



CHEAT SHEET: PREPPING FOR AUDITIONS WITH LITTLE TO NO TIME

A common complaint amongst actors is that auditions now arrive with little to no time to prepare. We have known actors who have been given an hr to ready themselves for (usually) a commercial casting.

This is the new norm in our industry and, while getting just an hr is a rare occurrence, a couple of days is more likely which, compared to the 'old days', is very little time at all.

What is an actor to do when they want to be their best on the day but are given little time to prepare around their everyday responsibilities?

How do they avoid adding stress to the already pressurised situation?

Follow this simple 5 step plan to prep like a winner.

Read the sides

Unbelievable but, when overwhelmed by short prep time it's very tempting to skip reading all the material you are given and head straight to 'your bit'.

If you feel this way – please avoid doing this. Information is power and, if you skip reading all of the material, you are VERY likely to miss absolutely vital information that could transform your reading of the role.

Don't substitute this for time, it is much better to spend MORE time reading the material and LESS time learning it. For the rest of the steps, you will have to have read everything that was sent to you.

Concrete facts

As you read the sides, have a notepad nearby and write down 'concrete facts', that is, everything that pertains to your character's life and experience. As an example:

Her name is Emma

She is 35 (says on p 12 of episode 1)

She enters the library at 12.30 in the afternoon

She learns that her father died yesterday (says on p 50 of episode 1)

She tells her boyfriend that she wants a new career (p 10 of episode 2)

It is a 'fact' that she says these things, even if she doesn't achieve them. What we are after are statements and circumstances that lead to a comprehensive understanding of our character's situation and desires.

Wants

From reading and listing the facts about your character, you gain a better understanding of the life wants and needs of your character which you can translate into solid objectives.

I would choose a solid and playable objective for each scene that you know you have to read.

Keep the objective simple, clear and dependent on the other character e.g 'I want you to offer me support' or 'I want you to give me comfort'

Placing the outcome 'in the other person' will generate relationship which is what we need to make an impression in the casting room.

Change

Ask yourself:

- How does my character change from the start of the scene to the end of the scene?
- What are the differences between each scene I am being asked to read? What element of my character's personality do the different scenes expose?

Directors want to see your character go on a journey both within a scene and between scenes. A scene is only there to move the story forward via your character's experiences.

If you remain the same emotionally throughout the piece, you have not received the events in the piece adequately.

Even if your character comes out of the scene with the same conclusion as when they went in, there can be a deeper level of understanding for them or a greater level of frustration. Ask yourself, how have I changed and allow those changes to occur in front of the directors eyes.

Resistance

Last but not least, look for obstacles on the page. These could come from other characters who want something that opposes your character's desires or, self generated obstacles like counter objectives (something you want that works against another thing you want).

Obstacles create 'resistance' for you and resistance generates behaviour. When you have something to fight against, you come to life.

Work out where the resistance lies and it gives you both something to do as well as something to discuss with the team if and when appropriate, demonstrating an understanding of the piece on your part.

Extras?

Line learning

It may seem odd that we have not mentioned learning lines, there are two reasons for this.

Relationship is more important than learning lines.

Knowing your lines in no way guarantees that you will play a truthful relationship. If you have done the prep we have discussed, you will naturally begin to play a relationship strongly with the other readers and we will believe you. If you have spent all your time learning lines we will get a lovely recital but nothing more. A lot can be forgiven when relationship is alive and well in a scene.

Line learning is a given.

This may seem contrary to what we just said but, it is a given that actors are going to try and learn lines and, if you were prepping for a screen role (especially for an American production) you would be expected to be fully off book.

Actions

If you have time to write a simple action above each beat of your text, wonderful! If you have time to play and absorb each action as you learn lines – even better! However, if you have no time for this, knowing your simple objective should prompt tactical play naturally, without any real preparation in this area.