

# AUDITION DOs & DON'Ts

By Domenick Scudera, M.F.A., Professor of Theater, Ursinus College  
dscudera@ursinus.edu

## DO:

When preparing and rehearsing your monologues before the audition date, be sure to rehearse your introduction as part of the whole package. Oftentimes, actors ignore rehearsing their introductions and when they get to the audition they fumble through it. This starts the audition off on the wrong foot and makes the actors nervous before they even begin their monologues. Write down what you are going to say in your introduction and prepare it as you would the monologue. This will make you appear confident and in control when you start your audition. It will also make you *feel* more confident before launching into your monologues.

Choose a monologue that is appropriate for your age, type and ability. If you would cast yourself in this role in a production of this play, then it is a good monologue for you. If you are not right for the part, don't cast yourself in it. If you are sixteen years old and you're doing a King Lear speech, you are headed for disaster.

Choose a monologue that you understand both intellectually and emotionally. If you have any questions about it at all, do lots of research to make sure you understand it completely. If you still have any questions, choose another monologue.

Choose a monologue with one clear, simple, strong and playable objective. You only have a minute or two. It is much more effective to play one clear objective well than to try to show a variety of emotions in one short monologue.

Read the entire play from which your monologue is chosen. Without knowledge of the whole play, you may be misinterpreting the moment or the character and the director may not understand the choices you have made.

Take charge of your audition when you walk in the room. You get only one first impression, and that first impression is forged the moment you enter the room. Put the director at ease by knowing what you are doing. The director will automatically like someone who is professional, in charge and confident. An audition is essentially a job interview and should be treated accordingly.

Have other monologues and a song prepared beyond the ones you were asked to prepare for the audition. If the director likes you and wants to see something more from you, it is impressive if you can whip out something on the spot that is prepared and strong.

When you walk in the room, find the strongest, most central location from which to begin. Wait until you are "grounded" in this location before you start introducing yourself. Stand in the center of the space. If you stand near a wall or a chair, you will subconsciously appear weaker and dependent. If you stand too close to the auditors, you will make them uncomfortable. If you stand too far away, you will seem distant and removed. You want to create the strongest environment from which to begin. Don't expect others to do it for you.

Be nice to everyone from the initial phone caller who set up the audition to the person who signs you in when you walk in the theater. All the people who staff the audition will let the director know if you were nasty or "high maintenance" out in the waiting area or on the phone. I have seen people lose jobs because their attitudes in the waiting area were so obnoxious and the directors were not willing to take a risk by casting them.

Wear clothing that is neutral and comfortable. You want to feel confident and you will only feel confident if you wear clothes that you know make you look good and don't constrict you in any way. Neutral clothes are best because they will help the director focus on your monologues and your ability as an actor, not on your appearance.

Wear comfortable shoes that keep you grounded. Audition days are not the days to break in a new pair of shoes or to wear those high heels that you can barely move in. You want to be rooted to the ground and to appear as strong as possible.

Take an appropriate amount of time between your introduction, your first monologue and your second monologue. Don't go too quickly from one to the other, or else it may be difficult to realize you have are into something new. Don't go too slowly from one to the other, or else you will appear to be an actor who needs too much time to prepare.

Be professional, confident and positive at all times.

## **DON'T:**

Don't choose a monologue that tries to accomplish too much emotionally or that has too complicated a plot. A monologue that is simple and strong is most effective. If you are choosing a monologue that is filled with lots of different types of emotions to show off your range, you won't have enough time to impress the director with everything. Do one thing well. Don't do a number of things too quickly that they can't be judged.

Don't be "high maintenance." When setting up the audition, don't run through your entire schedule and tell the person on the phone all your conflicts before confirming a time. Don't let everyone in the waiting room know how anxious you are to get in quickly because you have to pick up your son from day school. Don't let the director know that you missed the bus and just got in 30 seconds ago and you are unfocused and need a minute to breathe. Don't make excuses. There is no reason to let the director know that you are sick, or that you're exhausted, or anything. The director just wants to see your work. He or she doesn't want to know all your problems.

Don't apologize for your own perceived shortcomings ("I'm sorry I have a cold and my voice doesn't sound good" or "I'm a terrible singer"). Don't judge your own work in a negative way.

Don't choose a monologue that you think will fulfill certain requirements or will please other people. You need to connect with the piece you are doing and make it as honest as possible. If you don't connect with it, but you think it will be good because the director likes this kind of monologue, it won't work because you don't have a personal attachment to it. You will always be strongest when you are "in the moment" and fully understanding what you are doing.

Don't mispronounce words and names in your monologues or introductions. Do your research, look everything up and ask lots of questions when you are preparing and rehearsing. A good way to ruin your audition is to start by saying that your monologue is written by David 'Mamay' instead of David Mamet.

Don't try to be clever by doing something outlandish or unusual to stand out at the audition. Sometimes actors feel it is necessary to do something unique and "memorable" so that they will be remembered. However, what often happens is you will be remembered as "the weirdo who did the back-flips" or "the one who wore that ridiculous outfit." If you want to be remembered favorably, simply exude strength, confidence and a professional attitude. You'd be surprised how few people can do that and how you will stand out for those reasons alone.

Don't choose a monologue that is overdone. If you know anyone else who has done your monologue, you may be in trouble that it is popular. Don't choose monologues from monologue books because everyone else has probably done the same. Ask directors you know what monologues they hate because they are so overdone. Almost every director cringes when they hear "My first monologue is from Christopher Durang's *Laughing Wild*" or "My next piece is Viola's ring speech".

Don't choose monologues that are too angry or sexual or full of curse words. Most directors are very open-minded, but after long, grueling days of listening to actor after actor, it is annoying to feel that the actor is attacking or being inappropriate.

Don't get overly dressed up or "done up" for your audition. An audition is not a wedding or a modeling shoot. The director wants to get to know who you really are. False impressions will not last long. You should be the best possible version of your normal, regular self, not a super creation of someone else.

Don't feel it is necessary to stuff as many pieces as possible into your three-minute allotment or to do monologues that are lengthy. It is best to do short pieces well and have the director want to see more because they like what they see. It is not effective to do lengthy pieces that go on and on and don't hold the director's attention. Your goal should be to intrigue the director enough to be asked in for a call-back. It should not be to show the director, in three minutes time, everything you are capable of doing.

Don't wait for the director to tell you what to do when you walk in and out of the audition room. You should be in charge of what is happening to you. Think of the director as a guest at your own party. You want to be welcoming, warm, and in charge. If you put the director at ease and he or she doesn't have to do anything but judge your work, you will make a good impression. You will make the director think that you are someone who will be easy to work with.

Don't be arrogant, pushy, aggressive, obnoxious, overbearing ... (you get the idea). Remember, the director is deciding if he or she wants to work with you and if he or she wants to spend time with you for the duration of the rehearsal period. The director is not only assessing your skills as an actor, he or she is also assessing who you are as a person and whether or not you will be a worthwhile collaborator.