

SELF-TAPING AUDITIONS

QUICK TIPS

General Tips

- It may sound obvious, but always read the information carefully and *follow directions*. The tips we're discussing are general standards for our market, but some casting directors/clients may have certain ways they want you to frame the shot, do the slate, label your files, etc. So, always follow directions so your video doesn't get thrown out without being watched.
- Always make sure the viewer can clearly hear you and see you. And be sure to be facing the camera and not having the side or back of your head facing camera.
- Remember: you are selling the part, so make sure you are delivering the lines, being expressive, etc. and not just reciting the lines to the camera.
- Keep the production simple. Do NOT go out and actually shoot the scene, write new dialogue, add music/sound effects/titles, etc. You are being hired as an actor, not a director/DP/writer, etc. They want to see what you can do with the role without all the bells and whistles.
- Avoid props and costumes. You can dress appropriate for the role you're auditioning for, though. So, if it's a business-type role for a commercial maybe a dress shirt or Polo shirt would be appropriate. And a color that's flattering to you and different than your background. Avoid busy patterns or anything distracting.

Framing the Shot

- It is recommended that you use a tripod. They also make tripods for phones now. If not, sit it on a steady surface. No hand-held cameras.
- Camera should be at eye level with the actor. If you shoot angled up or angled down it will look weird on screen. (Again, if you don't have a tripod, you will need to be creative and stack up some books to sit the camera on, etc. to be eye level with actor). Actor can look toward camera when giving audition...just past the lens, instead of looking directly into the lens.
- Unless otherwise directed, the audition should be done in a Medium Close-Up shot, which would have the actor's chest at the bottom part of the shot and just a little room over the head on the top part of the shot. Actor is centered on screen. See example:



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- If you are using the camera to record with, be sure that you turn sideways prior to starting to record, so that the camera is shooting in widescreen (horizontally), instead of vertically. This fills out the entire screen with your image instead of having the black bars on the sides and making the video smaller.



Slates:

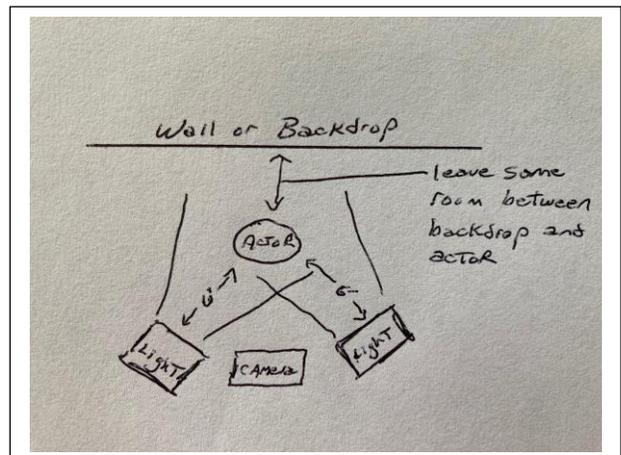
- A slate is an actor introducing themselves to the camera. This helps casting match names/faces, but also gives a sense of personality and what the actor looks like close up and at full length, too. Traditionally, these have been first, followed by the audition. In recent years, some have started adding to the end, so the client can watch the audition first, then the slate. Either way is still acceptable, but I am preferring to add at the end... I think this helps when clients are reviewing a lot of auditions, they can dive right in when clicking play.
- Start with a close-up or medium close-up shot and you will verbally say your name and agency. "Hello, I'm John Doe with Talent Fusion." Depending on directions, they could also ask you to mention your height, location or even raise up your hands in the shot so they can see close-ups of the front/back of your hands. But in general, just saying name/agency is minimum. Then, they would like to see a full length body shot of the actor. If you have a zoom function on your camera, then zoom out to a full length shot. Or if not, you can start a new clip with a full length view and just edit together. This just gives them an idea what the actor looks like as a whole person.
- Do not add text on screen with your slate, say it verbally, unless otherwise directed. (Sometimes they may even request you write it on a piece of paper and hold it in front of your chest during the slate)
- Unless otherwise directed, the slate and audition should be edited into one video clip.

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Lighting

- For best results, I would recommend investing in buying a light kit. You can research different kinds and use what is best for you. Personally, I like soft box lights, which give a nice light, but help soften it a little bit so it's not too harsh.
- At minimum, angle two soft box lights to cover both sides of your face. Lights should be about 6 feet from the actor. Camera is straight ahead of actor. And leave a little room between you and the backdrop (or wall) behind you, to avoid shadows and add a little depth on camera. An overhead light can also help fill in some other areas, too.
- You'll have to play around with adjusting the lights closer and further away from the actor, etc. to see what looks best on camera. You want to make sure they are well lit, avoiding any drastic shadows or getting too close to the lights where the actor becomes washed out. If the room is too dark, the video will look grainy. Some overhead lights can also help.
- If you don't have a light kit, you'll need to use lamps and lights you have in your house. Again, playing around with adding/moving lights to get it looking good. A tip: your home lightbulbs come in different color tones: warm, cool or daylight. "Daylight" bulbs will look best on camera, whereas the "warm" bulbs tend to cast a yellowish tint to the scene. If you can incorporate some natural light from windows, that can be good, but do not tape auditions outside.



Here's a sample set-up using Soft Box lights, which can be purchased on Amazon and other online (and brick-and-mortar) Audio-Visual / photography / tech retailers.

There are also other types of light kits, some of which can be rigged on the camera. Just do your research and find what is right for you.

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Camera/Tripod

- For cameras, you don't need to go super high-end honestly, just something that will take a good video. Some people like DSLR cameras; others prefer HD camcorders (like the Canon Vixias). And most of the phones today have great cameras in them. (Just refer to the previous section about shooting in landscape/widescreen). Do your research and find what is best for you.
- I would recommend a Tripod, which can be purchased relatively inexpensively. They have taller ones for cameras and even the phones have tripods built for them.

Sound

- This is an important part! Make sure they can hear you. Some cameras built-in mics might be good enough, but I would encourage you to look into getting an external microphone that you can plug into your camera.
- Most common is a shotgun mic. This can be mounted on top of the camera (and they have some that are compatible with smartphones, too). You can also use this type of mic on a boom pole and have hanging down over you. The wire from the mic will plug into your camera.
- Some people prefer a lavalier (lav) microphone, which clips onto your shirt. They typically have a battery pack that you can clip on to your pants and then a receiver that plugs into the camera.
- Make sure there is not background noise (TV on, people talking, noise outside, etc.). And watch for big open rooms with hard-surfaced floors, they can sometimes make the audio echo. And don't shoot outside.



Example: Shotgun Mic



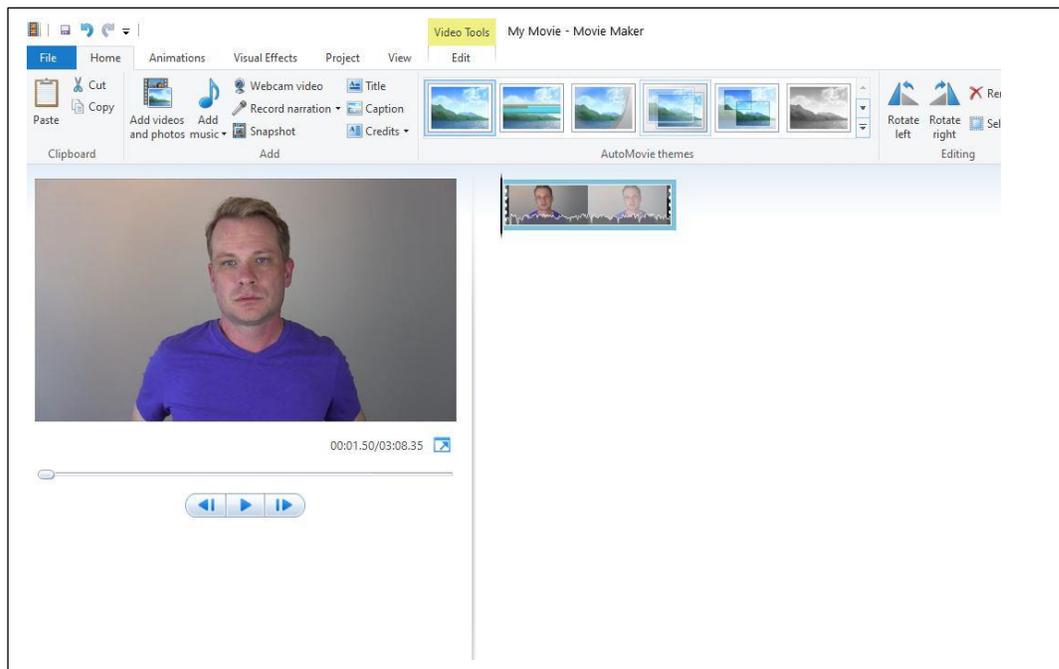
Example: Lavalier (Lav) Mic

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Editing

- There are tons of different editing software and apps out there. Most computers come with free editing software on them. Windows Movie Maker, iMovie, etc. Your phone should have free apps you can download (Slatable, FilmicPro, etc.). You do not need high-end editing software like Adobe Premiere or anything like that. Simple editors will work fine. (Personally – I’ve always liked Windows Movie Maker – they have a newer version now, but you can still search and download the old version, which I think is very user friendly).
- You can pull clips from your camera/phone over to your computer and then drag those clips into the editing software, trim them if need to and save/export. And some of the phone apps you can shoot and edit everything on your phone.
- Remember: You don’t need to fade in from black; don’t add any titles/music/sound effects/graphics/actor headshots/fancy wipes or effects, etc.



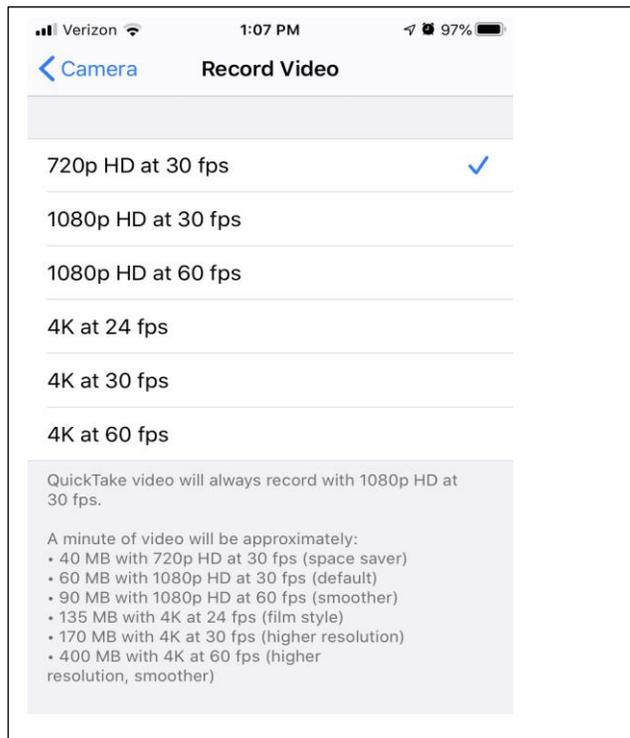
Example of editing dashboard in Windows Movie Maker

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Shooting Resolution / Compressing your Video

- This can be one of the most confusing aspects about the whole video audition process. Many cameras today have high-end resolution for extremely clear images. Even some phones can shoot in 4K resolution. But for auditions, you don't need to have that high of resolution. Your video will be viewed on a computer screen or maybe even a mobile device...not broadcast or a large TV. So, never shoot in 4K.
- Typical resolution for online viewing is 720p. So, I always recommend people shoot their video in 720p resolution. If you go into your camera's settings, you can select which option you want. If there is a frame rate (fps – frames per second), you can select 30.



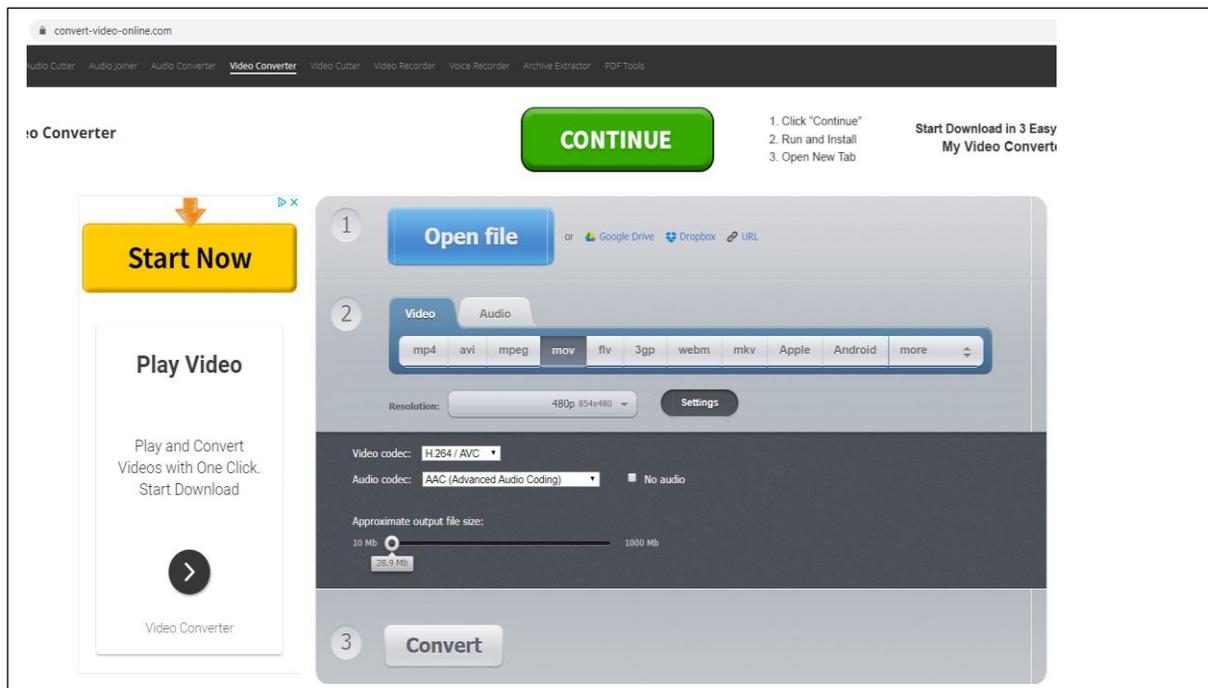
Here is an example from an iPhone SE, under "settings" and "camera" you can select what resolution to shoot in. All cameras should have some kind of settings button you can select to change.

- After you edit your video, when you export it, you should have options to on what size you want to export and what format. Depending on what you are using, it may refer to it as Quicktime (.mov) or .mp4. These are the two most common formats you should save as. For size, it could say "medium-high quality H.264" or it may have list 720p or 480p or it could list resolution options...which you want to keep between 1280 x 720 on the high end or 854 x 480 on the low end.

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- If you have a file that is large, there are also different converters online that will help you resize the video. Keeping the quality, but making the file size smaller. One website I think is helpful, is a free one at: convert-video-online.com
- You can upload your video file and then choose which format you want (.mov is best option) and you can select the size of output file you want to have. (On our end, getting files under 40MB is great to upload into our system. But it also depends on how long the audition is). You'll need internet service to use this since it's a website application.
- Hit the convert button, then "download." The file should download to your computer. And then you can send it to us (or the casting director or whoever you are sending the audition to) via the methods below.



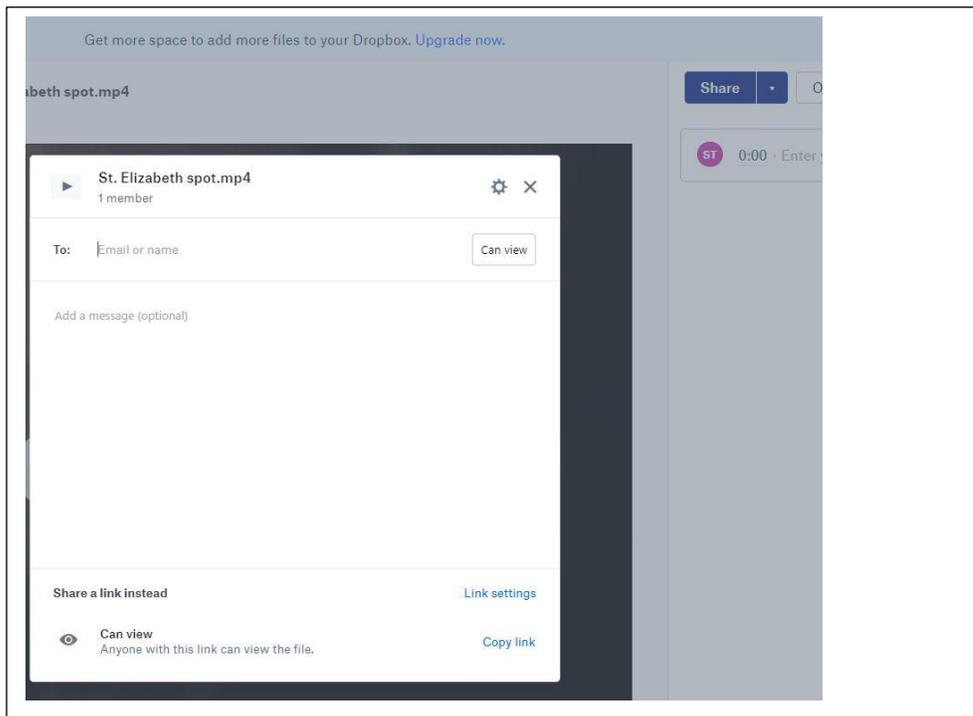
Sending

- Always remember name your file with your Name, Role and Agency. (You could include project name if you want, too). If they have given different instructions, then follow those. And avoid characters like hyphens, dashes, parenthesis, slash, etc. Either put an underscore _ symbol or just a space between. Example: "John Doe_IU Health_DOCTOR_Talent Fusion." This helps when sorting files they receive, instead of them getting 100 files that all say "Audition" or the default the camera might save the file as "0356490823.mov."

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- Most video files are probably going to be too large to email as an attachment. (If the file is 15MB or less, then it's probably OK to send via email. Otherwise, it will be best to use some kind of file transfer to send it. There are plenty of free options out there: [wetransfer.com](https://www.wetransfer.com), [dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com), [google drive](https://www.google.com/drive), etc. They work by you uploading the file on your end and you can put the recipient's email and then it will send a link to them and they can download on their end. Others you can create a shareable link and then just copy/paste that link in an email to send.
- On dropbox or google drive, when you hit the "share" button, be sure you select the "copy link" or "Get shareable link." This will give you a direct link that you can copy and then paste into the body of an email to send to us or whoever is receiving your audition. By doing this option, anyone with the link can view your file. If you just select "share" it is only shareable with that specific person's email address and on some platforms they would have to even create a user account. This just keeps things easier and quicker for the casting director.



- Do not put on YouTube unless instructed. You can't easily download the file, so most people don't like that method. But if you do have to send something via YouTube, be sure to put it as "Unlisted." That way, only a person with that link can view the file.

Remember, the better and more professional looking you can make your auditions, the stronger it helps to book you. Please let us know if you have any questions.