

Tips for Performing Monologues/Auditioning

Whether students are performing for each other, in front of an audience, or auditioning for a role, these tips will help young actors deliver polished, professional pieces.

Prepare your Monologue

Choose the Right Piece

Pick a piece for a character you can play easily; someone your age and your type. Choose a monologue that is not too short or too long for either your own ability level or for the project you are working on. Unless it is being asked of you, don't choose material that is off-color, in poor taste, contains vulgar language, or highly controversial subject matter. Also, think about the tone of the piece. Monologues can be humorous, sad, very serious, or even strange. Be sure to select a piece that fits well with your personality, and is appropriate for the style of the project you are working on.

Memorize

Know your lines so well that you can recite them in your sleep. This one trick alone will drastically reduce your nerves when it comes time to perform. Here are a few memorization tips:

1. Read lines out loud.
2. Repeat, repeat, repeat!
3. Record your lines and listen to them while you do other things such as working out or doing chores.
4. Move around while memorizing. Studies prove that physical movement helps strengthen memory skills.

Know the Play

If your monologue comes from a play, reading the entire play can give you a much deeper understanding of the monologue and of your characters wants/needs. This can dramatically affect your performance.



Know the Character

Your monologue may be just words typed onto a page, but they represent the thoughts and feelings of a whole human being (real or imagined). Spend time thinking about or researching your character. Here are some questions to get you started:

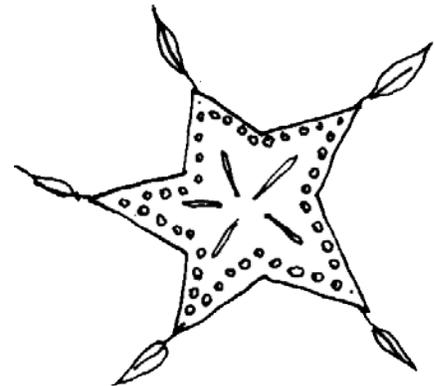
1. What is your character's background?
2. How does your character change throughout the play?
3. What is your character's personality like?
4. What is your character's biggest disappointment?
5. What is his/her happiest moment?
6. What is his/her deepest fear?
7. What does your character want more than anything?
8. What stands in his/her way?

Rehearse

Spend time learning the nuances of the monologue. Each line can carry a different meaning depending on how the words are said. This is where your research on the character can help you. Get inside the mind of your character and really think about what he/she wants. One great way to do this is to write down the 'subtext' of each line in your monologue. A character can say one thing, but mean another. For instance, a character can say "I hate you," in such a way that he/she really means "You've hurt me," or "I actually love you." When you write down 'subtext,' you are writing down the thoughts that your character is thinking as he/she delivers the line. This can help you deliver a powerful and believable performance.

Practice Projection and Enunciation

After you've done all of the character research, memorized and rehearsed your monologue, you'll want to make sure that the audience can hear you and clearly understand your lines! If you can, practice your monologue in the room where you'll be performing, and have a friend sit in the back of the space while you deliver the monologue. Ask them to tell you whether they can hear and clearly understand you! You may also find vocal warm-ups such as tongue twisters very helpful.



Add in Movement

Characters are not statues, rooted to one spot. They gesture, they move, and even pace back and forth when they talk. Use relaxation techniques and do some physical warm-ups to loosen up your body, and then rehearse your monologue adding in movement in places where it feels natural.

Visualize

Form a mental picture in your mind of yourself being relaxed and confident as you deliver your monologue. In particular, imagine that you have just finished your monologue and that you feel content and proud of your performance. Athletes use this technique before running marathons or making free throws; visualization affects your subconscious mind, allowing you to feel more confident and at ease on the day of the audition or show.

Rock the Audition!

If you are preparing your monologue for an actual audition, here are some tips to help you appear confident and professional!

Read the Fine Print

Read the audition notice very carefully. Make sure you are following all of the instructions as to arrival times, what to perform, and materials to bring. Remember, whether or not you get this part, directors and casting agents may keep you in mind for other parts...especially if you are organized and prepared.

Avoid Dull Monologues

Dull monologues are monologues found in books and readily accessible on the internet. These monologues are worn-out and over-used. Instead, try and find some monologues from newer plays or books from another country. For example, if you are in the United States, shop for monologue books on Amazon UK.

Match Your Monologue to the Project

If you are auditioning for a comedy, prepare a comedic monologue, not a Shakespeare soliloquy. Some directors ask you to bring two contrasting pieces. You'll want to make sure that one of them is very similar to the role for which you are auditioning.

Practice Cold Reading

Cold reading means performing lines as you read them for the very first time. You may not be able to get a copy of the play (depending on how new it is, or how available it is), and you may be handed a script to try reading during the audition. If you practice reading all kinds of scenes and monologues out loud beforehand, you'll be better prepared when a surprise comes your way! During a cold-reading, the most important things to remember are to stay in character and to create chemistry with your fellow actors. Make everyone believe that you are thinking and feeling the words on the page.

Dress Appropriately

Unless otherwise noted, it is usually best to wear 'business casual' attire. You'll want to appear charming and professional without looking like a banker. Many new actors make the mistake of wearing costumes to auditions. Directors and casting directors will find this amusing and amateurish, and it is unlikely that they will cast you in their play or film.

Research the Director/Casting Agent

Find out who will be auditing (watching) your audition. Try and learn a bit about their projects and background. This will help you feel more prepared, and it will allow you to tailor your material, conversations and questions appropriately.

Time it Right

If you are able to choose your audition time, avoid the lunch hour, and avoid going last. Many directors and casting agents stay in the space and order lunch in. If you audition during the lunch hour, you will be competing for attention with a turkey sandwich. Additionally, by the end of the day, the auditors will likely be tired and ready to pack up their things while you are giving your stellar performance.

Arrive Early

Allow yourself enough time to get to the audition with time to spare. If you are rushed because you couldn't find the right room, or got stuck in traffic, you will likely feel hurried and stressed right before you must step on stage.

Be Professional

Think of an audition like a job interview. Other actors or crew members may be in the area with you. Don't strike up idle conversations with them; spend your time privately readying yourself. You may wish to bring a book or a crossword puzzle. Focusing on something quietly will also help keep you relaxed and focused.

Make a Great First Impression

When you walk into the room, carry yourself with confidence. Studies have shown that human beings make judgments within the first thirty seconds of meeting someone. If you stand up straight, move with purpose, and smile genuinely upon entering the room, you will come across as relaxed and confident.

Don't Apologize

Directors do not want to hear that you have a cold or that your better outfit is still at the cleaners. Don't complain, either. If you are having a bad day, or it's raining, or this is your fifth audition that day, don't mention it. You're an actor. Pretend you are having the best day ever, and just do your best without complaining or making excuses.

Don't Be a Crazy Person

In other words, do not stand out for the wrong reasons! Do not leap off the stage and deliver your monologue directly in front of the director. Do not stare at the director during your monologue/song. Do not yell. Do not laugh. Do not cry. (Being able to cry on cue is not as impressive as you may think.)

Do Not Use Accents

Unless specifically called for, accents and dialects are not appropriate for auditions. The auditors need to be able to hear what you are saying without straining. And while you may feel clever and amusing, they may be wondering when you will be finished so that they can see the next person.

Stay Within the Time Limit

A general rule of thumb is to keep it short. If you are given a specific time limit, make sure that you do not exceed that time. Some auditions are extremely stringent about this, so best to err on the side of caution and come in well under your limit. Additionally, if an auditor asks you to stop midway into your audition, under no circumstances should you tell them that you are not finished, or ask for more time.

Don't Say "That's It"

When your monologue is over, don't announce the ending by saying "That's it." The proper way to end a monologue is to stand still at the end for a few seconds, then shift your weight slightly and bow your chin and say "Thank you."

