



## HOW TO HOLD AN AUDITION: STUDY GUIDE!

Whether you're casting for a director, or doing the casting yourself, we hope these guidelines to holding an audition will help you create the best film you can.

Auditions should demonstrate professionalism and care, no matter what budget you are working with (*especially* no budget!) Well-crafted casting breakdowns, clear communication, and a good audition space will speak volumes about how seriously you take your project, and make actors more eager to work for you.

So here are the main points we cover in the video!

### **READ THE SCRIPT AND DO YOUR RESEARCH**

You need to know not only the world you are populating, but the people who live in it. Do they have a certain profession, or live in a certain town? Go to a special kind of school? Do research!

### **WORK CLOSELY WITH THE DIRECTOR, AND ASK QUESTIONS**

Determine if the characters have a certain look or quality about them, if they have any certain backstory or history. Being informed about the story and the emotional arc of the characters will help you answer any questions an actor may have when auditioning.

### **CREATE A PROFESSIONAL CASTING BREAKDOWN / NOTICE**

This is what should excite actors about your project and give them a small glimpse into the characters and story.

Here is an example of a casting notice for Video Game High School Season 3:

Monday, Feb. 2, 2014

VIDEO GAME HIGH SCHOOL  
New Media Contract (SAG or AFTRA  
Jurisdiction)  
AFTRA New Media  
The RocketJump original series, produced  
by Digital Bytes

Casting Director: Catherine Garcia  
Shoot/Start Date: March 1, 2014  
Pay Rate: Industry Standard  
Location: Los Angeles, CA

**SUBMIT ELECTRONICALLY**

**IF POSSIBLE, PLEASE SUBMIT ACTOR'S ONLINE DEMO CLIPS ALONG WITH EACH ACTOR SUBMISSION.**

**SYNOPSIS:** Video Game High School is an action/comedy web series about best friends, first loves, and landing that perfect head shot. Set in the near future, it features video gamers launched to a level of celebrity, as gaming has taken over as the most dominant competitive sport.

[[JOSH](#)] Male / Featured / All Ethnicities / 18 - 25. Josh is a Massively Multitplayer Online Game (MMOG) Player. He runs his gaming guild and is really into Ultima Online, EverQuest, and WOW. He has kept his precious Tamagotchi alive for a decade and looks like he stepped right out of the 1990s.

[[CHER](#)] Female / Featured / All Ethnicities / 18 - 25. Cher is a Massively Multitplayer Online Game (MMOG) Player. She runs her gaming guild with Josh and is really into Ultima Online, EverQuest, and WOW. She is Josh's right hand gal, and looks like she stepped right out of the 1990s.

[[FARMER O'DOYLE](#)] Female / Featured / All Ethnicities / 18 - 25. The leader of the social gamers, O'Doyle is a hopeful, salt of the Earth girl, whose been pushed down and relegated to the sidelines again and again. She watches out for the needs of her group with no resources, and plays her "simple" games with all the love and passion of the FPS players.

[[TOE JAM](#)] Male / Featured / All Ethnicities / 25 - 45. The leader of the big, bad, biker gang. He is tatted up, and dangerous.

[[EARL](#)] Male / Featured / All Ethnicities / 25 - 45. The enforcer of the big, bad, biker gang. He is huge, tatted up, and dangerous.

[[JAQUES LATOUR](#)] Male / Featured / All Ethnicities / 35 - 55. Latour is the coach of the best professional FPS team in the world. He is at the very top of his profession and is as cool as he is skilled. Must have excellent French accent!

[[MRS. BARNSTORMER](#)] Female / Featured / Caucasian / 35 - 55. A woman perfectly at home in the boardroom or the deck of her yacht. She is a supermom, beautiful, brilliant, and totally in charge.

[[THE FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES](#)] Female / Featured / All Ethnicities / 30 - 50. A woman who embodies the role of The First Lady.

First, we have our **production information:**

Posting date of the casting notice

TITLE OF PROJECT	Casting Director
Production Type	Shoot/Start Date
Union or non-union information	Pay Rate
Production Company & Producers	Location

How/Where to submit

Any special notes for submitting

If you want, you can also include project length (is it a 10 minute short or feature length film?) director(s) names, how many days you are planning to shoot, and a link to your company's website.

We recommend not posting the audition location or times in the first notice. Once you pick out the submissions you are interested in, you can send that information directly when you reply to the people you want to schedule for an audition.

Next we have the project **synopsis.**

This is a short description of the story and type of film you are making. Keep this simple (a few sentences or a short paragraph.) Synopses often include a brief description of the plot, and/or references to the themes and feel of the film—basically, what the film is ultimately about.

You also need to include a **breakdown of the roles** you are casting for:

[CHARACTER NAME] Sex / Type of Role / Ethnicity / Age Range. A short description of the character that gives a sense of their type and personality. Any special skills or requirements needed for this character.

Keep it simple, descriptive and interesting enough to peak actors' interests.

## **CASTING RESOURCES**

There is a variety of resources out there for casting. Some places we recommend:

Actor's Access - <http://www.actorsaccess.com/>

Casting Frontier - <http://castingfrontier.com/>

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter... any social site where you are connected to a creative network!

Check out your local university's (or high school's) theater program, see if they have places you can post your notices.

You can even go to performances and seek out actors that stand out to you.

Talk to your professors and teachers. They may have contact or recommendations.

And don't be shy about pulling in your friends and family!

## **ORGANIZING & REPLYING TO YOUR SUBMISSIONS**

Sometimes you're dealing with a ton of submissions and replies!

Cate recommends creating a separate casting email account just for that project to keep it all in one place, but also to protect your personal information.

Create a spreadsheet that helps you keep track of who you have responded to, who has confirmed for their audition time, which character they are auditioning for, and any other notes you want to remember.

When replying to a submission, be clear and professional with your response, and make sure to give all the information they need.

Here is an example:

Hello!

Thank you for your interest in "VGHS Season 3"! We would be happy to hear you read for the part of "Josh."

Please come to:

1234 Fake Street  
Vague City, California 91234

On **Monday, February 23rd, 2015** at **1:00pm PST.**

Please bring a headshot and resume with you to the audition. Sides will be provided. Please confirm by replying to this email by [this date and time].

[Include parking and building information if needed here.]

We look forward to seeing you!

## **SCHEDULING THE AUDITIONS**

Instead of scheduling one person at a time, like this:

Joey 1:30PM  
Sean 1:40PM  
Cherish 1:50PM

Lauren 2:00PM  
Erin 2:10PM  
Dominic 2:20PM

You can give yourself some extra wiggle room by instead **scheduling in windows or blocks**. That way if someone doesn't show, or is a few minutes late or early, no one has to wait too long.

1:30 PM  
Joey  
Sean  
Cherish

2:00PM  
Lauren  
Erin  
Dominic

Also, make sure to schedule in breaks for yourself, so you can get up, stretch your legs, go to the bathroom, eat lunch or a snack. If you're uncomfortable and tired, you won't be as engaged in the performances you're supposed to be watching!

## CREATING A GOOD AUDITION SPACE

The most important thing about an audition space– whether you're in a professional casting office or not– is creating an atmosphere that is comfortable for everyone. This means:

Make clearly labeled signs for everything.

Entrances, exits, parking, directions to the waiting room, bathroom. Make it as clear as possible that your actors are *for sure* they are in the right place! Being worried about getting lost or being in the wrong area can hurt their performance.

Have a separate, semi-private waiting room.

Have a quiet, separate space for your actors to wait in. Make sure to have enough seating for each window of auditioners. Provide water!

Provide a sign-in sheet.

This lets actors relax a little more, knowing exactly when they will be seen.

Provide sides for the characters being auditioned for.

Have plentiful copies of the sides for each character so the actors can have it to prepare and audition with.

Have a separate, completely private audition room.

Have a pretty blank, open space so the actor is the main focus. Have a table and chairs where you can keep extra copies of the sides, the headshots you are given, bottles of water, pens, and notes.

On the first round of auditions, have as few people as possible in the room.

All you really need is the casting director and a reader. Sometimes the director will also like to sit in.

Have a reader that the actor can engage with, but not compete against.

Have a casting assistant or a friend sit in as a reader. A reader is the person who reads the lines of the other characters in the script, so the actor has someone to react off of. A reader should be engaging but not overpowering– they shouldn't act out the scenes, nor should they drone in a monotone. They just need to read the lines clearly.

Having a reader allows you to concentrate on the actor's performance, rather than having to worry about feeding them lines.

## **CHOOSING SIDES**

You want to choose scenes from your script that the actor can really sink their teeth into and play around with, that demonstrates the core of the character.

For lead characters, we recommend two different scenes, each demonstrating a different, contrasting emotion or type of scene. This can give you a better idea of the actor's range. You want to keep the auditions short, so keep each scene under a page and a half, so in total they aren't reading more than 3 pages.

For smaller roles, stick to about a page and a half total.

## **INTERACTING WITH THE ACTORS**

Pay attention to how the actor enters the room. Are they in character and ready to go? Don't waste time with small talk– let them get into it. Are they nervous? Chat with them a little bit, make them feel comfortable!

After an actor's first reading, don't be afraid to give them direction. Have fun, interact with them, and let them play with the scene!

Also take note of how they are treating you and the people around them, and how they are presenting themselves. Were they on time? they prepared? Do they look like their headshot?

Once the audition is done, say something positive and final. You don't want to promise anything, but you don't want to be negative either. You want the actor to leave feeling good about their performance.

## **PRESENTING RESULTS**

As a casting director, you have a special talent to see talent and advocate for actors that you believe are right for the role. Present the director with the actors you believe are best for the part. If a director isn't feeling it, don't be afraid to fight for an actor you believe in! You have been advocating for them through the entire process already by creating an audition that will let them show their best selves. So don't be afraid to lend your voice.