

8 Tips for Self-Taping Your Auditions

By: Caroline Liem

With shorter production, tighter budgets, and more out-of-state shoots, a taped audition may become your first—and sometimes only—connection with casting directors, producers and directors. A self-taped audition may be submitted when you're out of town, on-set, facing scheduling challenges (you have too many appointments!), or you're a casting office favorite—but they haven't seen you play this type of role. The turnaround time for your self-taped audition is quick, with just days to read the script, make your strong specific choices, tape, edit, and send it in. How do you make sure we see and hear you while showing your personality and sharing your best performance and—receive a call-back or booking? When my clients cannot get to my studio to tape and coach their auditions, they use this alternative.

Here are some tips for how to submit the best self-taped audition.

- 1. Lighting.** We need to see your face. There's no need for expensive lighting equipment. Find basic lighting around your house and create a set up similar to that on set or stage: principal light on you—also known as a key light, a fill light, and a back light to sculpt and separate you from your background. If you want to get fancy, add a background light, which is used to eliminate shadows and provide additional depth. It should look something like the photo below.
- 2. Background.** There's nothing wrong with a white background, but it can read flat or stark. I like a royal blue background. It makes everyone pop and look great. With that said, it's not the easiest thing to find. So get creative with your options with what you have around the house—bed sheet, yoga mats, etc.
- 3. Camera/Sound.** There are many options for shooting your self-tape, and they don't have to break the bank either. I've seen decent auditions taped on smartphones and tablets. Whatever your recording choice, make sure we can hear you and see you. Your device should zoom in enough to limit unnecessary background. Create a controlled enough environment where the camera can pick up your voice without unnecessary noise, like traffic and neighbors.
- 4. Your Read.** It's helpful to have your reader at eye level and next to your camera. Make sure your reader is instructed to speak with a softer vocal volume, as he or she is closer to the mic than you are.
- 5. Slate.** If you're asked to slate, keep it open and inviting. This is the first thing we'll see and more often than you think that moment when you say "Hi my name is _____" will tell us if we want to watch further.
- 6. Use your whole body.** Avoid talking head or exaggerated facial features. It reads that you're not connected to the moment or you "think" you need to work harder, but ultimately there's a lack of connection to your character. Stay in your moment. Whether your character is active or still, he or she lives in a whole body. And that whole body needs to be engaged. We'll register it even in the tight shot of your audition.
- 7. The camera picks up everything.** This is a good thing! Nuance is sometimes missed in the audition room, but enjoyed later when we review tape. Allow your character to live in-between the written lines. Resist dropping out when flipping pages. Know what you want from the other character, and keep your interesting story moving forward.
- 8. The camera is your audience.** Draw us in with your performance. We want you to be the choice.

I hope these basic tips help you take charge of your auditions and elevate your work. Enjoy the process!

Liem is a casting director, audition coach and teacher based in Los Angeles. Her highly acclaimed film/TV audition and text analysis classes have been taught throughout the U.S. both privately and at universities. She has cast independent films, studio features, and television pilot/series for Disney Studios, Warner Brothers, Sony, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, ABC, CBS, NBC, WB, and Fox. She is currently working on an independent film, and you can view her latest casting on Nickelodeon's Parental Discretion with Stefanie Wilder-Taylor. For updates on what she's casting and teaching "like" her on [Facebook](#) and follow her on Twitter [@CarolineLiem](#).