

“Tips for Successful Online/Video Auditions”

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More and more universities, colleges, and professional companies are utilizing online audition sites. Most notably for universities and colleges is the online program known as Acceptd (www.getacceptd.com). Students are highly encouraged to check the websites of universities and colleges they wish to attend to see if an online submission program is being used and in what capacity. Ways in which schools use online submissions include, but are not limited to:

- Active recruitment, whereby students are contacted directly by the university or college based on database information provided by the website. Acceptd allows university recruitment faculty to set database parameters to search for students looking to major in a particular program. As well, specific information can be targeted, such as “all students with a 3.7 or above grade point average,” “all females from California, Iowa, and New York interested in acting,” “all African-American students looking for a program in musical theatre,” etc.
- Basic information with a link to the department’s website, whereby students can research further before deciding to audition for a particular program at the university or college.
- Pre-screening candidates to invite to campus for an in-person audition and/or callback. Students upload audition materials, faculty at the auditioning university or college review the materials, and students are selected to come to campus for further auditions and/or callbacks.
- Sole audition for making acceptance decisions.

It is important to double check what each school requires with regard to audition pieces (i.e., length of audition pieces, picture and resume, letters of recommendation, and other support documents, including transcripts for students with dual-enrollment credits or Associate Arts degrees).

Many schools evaluate a student’s ability to follow guidelines and submit the required materials on time as part of their acceptance decision. It is important for students to meet deadlines and upload all required materials. One of the biggest problem areas is getting letters uploaded by Recommenders by the final deadline date.

Here are some tips to help students be more successful with their online auditions.

DO:

- Research university and college websites to see which schools might be a good fit for you.
- Be fully aware of school application policies and deadlines, including providing SAT/ACT test scores/transcripts/other required information and completing all Financial Aid Application materials on time. Apply as early as possible to schools, since new admission selections may finish before the department's individual auditions.
- Check Theatre Department policies and deadlines and if they accept/require online video auditions.
- Have a minimum of five people who will agree to provide letters of recommendation for you. Most schools will require at least three. It's always good to have extras, in case something happens and one of your references cannot meet a deadline or get a letter to you to submit on your own.
- Stay in contact with those you ask to write your letters of recommendation. You want to make sure they submit your letters in a timely fashion and before any application/audition deadlines. Many students end up not being considered for theatre programs because these letters of recommendation are not submitted on time.
- Make sure your school is willing to provide electronic copies of your transcript, if requested. Many theatre programs will accept unofficial copies of transcripts, but every University will require an official copy of the transcript be sent to complete the application process.
- Make sure you have a current photo and theatre resume which focuses on your strengths for the program(s) for which you have applied. Performers should emphasize performance work; designers and stage managers should detail different talents in each of expertise. Never use a business resume.
- Follow audition/interview requirements as set forth by each Theatre Department. Keep your audition material within the required time limit and include only pieces requested by the school. Following department guidelines is crucial in your audition/interview process – many departments use this as a “weeding out” process to eliminate students who can't follow rules and guidelines.
- Seek help with selecting audition material (performers) and/or guidance for developing your portfolio (design tech and stage management). Successful students are those who seek advice and coaching from their adult mentors – drama teachers, professional directors, voice teachers, choreographers, technical directors, etc.
- Select age-appropriate audition material if you are a performer. Only present a Shakespeare monologue if the school requests it. Sing songs which highlight your vocal range the

best, and make sure the song selections are within the guidelines set forth by the Theatre Department with regard to style. Does the school want “classic” Broadway material from a certain time period? Does the school want “contemporary” Broadway repertoire? What style/period of monologue does the school want to see? Does the school have a preference as to how you prepare your portfolio?

- Make sure you are presenting appropriate video footage for dance auditions. If the school is asking for ballet, then be sure to show them ballet. Most schools will want to see a short combination choreographed for you and taped in a dance studio. Too many students upload examples of modern, contemporary dance, and most of those videos don't demonstrate actual dance technique.
- Seek help with getting your audition/interview recorded. Students need the help of a trained eye to insure that what is being presented on camera actually is what is intended to be seen. And, don't cut and splice video for one audition piece. If you are unhappy with the results of your audition selection, then re-tape your performance.
- Dress appropriately for your video. You need to present yourself in the best light possible. This includes hair, makeup, clothing, shoes, etc.
- Make sure your videos and supporting materials have the correct university or college name on them when you submit them, especially if you are auditioning for multiple schools. If the audition evaluator at School A gets audition material with School B listed on everything, then the question becomes whether or not you actually want to go to School A.
- Meet all deadlines!! It says a lot about you if you do or don't meet deadlines. If students can't meet online deadlines, will they be reliable students in a university theatre program?
- Make sure your contact information is current and clearly listed on your resume, especially e-mail and phone numbers. An e-mail address and a phone number are usually requested for your online application. Be sure this is the only information listed on your resume...and preferably a cell phone number – not a home number, if possible. Never, never put a social security number, birth date, or home address on your resume!!
- Check your e-mail regularly for correspondence from schools interested in you. If you receive an e-mail, be punctual in responding to that correspondence. Also check your “Spam” or “Junk” folder – many times important e-mail correspondence gets delivered there without students aware they are being contacted by a university or college. Don't run the risk of missing a possible offer by not checking all facets of your e-mail account.
- Respond to email and/or telephone messages in a quick and timely manner. Schools representatives do not want to wait to hear back from you. If you don't respond in a timely manner, they will move on to another student for your spot in their program.

- Take every precaution to insure your online video audition is a complete success and fully represents who you are and where your talents are strongest.

DON'T:

- Don't miss deadlines!
- Don't use relatives for your letters of recommendation, even if your mother HAS been your dance teacher for 12 years.
- Don't use a senior portrait, family photo, or passport photo for your picture.
- Don't put your address, home phone number, social security number, and/or birth date on your resume. You only need to include your e-mail address and a CELL phone number (if possible).
- Don't misrepresent yourself on your resume. If you only have a few credits, that's ok! Just let us know what you have done, where you did it, and with whom. With whom you have worked becomes very important for university and college representatives. If they know people with whom you have worked, they can contact them for more in-depth information about you, your work habits, your attitude, etc.
- Don't record your video submission in your bedroom. If that is the only space you have available to use, then CLEAN YOUR ROOM! And, be aware of who also might be included in your screen shot as you record. If something happening behind you is more interesting than your audition, it's not a good thing.
- Don't record your video in your bathroom. The acoustics might be really great in there, but no one wants to look at your toilet and shower stall behind you as you perform.
- Don't sing a cappella! ALWAYS use an accompanist, if possible. Recorded music is an acceptable alternative, but it does not show schools how well you can collaborate with a pianist in an audition and/or performance situation.
- Don't perform Shakespeare monologues if the school says they don't want Shakespeare monologues.
- Don't sing "cabaret" songs that you found online and were written specifically for another performer. Most of the time, they only worked because of that person's personality, and too many of them are not good for auditions.
- Don't sing songs that are extremely difficult rhythmically, hard for an accompanist to play, and don't show your true vocal abilities.

- Don't film your audition in your night clothes. Make sure you are dressed appropriately! How you look in the audition video is very important!! Your look represents YOU and lets us know what kind of person you are. Make sure you are neatly dressed and hair is fixed nicely.
- Don't use your phone to film your audition package. Yes, many phones have good quality video capabilities on them, but too many times the frame is too small to capture a good image of you and your work.
- Don't use film clips from recordings of your high school shows as your audition...or any other recordings of your performance work (i.e., singing on the local news station or at your church; fourth girl on the left in the yellow dress dancing with guy in blue bow tie, classroom presentations, etc.)
- Don't videotape yourself dancing in any part of your house. Get into a rehearsal or dance studio to film your work.
- Don't harass school representatives wanting feedback on your audition if you are not selected for their program. As helpful as it can be to get such feedback, do not expect to get a response if you ask. Most college representatives and program directors just do not have time to respond to the hundreds of students auditioning for their programs.
- Don't decide to attend a college and pursue another program track with the intention of re-auditioning for the program you really want. There are many, many factors in the selection of new class groups, and there is no guarantee you will get into your preferred program even after a second audition. It also demeans the program in which you do register, because you are not giving your full effort to that program's requirements.

With the utilization of new online technologies by university and college programs, students seeking post-secondary education opportunities are faced with even more challenges in the application/audition process. However, if students complete thorough research and prepare effectively, hopefully they will find their mailboxes, electronic and otherwise, with multiple congratulatory letters inviting them to join a university or college program.