

As producers and directors of live theatre, we see lots of actors in auditions, from the raw beginners as young as 4 years-old to veteran pros in their 70s. And we're actors, too, and go through the gut-wrenching process of auditions on the other side of the table now and then. Here are some suggestions to help make auditions go better for you:

Be prepared: Spend enough time on your monologues and songs so that you are confident and relaxed. Auditions are stressful enough without worrying that you aren't prepared, and you don't get a second chance to make a first impression

Be on time, which means be early: Plan to arrive at the audition location 15-30 minutes before your scheduled time – more if you're not sure where you're going. Auditions are stressful enough without worrying that you're going to be late.

Be ready: Sometimes other people don't show up and the auditions are running ahead of schedule. They may ask you if you're ready to go as soon as you walk in.

Be in control: If you're NOT ready when they ask you to go early, it's ok to say "I need a minute." It won't hurt your chances to say you prefer to let someone else go ahead if you are truly not ready to go. Again, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression.

Be appropriately dressed: Don't be too casual or too dressy. Wear clothes that are flattering but not flashy. You want the people watching to remember you, not your clothes. No distracting jewelry or shoes that make you walk awkwardly. Do not wear a costume for an audition, but it's ok if the clothes you choose help people see you as the character you hope to play. Do NOT use props of any kind.

Be energetic: Walk into the room or onto the stage with your head up and a smile. Everyone knows you are nervous but you don't have to show it – you're an actor, right?

Be confident: Look out there (into the darkness or into their faces, as the case may be) and say "Hello" or "Good afternoon" or something, say your name clearly, and tell them what you are

going to do, such as, “I’m doing a piece from Equus by Anthony Shafer, and then I’d like to sing Tomorrow from Annie.” But don’t ever actually sing Tomorrow from Annie. Seriously. Even if you’re 6.

Be positive: NEVER start by apologizing or complaining or making excuses, such as “I have a cold” or “I’m so nervous” or “There’s no place to park around here.” All of that is irrelevant.

Be realistic: Standard practice for auditions is singing with a piano so don’t bring a CD, iPod or Walkman for your accompaniment. And no, it’s not ok to sing a capella because they want to hear whether you can match pitch, keep tempo, hear how you sing with live musicians. Don’t expect every pianist will (a) already know your song, (b) understand the cut you want to make without a well-marked up piece of music, or (c) transpose the key on the fly. It’s up to you to bring sheet music in the key you want to sing in. Don’t choose a song that is incredibly difficult for the pianist if you want it to go smoothly. And don’t choose a song that is incredibly difficult for you. An audition is not a time to push the boundaries of your range or memory. Instead, choose something that makes you sound good and highlights your strengths and rehearse it. A lot. Believe it or not, the people watching can see the difference between “Confident You” and “Freaking Out You.”

Be humble: Don’t use monologues you have written yourself unless you’re a famous writer or something. Maybe not even then. It’s not likely that what you’ve written is a more compelling audition piece than the entire body of dramatic literature of the last 2,000 years from which you have to choose.

Be rooted: Don’t give yourself a lot of blocking or choreography. It’s ok to move, but not all over the place. It’s almost always better to plant your feet and let them look at you while you do your stuff.

Be awesome: Do your audition pieces with energy and passion and be fully committed to the moment. Have fun. Show how much you love doing this.

Be respectful: Learn your audition pieces – don’t say “I didn’t have time to prepare” because that means you don’t really care. Don’t exceed the time limits. Know the correct title and author of the play or song you’ve chosen. Don’t have a ‘tude.

Be human: If you screw up, you are not the first person to do that. If it's a minor screw up, keep going. If it's a major problem, like the pianist is going way to fast or slow, or you bite your tongue on the first sentence you say, it's ok to quickly say "I'm going to start over" and start over. Remember that every person who is watching you audition has been up there doing what you're doing. They understand, and they want you to succeed and be fantastic.

Be finished: When you're done, don't say "scene." Just drop your character, smile, and say thank you sincerely. Pause a moment and if they want you to stay and do something else they will say so. If all you hear is "thank you" then just walk off smiling with your head held high.