

Advice from Talent Agents for online auditions

DEADLINES:

Respect the deadline as you would an “in the room audition” time; be early and prepared. Do not wait until an hour before the deadline thinking you’ll finish recording, editing and uploading; give yourself room for technical difficulties and other random delays.

Everyone is working tirelessly to get these tapes seen by producers on time. Missed deadlines are among casting’s biggest complaint (even before COVID). If you miss a deadline, then your agent misses the deadline. This means your tape gets sent to casting late, and they either miss their deadline waiting for you, or more likely, they don’t wait for your tape at all and send their selects without yours!

Once the deadline hits, casting begins to download all the tapes from the service they’ve had you upload your tape to (usually an EcoCast invite, or a Casting Workbook link). If you are late, the links EXPIRE, and then your agent has to email casting your tape. This puts your tape at risk of getting lost in their inbox for another few hours, due to their high volume of emails.

Please respect the deadlines. Self-taping is now a heavy part of the job, and you need to do your part in getting it done on time.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS/INSTRUCTIONS: This may sound simple, but please read the emails your agent sends you thoroughly. Each CD needs their tapes done differently – whether it’s their own personal preference or whether it’s a request from studio/producers. Whatever the case, if you do not follow their instructions, you risk your self-tape not being included in selects. Sometimes casting asks for separate files for each scene, sometimes it is all scenes edited together to create one file, sometimes they want a slate at the end, sometimes at the beginning, etc.

Under previous circumstances your agent had the ability to help you edit or adjust your tapes when needed. However, now that everyone is having to self-tape, they aren’t just dealing with a few tapes each day. Having to edit your tape, or chase you down for the missing slate, or needing you to re-do it because of bad sound, framing, etc. puts your tape at risk of not getting to casting on time, and it also takes your agents time away from making sure they meet all their other deadlines.

COMPRESSING FILES: File sizes should be no bigger than 100-150 MB. This ensures quick uploading for you, and quick downloading/uploading for both your agent and casting. If you do not know how to compress your file, or if you do not know how to create a smaller file, please Google – “how to compress (or create) a file using ‘insert your editing software here’”. There will likely be an answer for you on the internet. With casting having to now download hundreds to thousands of auditions in a day, file size can impact their day and therefore their deadlines.

LABELLING: Please label your auditions per casting’s instructions. File names such as “movie.mp4”, “IMG-1454.mov”, and “Ciarra.mov” are at high risk of getting lost in the shuffle. If you are sending multiple takes of one scene, please make sure to send them individually in case casting opts to only send one of the takes. You should only send multiple takes if casting has requested options – or if you decide to give two VERY different choices. If you’ve made very subtle changes, do not send both, pick your favourite. Below are standard labeling examples. If casting doesn’t provide something specific, use the following as a guide:

- For one edited single file (most requested): **Full Name – ROLE – Project**
(ex. Jane Joe – TIRED WOMAN #1 – Her Life)
- For separate slate: **Full Name - ROLE – Project – SLATE**
- For separate takes: **Full Name - ROLE - Sc1Tk1 – Project; Full Name - ROLE – Sc1Tk2 – Project**

SLATES ARE MANDATORY: Please check the notes for slate instructions. As much of casting is currently being done by tape, slates have become important for casting to receive and control uniformity. Casting may specify that they need the slate at the end, at the beginning, or as a separate file. Most slates are generic, but some have more specific information requested. Again, this is where reading the instructions is important. Below are examples of generic slate requests:

- First/Last Name
- Height
- Location
- Age & Date of Birth (if under 18)

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE FOR WHICH YOU ARE TAPING: Another note mentioned by multiple casting offices is that for smaller roles, keep the tape simple! Don't try to do too much with it. It may feel like you have the freedom to push the boundaries of a character when it's not required. Sometimes the role of "pedestrian" is just a pedestrian – keep it simple! Conversely, on the bigger roles, casting is finding actors are spending too much time trying to get the "perfect" read so that the audition loses all life. While it's nice that you have the time and ability to do more than one take, it shouldn't show that you've done it 20 times prior and you're sending take 21. An overworked audition can be just as harmful as an underprepared audition.

READERS: Finding readers by the deadline can be difficult, especially for those who live alone. Safety is also important during these times. If you feel unsafe with having someone in your home for a self-tape, having a reader on the phone or over Zoom/FaceTime/Skype is a great alternative. It is recommended that you not record yourself or use an app to read off of you. As always, do not share sensitive information about the projects or leak any scripts/materials - they are for your eyes only. Your sides (not the full script) is the only thing that should be shared with your reader.

VIDEO/AUDIO: Here are a few general notes about the audio/video aspect of your self-tape.

- Recording your self-tape on your smartphone is completely fine, but please hold it HORIZONTALLY and not vertically.
- Make sure you can be properly seen and heard. This means decent natural lighting, or a minimalistic home lighting set up (ring lights and phone tripods are a great investment). Try to minimize shadows on your face as casting needs to see your eyes.
- Keep the background simple – a plain wall, no art or anything else to pull focus. Try to minimize background noise.
- Have a good frame; unless it's a full body slate or there is lots of movement in the scene, frame the shot with your chest/shoulders at the bottom and just a touch of space above your head.
- Export your video to <100MB
- If you have not received a link for direct uploading, please share your video with your agent via **WeTransfer, Hightail, Dropbox** – or whichever they have indicated is preferred. Make sure it is private and downloadable.

CONFIRM/REGRET: Confirm receipt of each self-tape request. It lets your agent know that you have received the information so that nothing gets missed. If you do not confirm receipt your agent does not know whether to expect your tape. PLEASE do not make your agent chase you down for your self-tape/confirmation/regret. If the deadline is approaching and you are having issues editing/uploading/etc. inform your agent so that they can explore other options.