

Do's and Don'ts for Making a Fantastic Audition Video!

These are some excellent tips for making an outstanding audition video, BUT, each school/conservatory/competition and university will have different requirements. **Make sure you always read the guidelines for each submission.** If you don't follow the rules set by the school, the panelists may make an assumption that you simply don't like to follow rules and you may be a bad fit for them.

Preparing for your audition video

Your video is your calling card! It's the first chance that audition panelists, judges or admission faculty get a sense of who you are. It's an important step in meeting your goal: your first choice of school, getting through the first round of competition, getting the job, etc. It might seem like a lot of information, but once you get the hang of it, you'll be recording like a pro!

Equipment Tips

- You can use your phone, tablet, computer, or a hand held camera.
- Your phone or tablet should be set **HORIZONTALLY**, not vertically – put it in Airplane mode or Do Not Disturb mode to avoid interruptions – and tap the screen to focus.
- Use a tripod or stand. This cannot be a “selfie” even with a stick. Or, have someone with a steady hand take your video. You can also place your computer on a table to film your audition.
- Be sure the device is at the right distance from you to frame the shot. Do not use the zoom function as this makes the image grainy or fuzzy. See below for framing information.
- If you are using pre-recorded music, have someone else start and stop your music so you are not running back and forth.

Background, keep it simple!

- Dance studio, church rec room, classroom, living room are all good choices. Think about acoustics when choosing a place to record.
- Stay away from a lot of clutter; use a simple background. Try to stay away from posters, fireplaces, prom pictures, trophies, food, laundry, etc. in the background. We want to focus on you; not the background. Blank walls or closed curtains work best.
- Make sure people are not dancing, singing, acting or playing behind you while you are performing! Duh!! 😊

Lighting – we want to see your fabulous face!

- Be sure you are well lit and that we can see you. Try to minimize shadows. Shadows blocking your hands if you are an instrumentalist are not good. Shadows blocking your face if you are a singer/actor/instrumentalist are not good. Shadows blocking any part of your body for a dancer are not good. It might give the filming a cool look, but if the panelists can't see you, they can't evaluate.
- Be aware of the light you are filming in. Fluorescent light will give you a greenish or grey hue. Severe or high contrast lighting can cast hard shadows on you and overhead light can be unflattering. If you're in a room with overhead light, try shooting closer to an open window to add some natural light. Placing a lamp or two nearby is another way to add “fill” or soften light to reduce stark shadows and keep the attention on you.
- If you are a dancer, most studios have florescent lighting. Don't worry about the lighting, as we will not be close up on your face. That being said, don't shoot too far away so that we cannot make out facial expression during the solo, at least from time to time.

Wardrobe

- Just like with getting a good headshot, you want to make wardrobe decisions that keep the attention on you in a positive way.
- Select simple wardrobe avoiding logos, busy patterns, stripes, white, and black (Black is a great fashion basic, but for headshots or auditions, black can create a distracting “floating head” effect, especially if your background is also dark.) Our eyes are naturally drawn to the brightest part of an image.
- Don't wear a white shirt against a white background. Choose a contrasting color to really have yourself pop!
- For dancers, check carefully the school, competition or company rules. Most of the time, a leotard and tights for ballet and simple dance wear for non-classical dancers will work. Some rules state no skirts are allowed so make sure to check. Most panelists feel that skirts, baggy clothes and leg warmers hide things, so don't give anyone an excuse to not consider you.
- Don't wear anything that can distract from you. Stay away from anything too revealing; too low cut or too short. Again, the focus should be on your performance; not your clothes or body parts. Some vocal panelists are wary of high heels and feel it can change your balance and subsequently your vocal performance. Try and stay with anywhere from flats to 2 inches.
- Instrumentalists and singers can be in nice casual clothing, or the same thing you would wear to watch a performance. An evening gown or tux is not necessary unless you own them and feel comfortable performing in that attire. Check with the individual school you are applying to.
- Regular make up and jewelry. **Make sure your hair is out of your face; this is a big one!** If we can't see your face, it will be very difficult to evaluate.

Recording Tips

- Be sure the room is quiet. No background noise (television noise, other people practicing, dancing, cooking, etc.)
- Make sure to check with school/conservatory or auditioner what their rules are regarding "slating." Providing a Slate at the beginning of your video audition is crucial to some and not necessary to others. A Slate is where you announce yourself and the pieces you are singing, acting, dancing or playing before you begin your performance. Some schools/competitions require a blind audition and would rather you not slate, so again read the rules carefully. If you do need to include a Slate, it should only take 5 – 10 seconds. It could be something simple like: "My name is Jane Smith and I will be performing"
- Have someone else start and stop the video recording and your music if performing to recorded music.
- Do not look directly into the camera as you play, sing, dance or act. This is called, "breaking the 4th wall." Pick a focal point just to the left or right of the lens or just above. You may look into the camera directly when you introduce yourself and your selections if a slate is required.
- Instrumentalists, be sure we can see your hands on the instrument and your torso. Be in the center of the frame.
- Singers and Actors, be sure you are in the center of the frame. Film from the thighs or hips up, unless your movement is integral to the piece. Also, be sure to film so that panelists can easily see your facial expressions and can check for diction, enunciation and breath control. Remember, they are trying to evaluate you.
- Singers and Instrumentalists: If there is an accompanist, they do not need to be in frame unless directed by panel. Check rules. We need to see you from the hips up, not just a face and not the whole body. That would be too close or too far away.
- Material should be memorized unless explicitly stated in the audition requirements. If you are in doubt, contact the school for clarification or approval.
- When using music, be sure the music stand does not block your face and/or instrument.
- Do not edit or manipulate your recording in any way. If a panel feels you have augmented sound, they may disqualify you. Most schools will not allow microphones. The exception would be an instrument that needs amplification like an electric guitar. Check with the school.

Special Notes for Dancers:

- Follow the directions! If the school is asking for your body to remain in the frame for the duration of the video, do not submit a video that cuts to close-ups, etc. Do Not Edit!
- Make sure we can see your whole body in the frame. Don't film in the mirror, ever! Have someone film you and start/stop your music.
- Set up tape markers to the right and left and forward so that you don't dance out of the frame. We need to see your entire body, head to toe, all the time. A beautiful jump will be lost if you do it off camera.
- What is the requested video length? If the school is requesting a 1.5 minute video - do not submit a 5:00 minute piece.
- There is no need to pay a lot of money for a professional video - BUT - do make sure to find a space with decent lighting so that your dancing is visible. Also, if you are filming your solo on your mobile device, hold it in the HORIZONTAL position so that the video is the largest size possible.
- Many schools ask for two videos that show contrasting styles. Choose styles that you are comfortable with, but don't be afraid to think outside the box. Ballet and Contemporary (or hip-hop) are great choices, but if you have a unique second style (Flamenco, Folklorico, Bollywood, Ballroom, etc.), think about showcasing that style. It will make your application stand out!
- Think about music selection. If you are submitting a hip-hop video, check that the lyrics of your chosen song would be appropriate for your future Dean. She/He may watch your application video! Also, college admission committees and competitions are watching hundreds of videos - be creative with your music choices. Ask yourself: will everyone else be using this Top 40 song? You want your video to be memorable.

Before you film the real deal!

- Film a rehearsal to make sure your lighting, sound, wardrobe and framing are good! Make any adjustments you need.
- Start filming and have fun!!!

After Filming and Before you Submit

- Before submitting, make sure there is video AND audio. Hello????
- Make sure it's not upside down or sideways. Small things like this can cause frustration for panelists.
- Make sure the balance is correct. We need to hear you over the pianist.
- Dancers, we need to hear your music.
- Make sure it's not blurry or fuzzy.
- Watch and listen all the way through to make sure there are no skips, pauses, or glitches in your audition.
- Make sure you are labeling the recording according to the rules of the school, competition, etc.