

Ten Top Tips:

Self-taping

Technical Tips:

1. Framing

Always. Always. Always. Film in landscape.

Frame yourself in a flattering way: don't angle the camera up or down, it should be level with you.

Generally, frame size should fit from your chest to just above your head, although this is scene specific. If there is a good reason for a wider shot, go for it, but remember to pitch your performance accordingly.

Keep your eye line tight to either side of the camera, but don't look down the lens.

2. Lighting

Day-light is usually best. We need to see you, but generally a softer, warmer light is better. Flatter yourself.

3. Backgrounds

Keep the background in the background! Ideally, a plain white wall. Failing that, a plain, uncluttered wall. Uncluttered should read as *empty*. We should not see your bedroom. Do not use a green screen. Nothing should distract from you and your performance. Keep it simple.

Watch out for shadows here too. A little soft shadow is fine, but don't let it distract. No large, dark, looming shadows, please.

Script Choice Tips

4. Know Your Casting

If you're able to choose a character, make sure it fits your casting type. If you aren't sure what that is, talk to your agent, or ask friends and family to describe you using three adjectives.

5. Avoid the Iconic

Avoid iconic characters and monologues which will draw immediate comparisons. There have been countless Hamlets, so you can go ahead and add yours, but don't pitch yourself against Bryan Cranston's Walter White, Marlon Brando's Godfather, Cuba Gooding Junior's Rod Tidwell ('Show. Me. The Money!'), or frankly anything Robin Williams has done, for example.

6. Think about the Journey

If the choice of text is yours, try to find something that progresses the character's journey. Speeches read out to an audience are not ideal. We want to see the character in a moment of struggle, where they need to make a choice that will change things for them.



Performance Tips

7. Minimise Movement

Don't freeze, but keep any movement, even just with your eyes, specific, purposeful (move with intention), and clear. When used, any movement should contribute to the audience's understanding of character, and situation.

Similarly, glancing at the script (once or twice) is fine, but keep the script in a good position for your eye-line so we don't lose you each time. Ideally, lines should be learnt before you tape, though.

8. Make a Discovery

Show the camera your character making a discovery. What do they learn in this text? What changes for them here? Don't tell us how the scene ends at the beginning. We need to go on a journey with you: there should be twists and turns, and it should build toward something (a discovery or change).

9. Remember the Basics

We need to hear you – your diction and general articulation must to be sharp. Your vocal delivery should also take us on a journey: from light to dark, and back again? Vary the pace, pitch, and tone, as well as the emotionality. Play.

Don't rush – but earn your pause. If you take one, make sure you *fill it*, not with activity – with thought.

Connect – with the character, and with the audience. The camera is your audience, don't forget to play to them. You need to draw them in with your performance. Make and keep that connection – don't lose them!

Never present a caricature. Your character might be the 'villain' in the story, but you should never play 'a villain'. Don't judge your character, always play their story as they see it.

Show don't tell. The words are only part of the story. How is your character feeling about what they're saying? What are they trying to hide?

Always. Always. Always. Play the Stakes.

Finalising the Cut

10. Make a professional offer

A professional self-tape should be slated. You can edit this in relatively easily with free software (eg. OpenShot).

Don't send more than one version, they'll only watch the first. Make a choice.

Keep it simple. Don't think of it as giving them everything you've got – rather, leave them wanting more...

