**Self-Tape/Digital Auditions with Fry**

The following is a “how-to” on making competitive, professional self-tapes for Film/Television auditions. When casting directors/agents receive self-tapes, they receive hundreds, sometimes *thousands*. Your video needs to stand out not only with your talent, but also with the professionalism and “production” consideration needed to not make them skip your audition and move onto the next.

In an in-person audition for theatre, the director/auditioner makes a decision about you in 30 seconds after your slate has started. In an in-person audition for film and television, the director/auditioner makes a decision about you in 15 seconds. For digital auditions, it is rumored to be 10 seconds. Many attribute this to the fact that the polite manners of eye contact and positive body language are out the window when an audition goes digital – and not in the favor of the actor.

**GUIDELINES:**

1. **“Production” Expectations** – On stage, the director sits at the back of the house because they want to be able to know you project. They also usually close the curtain to force you to stand on the apron so you appear confident and can be seen. On film, the same expectation of being “heard and seen” apply. **You must be well-lit and the volume on your recording must be adequate as you clearly and in-character articulate and project.** If they start your video and they cannot easily assess your appearance or understand/hear you, they will immediately click to the next actor.
   1. Use a camera with a good built-in microphone.
   2. Set up your camera (horizontal filming) with a tripod or a stable position.
   3. Consider your lighting / natural lighting from large, uncovered windows might be the best option. Always make sure there are no light sources *behind* you. Don’t stand directly in front of the window either.
   4. Use a solid color background that is not distracting, interesting, or shiny. It is okay to hang a sheet behind you as long as it covers the entire frame, is not wrinkly, and is a color that you find “flattering” but not distracting. White or gray is fine.
   5. **Frame** – Position yourself in the center of the frame with the bottom of the frame at your chest and the top of the frame just a few inches from the top of your head.
   6. **Sit or Stand** – Consider your character and decide if they are sitting or standing in the moment. Don’t change during the audition. Frame your shot accordingly. Don’t have your reader move the camera during the audition.
   7. After you set up all of this, take a few test runs of your first few lines. Watch it. If the lighting looks off/poor/too artsy or you can’t easily hear yourself, make changes as necessary.
2. **Your Reader** – A reader is a person off-camera who is your scene partner. They should sit directly to the right or left of the camera. They do not need to be the same gender as the character. They are your focal point (*not* the camera) and you should treat them like the actual character they are playing. However, inform them that while they should be “in character” they should not be over-the-top or dominating your audition. They should simply be easily heard and make eye contact with you to help you feel grounded.
3. **Script/Lines** – As with in-person auditions, you should be completely memorized. But here is the strange thing for film/television that seems unnatural for stage actors, audition with your script *in hand*. Casting directors encourage this for two reasons: it makes you appear flexible and not over-rehearsed, and more practically allows you to quickly reference and get your own line if necessary without having to call “line”, which casting directors find incredibly annoying, no one is on book for you during an audition. On stage - you improvise; in film/television auditions - you don’t. With all that being said, make sure your script is double spaced, large font so you can easily and quickly pick up where you need if you get lost.
4. **Don’t Slate** – This is another strange thing for stage actors. If you consider your 10 seconds mentioned in the introduction to impress the casting director, don’t waste it being yourself. Spend that time in character and acting. All of your information is already on your resume and labeled on your video; if they are impressed, they’ll reference it.
5. **Shoot Each Piece Separately** – Unless instructed to do so by the agent or casting director, shoot each of your audition pieces separately and edit them together for the final footage. You have that luxury that you don’t have on stage. It allows you to record your best work and also adjust the camera as needed (i.e. sitting, standing).
6. **Clothing and Appearance** – Wear solid colors to avoid distractions. Avoid wearing large or noisy accessories. Keep your hair out of your face, but still styled. Make your best impression.