

## **Audition Procedures**

### **WKU Film – BFA Program**

*Below are the approved WKU Film BFA Program Audition Procedures. Please read completely and carefully, prepare for each audition appropriately, and conduct auditions accordingly. Also, this document is to serve the director's process in working with their auditioning actors and, for sake of clarity, does not include the mechanics of running an audition.*

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#### Director Preparation

*Prior to each round of auditions, the director must prepare themselves according to the following:*

1. *Choose sides that will allow the actor to 'do something' – the sides you choose must have a specific WANT and a clear ESSENTIAL ACTION for their character. Stay away from scenes that are filled with emotions, 'action paragraphs', or physical states of being (drunk, hysterical, hallucinating). Give your actor the best possible chance to succeed. If your script does not have any scene as described, find one that does and use that for auditions – something along the same genre and tone as your screenplay.*
2. *Make a full Practical Aesthetics analysis for each character for all sides given to your actors. You should have the following for each character and each scene you are auditioning – write these on your script and bring it to the audition for adjustments and explication:*
  - a. *Literal action*
  - b. *What the character wants from the other character/s in the scene*
  - c. *At least 2 Essential actions*
  - d. *At least 3 Tactics*
  - e. *At least 2 As-Ifs (1 high-stakes consequence, 1 low-stakes consequence)*
3. *As you will have someone reading the sides for you with the actors, you need to bring a notebook to jot down your initial reactions to the auditions, answering the 3 Questions (below).*
4. *Write out the Character Circumstances that are relevant for each character for each scene you are using as audition sides. Only what is relevant to that scene and can be found in the full script. You may use these to answer actor questions if they have any.*

#### What a Director Looks for in an Audition

*The director must ask themselves these 3 questions and answer them honestly concerning each actor. The answers to these questions will determine whether the actor is a viable option for your film. The 3 questions are listed in order of importance. If the actor has a score less than 60% they are not a viable choice. There are no half-points, an actor either gets full credit for a question or no credit.*

1. *Do I believe them? (45%)*
2. *Can they be directed? (30%)*
3. *Can I see them as the character? (25%)*

#### What a Director Does in an Audition

*To answer the 3 questions above, the director must follow the WKU Film BFA Program Audition Protocol laid out below. This order of operations will allow you to spend more time assessing the actor against the 3 questions as well as giving the actor, and yourself, a better chance at arriving at an honest assessment of the*

*performer's abilities. These steps are to be used for each step in the audition process (see end of document) as they are universally applicable.*

1. The director will introduce themselves and give a rehearsed 1-to-2 sentence synopsis clearly describing the film.
2. The director will give a rehearsed 1-to-2 sentence Literal Action for the character the actor is auditioning for – whichever scene you have chosen to read, the Literal Action is based on that scene.
3. The director will give a rehearsed 1 sentence scene WANT describing clearly what their character wants from the other character/s in the scene.
4. Tell the actor that you will read them twice and that on the first read you will offer no direction as you want to see their take on the scene. Then tell them you will offer them an adjustment before the second read to see how they take direction.
5. Inform the actor that you are not looking to see if they are 'right for the role' or how well they act the scene; what you are looking for is their ability to commit to a simple action to achieve what they want from their scene partner (the reader). Offer an example: In the scene where your want is, "I want my professor to give me an extra day to turn in an assignment," I'm looking to see how well you can commit yourself to the action, "to get a favor" or "to get a favor from a jerk".
6. Ask the actor if they have any questions. If they do, only answer those that fall under relevant character circumstances you have written out during your Director Preparation.
7. After the first read, compliment that actor's choice of tactic. "I like how you challenged him there." Don't go into any more depth than that as the urge to discuss results is often too strong to resist.
8. Give a clear and actionable adjustment using only the one of the following:
  - a. Adjust the Essential Action\*
  - b. Adjust the Tactic
  - c. Offer an As-If Adjustment
  - d. *Special Note: if you are not giving the actor an Essential Action adjustment make sure you are at least acknowledging what you believed to have been their Essential Action in conjunction with their Tactic or As-If Adjustment.)*
9. After the second read, offer a compliment concerning their ability to take direction. Thank them for coming in to audition and let them know when they can expect to hear from you and your team concerning casting or further auditions.
10. Before auditioning the next actor:
  - a. Write down 1-2 sentences about what your thoughts were about the first read.
  - b. Write down 1-2 Sentences about what your thoughts are about the second read.
  - c. Write down what adjustment you gave the actor.
  - d. Answer the 3 Questions honestly.

#### Common Adjustments

1. ACTOR HAS TOO MUCH/TOO LITTLE ENERGY:  
If the actor has too much/too little energy or intensity in the scene, use either your high-stakes or low-stakes As-If adjustment. This will often alter the energy result you are trying to achieve.
2. ACTOR DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE DRAMATIC INTENTION OF THE SCENE:  
If the actor isn't utilizing a specific tactic, or the tactic wasn't in line with the scene want/essential action, compliment them *with the tactic you would like them to use* in the following read. The actor will be proud of their use of that tactic (to challenge to get what I want) on their scene partner in the first read and they will often attempt to use the tactic *to challenge to get what I want* in the second – even though they never really used it in the

first. Couple this compliment with a simple Essential Action adjustment – for which “to challenge to get what I want” is appropriate.

3. ACTOR DOESN'T SEEM TO BE LISTENING/INTERACTING WITH THEIR SCENE PARTNER:

If the actor is just waiting for their turn to speak, if they are indicating that they are listening by 'showing you' what they think or how they 'feel' about what the reader is saying, or if they seem to have rehearsed reactions use an Essential Action adjustment. Give them a gentle reminder that you are only interested in seeing how well they commit to their Essential Action to get what they want from their scene partner. Their focus should always be on the other actor so they can see if they are getting closer to or farther from getting what they want.

4. ACTOR IS REALLY HAMMING IT UP:

If the actor is rolling their eyes, huffing & puffing, or generally chewing the scenery use a combination of #2 & #3 as well as gently reminding them that the camera and the edit will supply all dramatic effect – their job is to commit to their Essential Action and get what they Want from their scene partner.

5. ACTOR HAS A TICK/HABIT PRIOR TO DELIVERING A LINE:

If an actor habitually exhales prior to saying a line, fixes their hair before saying a line, or any number of actor ticks use any of the adjustments above (but only one) and gently suggest that in the next read they try to deliver their line without (insert tick here), immediately. Let them know that it will seem uncomfortable, but it will fuel their performance and allow them to more fully commit to their Essential Action.

Cold Reads

*A Cold Read is the first audition. In general, the actor should have very little time with the script and the purpose is to see the performer's immediate take on the role and narrative – the director will be able to gauge the actor's professionalism and ability to deliver under pressure. The actor should be given the sides they will be reading no more than 24 hours before, and no less than 30 minutes in prior to their audition slot.*

*Purpose: Can this person commit to a simple action to get something they want from their scene partner?*

Call Backs

*A Call Back is the second audition. In general, the actor will have 2 sets of sides provided them for the character they are auditioning for. The actor should be prepared for this audition and the sides should be delivered to them along with their appointment no less than 3 days in advance.*

*Purpose: Without my help, could this person commit to the actions required by the script?*

Chemistry Reads

*A Chemistry Read is the third audition. In general, the actor will return with 2 sets of sides provided them for the character they are auditioning for. They will audition with other actors who are auditioning for the characters who they are in those scenes with. Through a cycle, all of the actors playing opposing roles will read together. This is a long process and the actors should be informed of this ahead of time and given a window that you would like for them to be available. Actors should be given the sides no less than 3 days in advance of the audition.*

*Purpose: Do these actors make each other better than they were on their own?*