

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS OF SELF-TAPES

Do memorize the script.

Though it's standard procedure to hold a script when auditioning in person, it's paramount that you give a performance and not a "read" on video. Since a taped audition is locked in place, that first impression is all you get to show whoever views it. Be prepared and know the material so you can give a winning performance.

Do find a partner to perform with.

They shouldn't be onscreen with you, but you want someone you can really "play" with and respond to even if they're just reading lines. Keep your focus on them and look directly into the lens. The more they see your face in the strongest position, the better. Three-quarter angles and profiles are weaker and don't sell you.

Do make sure the camerawork is solid.

You can use a smartphone to tape yourself, but make sure to use a tripod so the camera is stable. If you decide to hire a service that shoots videos, ask the camera person to frame the shot as a medium close up; no one needs to see your shoes or your wrinkled jeans. If you look like you belong on the show, they'll be more disposed to get you on the show.

Do stay within the frame.

It's OK to move your head and use your hands and body, but you need to size the performance for the media. You don't want to stand stiffly—be natural—but you also shouldn't be running around off-camera.

Do dress the part (or at least suggest it).

A lawyer in a suit, an undercover cop in a leather jacket, a student in jeans and t-shirts/leggings and solid-coloured tops. Dresses/skirts are appropriate as well and "dress up/down" accordingly. For girls/women, keep the look "natural" - no excessive make-up, especially for youngsters. Pay attention to your hair and "style it". It's more memorable to be in sapphire blue, fuchsia pink, yellow, or emerald green as opposed to dull gray, beige, or black. Avoid patterns. Men can wear dark suits or jackets, but add color with a shirt, tie, or sweater. A video audition says you look the part, are photogenic, and are a fantastic actor while looking attractive. It's not just about your talent.

Don't hold the script and read.

You *will* eventually look down or away, losing focus while you check a line. They'll assume that you're a beginner and/or aren't prepared.

Don't get too hung up on technique.

A well-intentioned acting teacher might have told you to "tone it down" or lower your volume for the microphone, but this is a classic mistake actors make when thinking they have to use "TV technique." Don't be afraid to move or use your body while staying within the frame of the shot. Casting directors, producers, writers, and directors all want to be excited and inspired by your creative choices and energy.