

# Unit 18: Auditions for Actors

<b>Unit code:</b>	<b>H/502/5394</b>
<b>QCF Level 3:</b>	<b>BTEC National</b>
<b>Credit value:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Guided learning hours:</b>	<b>60</b>

## ● Aim and purpose

This unit equips learners with the planning skills and key acting techniques to deliver effective audition performances for employment in live theatre and filmed media.

## ● Unit introduction

In order to gain work, actors are usually required to audition. The audition should be a piece of perfection, thought about, rehearsed and honed with at least as much attention as would be given to any full-length play.

It is essential that audition pieces be chosen carefully. Learners must develop awareness of their own acting strengths and weaknesses, and of their own personal behaviour within an interview situation. They should also discover the extent of their versatility as a performer in a range of areas, including: character portrayal; voice; speech; movement; emotional range; ease with different text styles; and interaction with audition audiences.

Any audition performance should be designed to appeal to a specific audience. Typically, within theatre, this will be the director of the play to be cast; in film/television, the production director and casting director (and possibly producer); and within drama schools, a course director or other teaching staff member. Judgement of audition performance is broadly concerned less with entertainment, than with the actor's suitability for casting as a specific character within a particular style or genre of performance. The needs of drama school auditioners in particular mean that they must be assured that prospective learners show an appropriately professional attitude, and display courage, imagination, spontaneity and commitment.

Audition pieces may be drawn from a variety of material. In theatre and for drama school auditions the 'norm' is a speech from a full-length play, using a monologue lifted or adapted from the original context. Here, learners need to be aware of the whole-play context of the piece, in particular character details. Screen auditions typically require the actor to read from a given script, with little time to prepare. Here there may be a non-actor eg casting director, 'filling in' lines spoken by another character in a duologue.

While the audition is usually something delivered as a solo act, learners can work together to offer each other positive criticism.

**Assessment will take place in at least three audition pieces, two of which must be contrasting.**

## ● Learning outcomes

**On completion of this unit a learner should:**

- 1 Know how to select suitable audition material
- 2 Be able to relate vocal and physical performance technique to character and style
- 3 Be able to use vocal and physical technique in performance.

# Unit content

---

## 1 Know how to select suitable audition material

*Research and planning:* eg assessing function/relevance of characterisation; analysis of text to build a character profile; deconstructing a script eg units/objectives/barriers; communication with director to develop interpretation of the role; assessing nature of actor/audience relationship; researching the work and preferences of organisations that hold auditions

*Material:* eg contemporary naturalism, realism, expressionism, surrealism, epic, Greek, choral and ensemble, melodrama, Commedia dell'Arte, Restoration, Pre-Elizabethan, Elizabethan/Jacobean, grotesque, farce, physical or visual theatre, political, theatre of cruelty, theatre of the absurd; play texts; screenplays; use of 'compilation' books versus use of speeches taken or adapted from plays

*Contrasting:* eg naturalistic/stylized; serious/comic; close-to-type/away-from-type; internalised emotionality/externalised emotionality

## 2 Be able to relate vocal and physical performance technique to character and style

*Vocal technique:* posture; body awareness; breath control; breath capacity; facial relaxation; body relaxation; loudness; inflection; tone; pace; pausing; accent/dialect; diction; vocal idiosyncrasies; pitch; pause; resonance

*Physical technique:* posture; gesture; use of tension, height, openness, space and eye contact; range and appropriateness of energy

*Character:* age; status; power in relationships; personality and attitudes; given circumstances, including objectives/barriers

*Style:* eg naturalism, realism, expressionism, surrealism, epic, Greek, choral and ensemble, melodrama, commedia dell'arte, Restoration, Pre-Elizabethan, Elizabethan/Jacobean, grotesque, farce, physical or visual theatre, political, theatre of cruelty, theatre of the absurd, play text, screenplay

*Growth and development:* engagement with the role; character decisions; experiment and risk; extension and refinement; memorising

## 3 Be able to use vocal and physical technique in performance

*Vocal technique:* posture; body awareness; breath control; breath capacity; facial relaxation; body relaxation; loudness; inflection; tone; pace; pausing; accent/dialect; diction; vocal idiosyncrasies; pitch; pause; resonance

*Physical technique:* posture; gesture; relaxation technique; use of tension, height, openness, space and eye contact; range and appropriateness of energy; using imagination to visualise environment

*Audition performance requirements:* eg learned monologue; sight-read monologue; sight-read duologue; response to re-direction during audition; requirement to improvise during audition

## Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
<b>P1</b> describe the suitability of chosen audition material for audition contexts [CT]	<b>M1</b> explain the suitability of chosen audition material for audition contexts	<b>D1</b> analyse the suitability of chosen audition material for audition contexts
<b>P2</b> develop vocal and physical performance technique, responding to character and style of audition text [EP]	<b>M2</b> develop vocal and physical performance technique, showing control and thoughtfulness in response to character and responding to style of audition text	<b>D2</b> develop vocal and physical performance technique, showing consistent control, physical ease and an imaginative response to character and responding to style of audition text
<b>P3</b> demonstrate vocal and physical technique in an audition situation. [SM]	<b>M3</b> demonstrate competent vocal and physical technique in an audition situation.	<b>D3</b> demonstrate effective and confident vocal and physical technique in an audition situation.

**PLTS:** This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

<b>Key</b>	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

# Essential guidance for tutors

---

## Delivery

An assessment of each individual learner's preferred personal style of vocal and physical communication, should lead to an informed evaluation of own vocal and physical strengths and weaknesses. This can be followed by an exploration of each learner's skill and confidence across a range of audition methods, role types and script/play genres. This structured process should guide learners towards an awareness of the suitability of particular audition pieces. Learners should therefore be encouraged to research and read a wide variety of potential material. In addition tutors should guide learners through an understanding and experience of the full range of the audition process, including sight-reading, receiving re-direction of a monologue, and participating in spontaneous improvisation activity. Books containing compilations of monologues designed for audition can be very useful in introducing learners to the styles, length and range of audition monologues: these can, however, quickly lose their value within professional and drama school situations, as a result of overuse. It is preferable therefore to make final selection of speeches for assessment from full play texts. Whatever the source for a selected monologue, learners should be familiar with their chosen piece within the context of the entire play. It may also be feasible to adapt passages from plays where other characters are involved, by cutting duologues to create solo pieces.

Tutors may choose to pre-select a range of short monologues for learners to work on collectively at a formative stage. By this means learners can experiment with forms of delivery and then evaluate material for its suitability for different members of the group. Extracts chosen here should be short enough to be learned quickly; detailed work can then follow and become the focus of the session.

Learners should choose contrasting audition pieces that allow for versatility to be evident. Consideration of contrast might include: tragedy/comedy, classical/modern, naturalistic/stylized, serious/comic, close-to-type/away-from-type, internalised emotionality/externalised emotionality. Learners should choose a shortlist of pieces on which they may wish to be assessed, which may then be 'tested' through performance to the rest of the group. Through regular performance, discussion and positive criticism, final choices can be made, and learned.

The physical environment for auditions can vary greatly, from formal stage settings to restricted non-theatre spaces. Learners should experience the need to adapt their audition performances; tutors can help by changing location for the second audition assignment. As an option, tutors may incorporate elements of a television audition into one of the summative audition assignments for example by using a television script for the sight reading element of the process.

## Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to unit and structure of the programme – whole class. Explain self-focused nature of unit, including aspects of evidence gathering. Introduce Assignments 1 and 2, 'Audition: 1' and 'Audition: 2'
Introduce workshop series; run solo relaxation/warm-up session. Introduce and explore different audition situations/techniques using a range of texts eg learned performed monologue, re-directed monologue, rehearsed reading, sight reading, 'theatre monologue' audition versus 'television duologue' audition; also explore improvisation exercises used within auditions. Guest professional workshop – discuss/explore audition technique/selection of material with a visiting professional (actor or director). Conduct own research, shortlisting audition pieces for final selection. Group work on naturalistic approaches to character development, using shortlisted or sample audition scripts: character profiling, uniting, setting and using objectives/barriers.
Planning work for both Auditions. Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• select three monologues eg two naturalistic contemporary, one in another style/genre</li><li>• complete profiles of each character using full play text</li><li>• read aloud each chosen monologue, and discuss content/themes/styles</li><li>• revise and present each character as a contrasting 'case study' (whole group)</li><li>• prepare for first in-character hotseating sessions (private warm-up and preparation)</li><li>• participate in hotseating sessions (whole group)</li><li>• review character work and complete planning for auditions.</li></ul>
<b>Assignment 1: Acting Audition 1 (prepare two contrasting monologues) (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, M2, P3, M3, D3)</b> Participate in monologue 'uniting' exercise, including identifying objectives/barriers. Line-learning and independent character work. First and second monologue rehearsals, including mock audition with re-direction. Performance under audition conditions eg self-introduction; audition; re-directed audition; improvisation exercise; sight-reading. Post-performance video review and evaluation.
<b>Assignment 2: Acting Audition 2 (prepare one monologue) (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, M2, P3, M3, D3)</b> Participate in monologue 'uniting' exercise, including identifying objectives/barriers. Line-learning and independent character work. Third monologue rehearsal, including mock audition with re-direction. Performance under audition conditions eg self-introduction; audition; re-directed audition; improvisation exercise; sight-reading. Post-performance video review and evaluation.
Review of module and process.

## Assessment

Evidence for this unit will be generated via practical workshop classes, and rehearsed performance, underpinned by appropriate research and textual analysis. Evidence for the research and rehearsal phases will be in the form of an actor's log that will document the investigations, theoretical and experiential, into audition requirements, and into differences between acting styles. Although this log will generally be written, learners should be encouraged to use a range of supporting material and to express their creative process in a personal manner. In order to support a range of learners' needs, it may be appropriate to consider different methods of collating the evidence for example video diary, viva voce, discussion groups. Further evidence of learners' working processes and creative contributions will be in the form of documentation, such as tutor statements. Supporting tutor statements may be contained either in the feedback given to learners in interim recorded feedback sessions, or through the use of an observation report of learners work. It may also be appropriate to consider the use of video recording to provide evidence at key stages during the rehearsal process, for example of formative activity such as character hotseating, participation in stylized movement workshops etc.

The unit requires learners to research and have practical evidence of working with a range of contrasting audition pieces. Learners will use edited extracts from published play texts, as this unit does not require learners to prepare and perform full-length plays. However, the extracts should each allow for the exploration and realisation of key relevant 'stylistic' features, such as audience interaction, character-based movement, approaches to vocalising text, and projection of emotions.

Learning outcome 1 could be evidenced through a range of artefacts that combine to represent learners' investigation of approaches to text and character within audition piece as well as their assessment of the suitability of the texts they have chosen. Learners' responses to two different key practitioners should produce observable differences in content. For example, planning work for a Brechtian audition piece would feature a high degree of image-based preparatory work, with focus on the contrasting personalities of 'the actor' and the fictional character; while work on a Shakespearean tragic play text would focus on character relationships within the story of the play, as well an analysis of verse-speaking technique.

Learning outcomes 2 and 3 will be evidenced primarily through documentary evidence, including some videotaped recording of learners' successful progress through rehearsal to live performance in front of an audition panel. The learner's actor's log completed by each learner should incorporate reflections and analysis of own contributions; this could be combined with notes (with actor comments) from the guiding director/tutor. The live audition performance should be recorded for internal and external verification purposes.

To achieve P1 learners should provide a list of chosen audition pieces giving reasons for their choices and unelaborated descriptions of each piece. At this level cited reasons will tend to be obvious and rather simplistic and descriptions of chosen pieces will be in the form of generalised statements regarding the genre and style of each piece. For M1, learners will provide an account that gives more detail with regard to choices made. They may, for example, explain why a particular piece was favoured over another and will also be able to compare and contrast the features of a programme of different audition pieces. The key features of each audition piece will also be explained in greater detail and related to choices made. To achieve D1 learners should provide an account that demonstrates a detailed investigation into possible audition pieces that has resulted in appropriate and well-considered choices being made. Learners should relate choices to their own vocal and physical ability. They may also discuss their choices in light of requirements of specific drama schools/HE institutions they are considering applying to. Close reference to the style and content of the pieces will be used to justify decisions made.

To achieve P2 learners should prepare for their audition(s) in an largely appropriate manner working cooperatively during group sessions and undertaking some individual work to develop a performance that is mostly appropriate to the character and style of the piece. Pass learners are, however, likely to have a passive approach to this process and may need guidance to produce an outcome. For M2, learners will work in a more active manner. Decisions regarding interpretation will be approached in a more reflective way and the style and character of the piece will be considered in more detail in terms of vocal and physical interpretation. Whilst merit learners may still require a small amount of support they are likely to ask questions to extend their understanding rather than simply waiting to be told what to do. To achieve D2 learners must demonstrate a focused and committed approach to the preparation of their piece(s). They will work in a creative and confident way taking risks when necessary and developing their work with attention to detail in terms of vocal and physical interpretation.

To achieve P3 learners should take part in auditions using vocal and physical skills in a manner that is largely appropriate to the role undertaken. There may be flaws in technique in one or both of these areas, however these should not be serious enough to detract from the overall performance and learners should be able to 'keep going' to the end of the piece(s). For M3, learners will present a performance that demonstrates a higher degree of control. Vocal and physical work will be technically secure and although the performance may not necessarily be inspired it should nevertheless be sound. For D3, the learner should perform in an assured manner demonstrating successful use of both vocal and physical skills. Learners will be totally at ease and will produce a performance that is both memorable and watchable.

## Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, M2, P3, M3, D3	Acting Audition 1	Learners prepare for and attend a professional-style audition. Preparation includes planning, learning and rehearsing two contrasting monologues, from which the audition panel may choose to select only one; participating in a 'mock' audition which provides feedback for improvement; and engaging with a range of audition activities in a formal audition situation, including self-introduction, monologue performance, re-direction of the monologue, sight reading of a script, and an improvisation exercise.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• character planning notes</li> <li>• actor's log, including reflections on own style of communication; reflection and analysis of shortlisting of monologues; notes on own progress, including within mock audition</li> <li>• script showing actor's analysis eg of units</li> <li>• notes (with actor comments) from tutor/director</li> <li>• tutor observation statements</li> <li>• audition performance (recorded).</li> </ul>
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, M2, P3, M3, D3	Acting Audition 2	Learners prepare for and attend a second professional-style audition in a new location. Preparation includes planning, learning and rehearsing a monologue which contrasts with the monologues chosen for Assignment 1; participating in a 'mock' audition which provides feedback for improvement; and engaging with a range of audition activities in a formal audition situation, including self-introduction, monologue performance, re-direction of the monologue, sight reading of a script, and an improvisation exercise.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• character planning notes</li> <li>• actor's log, including reflections on own style of communication; reflection and analysis of shortlisting of monologues; notes on own progress, including within mock audition</li> <li>• script showing actor's analysis eg of units</li> <li>• notes (with actor comments) from tutor/director</li> <li>• tutor observation statements</li> <li>• audition performance (recorded).</li> </ul>

## Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Acting Skills	Acting Skills and Techniques	Principles of Acting
		Applying Acting Styles

### Essential resources

Learners are their own resource for this unit. They will require a practical studio space in which to work, and video equipment will be needed for evidence recording purposes. An appropriate range of texts and supporting research material is required and learners should also have access to the internet for research purposes. Learners should have the means to perform work to an audition panel under 'work in progress' studio conditions eg privacy, plus appropriate minimal rehearsal props and costumes, although these are needed only insofar as they enable the actor to realise a role to its full potential within an audition situation.

### Employer engagement and vocational contexts

The opportunity to see live and recorded professional actors' performances in the styles of the work being prepared for performance, would greatly enhance the learner's understanding of key differences between acting styles. Centres should develop links with local performance venues. Resident staff with outreach responsibilities, but also visiting artistic experts (such as actors and directors) may be willing to visit and offer insights into the audition process. 'Talkback' sessions – when audience members are allowed to quiz director and actors in a post-show informal discussion – can deliver creative insights also.

## Indicative reading for learners

### Textbooks

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Performing Arts Student Book* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906787

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Teacher Resource Pack* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906794

Barton J – *Playing Shakespeare* (Methuen, 2001) ISBN 9780713687736

Boal A – *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 9780415267083

Eddershaw M – *Performing Brecht: 40 Years of British Performances* (Routledge, 1996) ISBN 9780415080118

Elsam P – *Acting Characters: 20 Simple Steps from Rehearsal to Performance* (A & C Black, 2006) ISBN 9780713675863

Fredman R and Reade I – *Essential Guide to Making Theatre* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996) ISBN 9780340655146

Johnstone K – *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (Methuen Drama, 2007) ISBN 9780713687019

Marlow J – *Audition speeches for Young Actors 16+, 2nd Edition* (A & C Black, 2006) ISBN 9780713678895

Sher A – *Year of the King* (Nick Hern Books, 2004) ISBN 9781854597533

### Journal

*The Stage*

### Websites

[www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)

UK trade union representing creative workers

[www.ncdt.co.uk/apply.html](http://www.ncdt.co.uk/apply.html)

National Council for Drama Training

## Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	trying out alternative ways of constructing their work eg approaches to creating a character, or improvisation within an audition, following ideas through to deliver a successful audition performance adapting their ideas as circumstances change
<b>Self-managers</b>	ensuring deadlines are met in terms of rehearsal and performance of audition pieces.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	planning and carrying out research into differences in acting styles carrying out research to develop creative ideas for their own character(s)
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	trying out alternative approaches to character development eg hotseating, using costume adapting their ideas as circumstances change
<b>Reflective learners</b>	setting goals with success criteria for their audition work inviting feedback on their own work and dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism evaluating their experiences and learning to inform future progress
<b>Team workers</b>	managing discussions to reach agreements and achieve results
<b>Self-managers</b>	seeking out challenges or new responsibilities and showing flexibility when priorities change dealing with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands responding positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed.

## ● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>ICT – Find and select information</b>	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	exploring, extracting and assessing the relevance of information from websites which contain socially or historically significant ideas, images or text (eg archive information on previous productions)
<b>English</b>	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	participating in production meetings
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	working on a script as an actor (eg dividing scenes into units) conducting creative research (eg text- or web-based information on audition processes) completing a character profile sheet
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	maintaining a performer's log producing minutes for production meetings.