

# A CASTING PLACE

512-587-7687 (Cell)

214-432-2664 (Dallas)

832-476-8940 (Houston)



## AUDITIONING AT “A CASTING PLACE” (AND MAYBE OTHER PLACES, TOO)

By Donise L. Hardy, C.S.A.

These comments mainly focus on TV commercial auditions. There are many similarities to a theatrical audition, but there are definite differences as well.

- First and foremost, be sure and book out with your agent if you are going to be unavailable to audition for any reason whatsoever! It is imperative that they know your availability and not submit you if you are not available.
- You may wish to keep notes on the various likes and dislikes of the local CD's. There aren't that many of us and we are definitely diverse... Not everything I say applies to each CD so that is why it is important for you to keep notes on us. The information contained in this posting is absolutely not intended to tell you how to audition for other CD's, but definitely for me.
- You are invited to an audition. A CD doesn't have to see you if they don't want to do so. So, you have already beaten out a lot of competition, just by getting the audition to begin with. We are on your side and want you to be brilliant. I MAY LIKE YOU, BUT WON'T SEE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THIS CHARACTER.
- Check your email and voice mail before you leave for the audition to assure yourself that there haven't been any last-minute changes in the time, location, script or the brings.
- If you are traveling to an out-of-town audition, get your wardrobe ready and organized, fill your car with gas, check your tires, radiator and oil the day before. You surely don't want any surprises the day of an audition. If there is ever a problem, you need to call your agent NOT the CD.
- On commercial auditions it is imperative that you dress to the role. You have to be "it" when you walk in the door, i.e. construction worker, bride, police officer, teacher, judge, go-go dancer, cowboy, socialite, nurse, cheerleader, bicyclist, kayaker, corporate executive, jock, etc.
- Prior to arrival in the studio, you should use the bathroom and also double check hair, makeup, teeth and wardrobe. Use a breath mint if you cannot brush your teeth. Some casting suites do not have a bathroom for talent to use, so take care of your business before you

get there. (I do not have a bathroom for public use. There is an Exxon Station directly across the street.)

- Do not wear cologne or aftershave. Clients could have allergies or dislikes. Toothpaste, soap, shampoo and deodorant are all good!
- Please arrive no more than 15 minutes early. Most casting offices don't have a great deal of seating area. Parents: 1 child/1 parent. Period. No one should ever bring family or friends, much less pets, to an audition. This is a job interview, pure and simple, it just happens to be on tape.
- If you didn't receive the script, drop by the studio early, get a script and leave. Come back at your appointed time.
- Be prepared. Have 10 or 15 headshots with you just in case there is another audition going on and you are asked to participate. I'm ALWAYS going to ask for a minimum of 2 and have needed as many as 10. And don't bother blaming your agent, if you are unprepared.
- Have headshots and resumes stapled back to back and make sure the resumes are either printed directly onto the back of the headshot or trimmed to size. I'm asking all talent to have their name in a clear and legible font on the lower right of their headshot and their agency logo on the lower left. By the way, this is not an arts and crafts studio and no, I won't lend you my scissors or staplers. (You may wish to give the photographer credit on the photo as well. This is usually high up in the border on the upper right, running vertically.)
- Bring size sheets. Pick up a blank size sheet when you audition. Make a few copies of it so you have blanks on hand. Fill one out very legibly with everything except the audition date and project name. Make a lot of copies so you'll have them on hand. Don't staple them to the headshot/resume. If your information or sizes change, fill out a new one and get copies of it. This will save you a great deal of time at the studio.
- I know a lot of this is now handled electronically, but there are those of us who still will ask for headshots, resumes and size sheets. Be prepared.
- Sign in, sit down and shut up. Noise can easily travel through the wall into the casting suite while taping is taking place. If someone insists on talking, just tell them you'll talk later and that you are using the waiting time to concentrate and focus on the material. If they continue to annoy you, move. You should use the time to actually concentrate and focus on the material.
- Leave as much as possible in your trunk. Don't bring in 2 armloads of briefcases, laptops, cell phones, etc. When you walk in the door, you should have your headshots, resumes, size sheets, pen and script. That requires one manila envelope. There really isn't any place to put all your stuff and you certainly can't leave it unattended in the reception area and certainly not with the receptionist.
- Listen to any direction given in the reception room so that you will know what to expect when you enter the casting suite. I go out to the reception area throughout the day to give the actors direction and information about the audition in order to help you be better prepared and so that you will know exactly what to expect.

- If you have any questions, ask them first of your agent, i.e. pronunciation of a word, callback dates, shoot dates, etc. If your agent doesn't know, then ask the receptionist.
- Side note: If you are unavailable for the callbacks or shoot dates, DO NOT GO TO THE AUDITION! And obviously don't go if you have a current conflict, i.e. fast-food restaurant, casual-dining restaurant, auto, beverage, clothing line, computer, etc.
- When you enter the casting studio, put your personal items (which of course should be in your car) on the floor by the door or on a table, if one is provided. Stop and check to see where the mark is, where the camera is and the general set up of the room. Go stand on the mark unless otherwise directed.
- Greet the CD and camera operator by name, if possible. Being called by another casting director's name is not okay..
- Pronounce my name right!
- Don't try and shake hands with us. We don't know where your hands have been and the #1 way of spreading germs and disease is through shaking hands. Don't touch us or our clients UNLESS they offer their hand first, then of course give them a good, moderately-firm handshake.
- Ask all questions BEFORE the tape is rolling. Ask "What's the frame?" so that you will know your working space. Again, if that has already been told to you, don't ask. If there is a reader ask if you should "read to reader or to camera". Ask if there will be a pause between the business portion of the audition and the material. Ask any pertinent questions you have about the audition or the material that is being held right now, not things in the future. Always be respectful and polite and LISTEN to the answers. Sometimes people are so busy thinking of their next question, they don't hear the answer to the one they just asked.
- When you hear "roll tape" that is direction to the camera operator, not you. Just stand there smiling and wait for the audition to begin. Rule of thumb is that when the camera is rolling during the business portion of the audition, you make eye contact with it. When not rolling, make eye contact with the person who is talking to you.
- Find out in advance if the CD wants or doesn't want agency mentioned. (I don't!) If the CD says, "May I have your name please?" that's usually all they want to hear. "Slate please" usually indicates name and agency. Check with the receptionist if this is your first audition with this CD. If that person doesn't know, just ask the CD, again before taping begins.
- Let the CD lead you through the audition. Remember, we are on your side and want you to be brilliant so that we'll look brilliant! Take your time; be warm, friendly, humorous and personable. Be responsive to questions on tape with brief comments. Don't gab on and on... Keep your answers clean: no politics, sex or religion.
- I cannot begin to stress the importance of how you say your name. It needs to be warm and friendly, possibly a little different from how everyone else will say their name. I have seen clients fast forward

over an entire audition because talent didn't know how to introduce themselves! You must enunciate your name clearly and in a friendly manner.

- Have your script in your hand and don't argue with the CD about whether or not you have it memorized. Once the camera rolls, I can almost guarantee you, you'll forget every word. NOTE: FOR THEATRICAL AUDITIONS, YOU MUST BE OFF BOOK, but you must still have your sides in your hand. Make sure the pages are in order.
- Hold your character until you hear "Cut" and then for another second or two. Don't say the last word and then immediately display your disgust with your performance or look to the CD for approval.
- Feel free to ask if they would like to see anything else. If they say no, then smile, say thank you for the opportunity and leave. If they say yes, ask if there are any adjustments and then follow the direction given.
- If you are on a SAG audition, always be sure to sign out, particularly IF you have been kept more than one hour from your appointment time, not your arrival time. SAG requires talent be compensated for being there more than an hour. No such luck with non-union jobs.
- Never put down your social security number unless someone is writing you a check. Put down the last 4 digits or just draw a line in that column. Obviously never put that number on your resume, website or anywhere where someone could steal your identity.
- Check in with your agent after the audition, if they ask you to do so.
- Don't change anything between the audition and potential callback. This is not the time to get a Mohawk, shave your head, change your hair color or length, or lop off that facial hair.
- Leave the studio immediately after your audition. This is not a social hour, so leave so that you don't disturb other actors who are preparing, focusing and concentrating.
- I send a Feedback Sheet to the agents which covers look, energy, performance, direction and overall impression so that your agent will be kept up to date about what I am seeing.
- The audition process is nerve wracking and we all know that. But if you will give some thought to these guidelines, hopefully it will be a better and more rewarding experience for all of us.

GOOD LUCK ON ALL THOSE UP-COMING AUDITIONS!!!

Copyright 2010  
Donise L. Hardy, C.S.A.