

Title:

Acting - Cold Reading

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Summary:

In this article we're going to discuss the very difficult art of cold reading a script you have never seen for a part. Not as easy as you think.

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Article Body:

In regular theater an actor may prepare a monologue that he has spent many hours memorizing, for a part that he will also perform at every audition. He's spent a lot of time on this and has perfected his art and delivery. When going for an audition he is quite comfortable with his prepared lines. However, in a film or commercial audition the actor is expected to perform a script given to him that he has never seen before. This is when the art of cold reading is very important and can be a life saver.

The technical definition of cold reading is the auditioning for a part with a script in hand, one the actor has never seen. The profession says that the actor is supposed to be given the script at least 24 hours before the audition but all too often this just doesn't happen. This is why cold reading is so important to actors who work in film or commercials.

So, how do you learn to cold read? Brute force. Pick up a script, read the first line, commit it to memory and then say the line without looking at the script. You've just done your first cold reading. At first you may only be able to memorize a few words at a time, but with a little practice you'll soon be memorizing several lines at a time. Being an actor is kind of like being an athlete. The more you work at it the better you'll get. After you feel comfortable doing cold reading by yourself try it with another actor. This is when it gets fun.

When you're at your audition it's very tempting to try to sneak a peak at your next line while the other actor is doing his lines. Don't do this. How you listen to your fellow actor is just as important as speaking your lines. Wait until it's time for you to respond and then look at your next line. Memorize as

much of your line as you can in a few seconds. Then make eye contact with your partner and say your next line.

If you've got more to memorize than you can with just a glance, repeat the process until you have the line memorized. But keep your face out of your script. Never read your lines while looking at your script. This is a sure way to blow the audition. Make sure you stay in character while reading your lines.

When you're actually at your audition even if you don't get the script until you get there, try to read the script in its entirety at once and remember as much of it as you can. This way you'll at least have some idea what the scene is about, who the characters are and how the conversation should go. If you have more time try to memorize the first and last lines. This will give you a strong start and finish, which is what the person auditioning you will remember the most.

When holding your script, hold with your left hand if right handed and at chest level. Never have your head buried in the script. Don't wave the script around like it is a prop. Make believe it is just a natural extension of your body. The less attention you draw to the script itself the better.

A cold reading goes much slower and feels a lot more awkward than a normal reading. This is normal and there is no need to worry about it. The casting director knows this is the first time you've seen the script. He is more interested in what kind of personality you have as the character.

Sadly, you may be the greatest actor in the world, but without being able to cold read well you aren't going to get many parts as you'll never get past the first audition. So include cold reading in your training. You'll find you'll get more parts because of it.