

THE PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE



10 ^{7 MORE} AUDITION TIPS FOR ACTORS

BY KEN DAVENPORT

Thank you for reading my 10 More Audition Tips for Actors!

Following the old Hollywood axiom that says, “When people like something, give ‘em a sequel,” I decided to write a follow-up to my 10 Audition Tips for Actors.

After all, I’ve watched hundreds and hundreds of very talented folks strut their stuff in hopes of a big break on Broadway, so I’ve got tips galore to send your way. So here are 10 more tips to tune up your audition skills and help you land the job you’ve been dreaming about.

Remember, we want you to be great. We’re pulling for you more than you can ever imagine. Because a great audition, means a great cast, which means we’re one step closer to a great show.

Here we go. Enjoy!

Ken Davenport

10 MORE AUDITION TIPS FOR ACTORS

1. Be a Boy Scout. Be prepared. Remember, an audition for a show, isn't just an audition for *that* show. You're making an impression on that Director, Casting Director, Producer, etc. that could apply to other projects that they are working on now or in the future. So even if you're not right for that part, you could find yourself getting a callback for something else down the line (on *Godspell*, I watched a whole bunch of people who weren't right for our show get put in a *Wicked* pile). And that's why you always have to be on your game . . . which means doing your homework. Because we know when you don't. And see, the thing is, it cuts both ways. I've watched people come in that have been so unprepared that Casting Directors et al have written them off for that show *and* others as well. Make the most out of every chance you have in front of a decision maker. This doesn't mean you have to be perfect. It just means that you've got to treat that five minutes with respect, and be familiar with the material.
2. Research who is in the room. Blind dates are nerve-racking . . . blind auditions are worse. Always try to find out from your agent or the casting director, or even the monitor, who is in the room sitting behind the table. Is the composer there? The playwright? The casting director? Assistant? You do this for two reasons . . . 1 - so you can tailor your material, your conversation, and your questions accordingly, and 2 - it's totally appropriate to drop a personalized follow up note to the folks that you auditioned for . . . but you gotta know who they were.
3. Forget what your Mom says, skip lunch. Ok, I don't mean that you should skip eating lunch. You should skip auditions that are around the lunch hour. From about noon to two, auditioners get hungry and, if they're having food shipped in for them to eat (in order to make sure they see as many auditionees as possible), you run the risk of doing your 16 bars while someone is munching on a pastrami on rye. And, well, that might be a bit distracting for them and for you. So try and work around those hours, if you have a choice.
4. Dress like you're on a date. A first date that is. You want to treat your audition like a professional experience (see tip #1), but you don't want to overdo it either. So dress to impress, but also make it look like you didn't try too hard (see where the "first date" thing comes in?). BONUS TIP: When you get a callback, and you will, wear the same outfit you wore to the first audition. They'll remember you more.
5. Singers, have all sorts of material. Way back when, all that musical theater actors needed was an up-tempo and a ballad. But as the music on Broadway has become more diverse, it's important that you can show your diversity as well . . . and you never know what someone might ask you to sing. You need a ballad, an up, a pop

song, a classic, something funny, something serious, etc. Think about it this way, auditions are like improv, you always want to be able to answer “Yes” when an auditioner asks you anything . . . including, “Do you have something in the style of R&H that shows range?”

6. Having a bad day? Act like you’re not. Seems simple enough, but I can’t tell you how many people come in complaining about the weather or how many auditions they’ve been on that day. People have bad days. I get it. But you’re an actor, so pretend that you’re having the best day ever . . . because no one wants to be around people that are sour-pusses.
7. Burn all your monologue books. Monologue books were made to make it easy for actors looking for monologues. So that means a majority of people use them. And *that* means you’re not going to stand out as being special if you’re the fifth person to do the monologue from *Key Exchange* that day.
8. Read the whole play/screenplay/musical. True story – an actor auditioned for me for a play years ago and was visibly shocked when the director said something about later in the story when the character they were auditioning for attempted suicide. Umm, that might have affected some choices you might make, don’t you think?
9. Your accompanist is your friend or your enemy. You choose. If there’s one person you really need on your side at a musical audition, it’s the guy or doll playing the piano. Be nice, be thankful, be complimentary, and have music in the right key, in the right order, and in a book that is easy to read and easy to flip the pages. BONUS TIP: No song books that you just bought from Colony Records. Have you ever tried to get one of those things to stand up without falling over? And do you want your accompaniment to just stop in the middle of “On the Street Where You Live?”
10. Auditioning is like batting practice. When I first made my varsity baseball team in high school, I was nervous about facing some of the faster pitchers in the league. “It’s ok,” my coach said, “that’s what the batting cage is for.” I stood in that thing every day, swinging away at everything until I got numb to 70, 80 and 90 mph fast balls and curve balls coming at me in all sorts of directions. So, when I stepped up to the plate during a big game, I was so much better prepared to show my best. You’ve gotta get numb to the questions, suggestions, and requests that will come at you in all sorts of directions when you audition. So get in a cage. Take a class, or better, audition as much as you can. Auditioning is a special skill . . . and if you can master it, you’ll find yourself working a heck of a lot more.

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