
5 TIPS TO REDUCING SELF-TAPE STRESS

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So, you have been invited to submit a self-tape.

Congratulations! Does the thought of creating a self-tape immediately suck all of the air out of your lungs? If the answer is yes. Breathe. You aren't alone. I remember the feeling well, but I want to assure you this is something you can absolutely learn how to do and do well. From my own experiences as an actor and casting multiple projects where I have viewed thousands of self-tapes, I have compiled 5 tips to help send your stress packing so you can focus on what you love to do. Act.

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KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE

1. Remember who you are. You are an actor. A creative. You have been given the opportunity to do what you love. You have been invited to audition for a project. This is and of itself is a win. Self-tapes allow you to be considered for projects in multiple locations. You can create them on your timeline. No traveling to casting or production offices, battling traffic and parking tickets. This is a huge pro and you are a pro so let's try to shelf the self-doubt and see all the positives. It's not easy. We can be a self-deprecating bunch so again, breathe. Remember all the pros instead of the cons.

2. Read the specific instruction from casting.

Write them down and check them off. It doesn't bode well for you if your tape doesn't include all of the specifics casting is looking for. You want them to remember you for all of the RIGHT reasons. Not that you couldn't follow directions. Ouch. What specifics are usually included? Specific slate instructions. Separate slate, tail slate, what to include in your slate, full body slate, etc. Do not slate in character. Your slate should be the best representation of YOU. Specific framing instructions. If none are given the standard frame is mid chest to just above your head.

3. Remember your role prep techniques. When you prepping your role be sure to read and reread the description provided by casting. Sometimes actors just want to rush right into the dialogue and miss the really important moments in the scene that happen before the dialogue begins and after the dialogue ends. Ask yourself "What would my character be doing? What does my character want? Let these questions guide you. Make specific choices. Don't be afraid of the silence. Your body, your eyes, your choices all can say so much on their own. Every scene should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Even if you have just one line of dialogue, be conscious of how your character feels and what they are doing when the scene begins, in the middle and when it ends.

SOUND IS CRUCIAL

4. Lighting and Backdrop. Absolutely make sure you have a well lit area. Ideally, you should have two lights in front of you on either side of the camera. If you don't have the budget for lighting, it is possible to use natural light and lamps you have around your apartment or house. Before you combine light sources try all natural light first and if it's too dark, try all artificial light. Your background should be a solid color and free of clutter. Remove any art, photos, etc that could be distracting and take away from your performance. If hanging a sheet with command strips or painting tape is easier than removing things from walls then do it. The sheet you choose should be a solid color and wrinkle free! Note what you choose to wear against your background, too. Record practice takes until the look, your wardrobe and the light all look their best!

5. Sound. Sound is crucial. If casting can't hear you they can't cast you. Sound cannot be an undervalued element in your self tape auditions. Don't spend all of your energy making sure you look right, you also have to make sure you pay attention to how you sound, too. The easiest way to produce high quality sound on a low budget is a quiet room so pick a time and a place that is the most quiet. Make sure you are close enough to the microphone on your camera that you can be heard clearly AND make sure you have whoever is reading with you is off-camera and farther away from the microphone so it picks YOU up louder than them. You do not want casting to clearly hear the reader, but have to strain to hear YOU. Another helpful tip is if your reader is your eyeline make sure they aren't too far away from the lens. Casting wants to see your face and eyes as much as possible. So do some practice takes and check your sound to make sure you are coming through loud and clear!

Doing the work and practicing your craft will only serve to benefit you as an actor. Break a leg!