

FORMS

CASTING NOTES

Casting Director:

1. Reads scripts, makes notes on characters
2. Meets with Director and Producer
3. Then the Casting Director does a breakdown (see sample)
 - a. Short Synopsis – 3 paragraphs max
 - b. Description of the character – physical, sex, age (if relevant). Character/personality traits, conflict/choice they face.
 - c. Chooses the sides in consultation with the director
 - d. Usually chooses a **2-handed scene** – where the character has the most lines, undergoes a change. Scenes where the focus is on the character
 - e. May make cuts in a scene, losing other character's lines or actions.
 - f. Don't audition 2 people on camera. If essential, do it as a second step or on a call back.
 - g. Select a reader.

The Audition:

- For leads, ideally at least 6-8 per role.
- It is good for writers to come casting sessions to hear their scenes read. May suggest rewrites.
- Hierarchy – Director runs audition, then producer, then casting director.

The Setup:

- The ideal audition space is one of the casting studios in Toronto.
- If this is not possible for financial or logistical reasons –
- Find a quiet space accessible by public transit
- Provide a comfortable seating area for actors waiting to audition.
- Provide bottled water (courtesy for the actor)
- Record the actor against a neutral background.
- Take a full body, eye-level shot while they are slating
- Move into an MCU (head and mid-chest) for the duration of the audition
- Full face, direct to camera, evenly lit.
- Mike the actor from a stand, do not use the camera mike
- Use a reader (ideally an actor)
- The reader sits as close to the lens as possible
- The reader is not auditioning. He or she is there to give the auditioning actor someone to react to. He or she should give a rehearsal reading of the off-camera lines, reflecting the basic emotion of the lines without histrionics.
- Have a monitor available. Don't watch the live audition, watch the monitor.

Actors:

- Create an Actor Information Form to be completed by all Actors
- Be Professional and Organized – Don't Run Late
- Remember this is "Your Party" – you want the actor to be relaxed and feel like an invited guest
- Introduce yourself and your production team
- Ask if they have any questions about the material.
- Ask the actor to slate on camera (name and role they are reading for, agent if they have one). This will help you identify actors if photos don't match
- They are generally petrified.
- They should sit or stand, whatever is appropriate for the scene.
- If they wish to move during the audition, give them the parameters of the shot. Keep the area of movement reasonably small.
- **Start with their take – and then give them direction.**
- Allow actors a second take – and give them a least one simple note that will reveal whether or not they can take an adjustment.
- Best audition notes are short, immediate and concrete. Suggest an objective, don't get into the back story. "You want to show just how angry you are."
- Do it like building blocks – add one more thing – e.g. "She's in a hurry." (99/100 auditions are better if you speed it up). Actors tend to slow it down and try to perform
- Two or three takes should be sufficient, don't overdo it.
- Callbacks only if absolutely necessary – remember these folks are volunteering their time.
- Avoid accents, unless it is the actor's natural speaking voice. Or absolutely essential to the character. If an accent is essential, make sure you specify that on the Casting Breakdown.
- Make brief notes as soon as the actor leaves.
- Review the auditions (at least the top three choices for each part) on the monitor after auditions are complete. Preferably the next day.

CASTING STUDENT FILMS

- What does a student film offer to the actor, given they are working for free? A showcase for their talents. So the most common profile is the young or new actor looking to build a reel.
- To state the obvious, large parts (principals, leads) are easier to cast than small parts. Background performers/Extras are very difficult to cast, particularly if you need large numbers or they need to be on set for long periods of time. They inevitably end up being fellow students and friends

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- which puts them in the early 20s age range. Which may not be the age you really need. Look for ways to limit the need for extras.
- Sometimes an experienced actor will agree to do a part in a student film because the part represents a departure for them, a chance to play a character they find interesting or a chance to show a side of their abilities that they feel has not been revealed. In these cases, the part is offered to the actor, they can't be expected to audition.
- Other experienced actors will work on student films if they are available. Some may even audition. This information will come from agents more often than not.
- Generally, young women's parts will attract more actors than any other parts. Then young men. Strong actors in the male, 30 to 40 age range are often the toughest to find. Middle-aged actors and talented seniors are probably the next most difficult.

AUDITION NOTES

- Make audition notes – see template.
- Actors dropping out after they have been cast is a not infrequent occurrence – they get a paying gig, for example.
- You may need to go back to your notes to find a second choice.