have the ability to actually act. If you did your research and learned a little bit about the play, you can start to make some decisions about how to play the part during your audition.

Casting teams really like to see that you have thought about the character, and how they would behave if they were speaking the lines you were given. Think about their mood, the situation they are in, and who they are talking with. These things all play into how that person would act. You may not get the interpretation completely right, and that's OK. We want to see that you thought about your character, and that you can do something with the part.

4. Slow down and enunciate every word.

One sure sign of nervousness is speeding through the lines. When you talk too fast it is harder to make sure each word is understood, and the emotion that should accompany those words does not come through. Slow down and make sure you say each word clearly.

Think about the way people really speak. For most people the pace is more relaxed, and there are pauses sprinkled throughout the conversation. Remember, we don't want you to simply read the lines. We want you to speak the lines like your character is a real person having a real conversation.

5. If you make a mistake, battle through it.

Even the best actors occasionally make mistakes on stage. But good actors know how to work through their mistakes without letting the audience realize that a mistake was made.

One of the things directors are looking for is poise. They want to know how you will react when things don't go as rehearsed. If you fall apart during an audition, it doesn't give the director much confidence that you will react well on the nights of the show.

If you do make a mistake, don't apologize. Don't ask to start over. Just pick up from where the mistake was made and push forward.

6. Don't be too cocky.

No one is guaranteed a spot in a play. It doesn't matter what other roles you have had, or what other theatres you have worked with. If the director decides you are not the right fit for the role, you will not get the part. If you have good acting experience, and you audition well, you greatly increase your chances of getting cast. If you come across as being someone that is hard to work with, it makes it much more difficult for the director to give you a part. After all, who wants to take on a headache?

We have seen quite a few young actors walk into an audition because they just assume they will be given a part, and their audition is flat and uninspiring. Then they are shocked when they didn't get a major role in the play. If you are taking the director's time to go through the audition, you need to give it your best - every time.

If you have acting experience, we will know from the information on your audition form or your resume. And we do like to see some previous experience, but again, that does not guarantee you a part in our plays. It is not unusual that a person with no previous acting experience gets a good part because they blew us away in the auditions.

7. Audition often.

One of the biggest obstacles between you and getting cast in a play is your nervousness. Nervousness makes you more timid. It makes you rely on the script in your hand too much, so you end up reading and not acting. It makes you talk too fast. It makes you less memorable and more likely to get lost in the crowd.

The best way to overcome your nervousness is to practice. That means auditioning more.

If you don't get the part, shake it off as a learning experience, and when the next show rolls around, go out and audition again. The more you go through the process, the easier it becomes.

And here is one more "Bonus Tip" for you.

8. If you don't get the part, don't argue about it.

As we said earlier, the decisions about who to cast and who we have to say "no" to are never easy. There is a lot of discussion about who does and who does not get a role. If the director decides that you are not the best fit for this show, please respect their decision about what they feel is best for the show they are

directing. It doesn't always mean that you had a bad audition, or that you're not a good actor. It just means that you were not the best actor for this part in this show.

Arguing leaves a bad impression on the people that cast the shows. You will not change anyone's mind. All it does is make it more difficult for the director and producers to cast you in a future production.

Good Luck and we look forward to seeing you at an audition soon!