

Unit 23: Film and TV Acting

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| Unit code: | D/502/5362 |
| QCF Level 3: | BTEC National |
| Credit value: | 10 |
| Guided learning hours: | 60 |

● Aim and purpose

Acting for the camera is an essential skill for learners who wish to work in the film and television industries. This unit provides opportunities to develop and practise the particular skills required for acting to the camera.

● Unit introduction

The growth of independent screen productions and digital broadcasting offers many employment opportunities for actors who have trained and developed the necessary skills of acting for the camera. Experience of working as a member of a creative team within a studio environment is invaluable for such performers. This specialist unit provides ways for learners to develop their vocal skills and the subtle physical expressivity demanded by this specific medium, using techniques that are markedly different from those required for acting on stage.

Throughout this unit learners will use and hone their camera-acting skills. There will be opportunities to explore the performances of actors in professionally produced films and programmes, finding out how they use expressive codes and conventions, characterisation and performance signs in the application of their acting skills. Learners will begin to understand and use this technical and performance language. By seeing a wide range of performance styles used by actors in all kinds of television programmes and films, learners will be able to evaluate and enrich their own skills development. These skills might be used to make whole films or programmes, DVD shorts, promotional clips or showreels.

There will be chances to develop performances in a range of genres and for different purposes. For instance, work might lead to the creation of narrative film shorts, soap operas or TV commercials. The focus will be on developing the skills and understanding actors need to very quickly create fully rounded characters, often in performances that only last a few seconds, such as in commercials, as well as those that enable an actor to maintain a character across the journey of a narrative, like in a soap opera. There will be voice workshops where learners can develop their ability to enhance a character through voice, such as by developing a regional or national accent; there will be movement workshops to help the actor move in role, stay natural and communicate the complete character. Learners will experience the need to create and re-create a performance, sometimes over and over again, getting it right every time. They will learn to respond positively to direction, accepting criticism willingly and developing their work in relation to that.

Learners will work in a studio environment and on location, assimilating knowledge of the filming and editing processes, analysing screenplays, scripts, styles and genres. They will apply their knowledge and understanding through making work to be captured on film or DVD. This will then lead to a wider personal perspective and working knowledge of the film and television industry.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Be able to develop acting techniques for the camera
- 2 Be able to rehearse material for performance to camera
- 3 Be able to take part in a performance to camera.

Unit content

1 Be able to develop acting techniques for the camera

Techniques: close-up, medium and long shots; acting on and off camera; objectifying non-existent event; 'doing less' than on stage; blocking, hitting marks; use of expressive objects; concentration; listening and responding; playing reaction

Skills: using the ideas of practitioners such as Stanislavski and Strasberg eg the method, physical action, developing characterisation, use of voice, movement and gesture; how to read interpret and analyse script/screenplay; technical and performance language; performance signs

Materials: eg film and TV performances, style and genre analysis, screenplays and scripts, exploring expressive codes and conventions

2 Be able to rehearse material for performance to camera

Rehearsal methods: taking directions; creative flexibility and generosity; group interaction; learning and memorising dialogue; being on your mark

Growth and development: application of acting skills; experiment and risk-taking; engagement with role and character development, extension and refinement; sustained spontaneity; using evaluation and analysis of own work and that of other actors/performers

3 Be able to take part in a performance to camera

Skills: performing in character; interaction with other performers; focus; movement; gesture; dynamics; pace; energy; rhythm; vocal skills; proxemics

Techniques: awareness and appreciation of camera angles/shots; consistent playing in different shots; retakes; hitting marks; concentration; control of voice and physical action/use of props; working in and out of sequence

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: |
| P1 use acting skills for the camera that are appropriate to the role [IE; CT; SM] | M1 use acting skills for the camera to fulfil the needs of the role | D1 use acting skills for the camera imaginatively and creatively to fully exploit the potential of the role |
| P2 rehearse and develop work for the camera [IE; CT; RL; TW; SM; EP] | M2 recall, rehearse and develop work for the camera through cooperation and commitment | D2 recall, rehearse and develop work for the camera with accuracy, imagination and creativity |
| P3 perform a role through the medium of film or TV. [TW; SM; EP] | M3 perform a role for film or TV with appreciation of the needs of the medium. | D3 perform a role for film or TV that fully exploits the medium. |

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.

| Key | IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers | RL – reflective learners TW – team workers | SM – self-managers EP – effective participators |
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Work for this unit should be designed around providing learners with the maximum opportunity to develop and experiment with the specific skills required for acting to camera. Since these skills are so different from those needed for stage acting, emphasis must be placed on those that relate to the creation of performances made entirely for this medium. Work made for the stage must not simply be made into films or DVD recordings.

Particular practitioners whose work is seen as relevant to the medium, such as Konstantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg, may form the backbone of the basic skills development. Drama workshops exploring the ideas of such practitioners will be helpful. These should involve exercises in the use of emotional memory, vocal skills development, movement workshops, gesture work, use of props and mastery of the skills of 'less is more' on camera. Most drama workshops will revolve around naturalistic acting, as this is the technique used in contemporary practice. However the study and analysis of work produced for camera in the past will be very useful in comparing and exploring the ways that acting performance has developed. Learners' work must be captured on film or DVD.

For learning objective 1, the use of the camera in the workshop will provide an effective way of capturing the success or otherwise of learners' attempts, as they build their skills. Time should be spent exploring how successful performances work and finding out how actors apparently do so little in the conveyance of emotions and thoughts. The workshop approaches of Stanislavski and Strasberg and filming the outcomes of such workshops, will enable learners to find their own personal ways in to this technique. Workshops should cover essential areas, such as relaxation and comfort within the space, using past experiences to colour the development of performance, particularly in character development, concentration and learning to perform with others and solo.

Movement workshops should study the whole body and how each individual moves, moving in character, finding what leads a character, status, gesture and its uses and facial expression. Listening and responding to direction and the needs of other actors will be essential. Vocal work should concentrate on finding the natural and unstrained voice, tone, pitch, diction and projection as well as developing the voice of the character and approaches to age, accent and dialects.

Learners will need to work on and off text, learn lines, adapting to the needs of the moment and the narrative, working with set, costumes and props. Using recorded performances of professional actors will enrich the understanding of what makes successful work.

For learning outcome 2, learners will explore the creativity, focus and flexibility required for this medium, as well as the spontaneity and generosity actors must possess. They will need to practise repeatedly being on their mark, lines learnt and their focus concentrated. The grounding based upon workshop experiences undertaken for learning outcome 1 will be essential for learners now to develop their understanding and ability to deliver roles and characters. Here, evaluation and ongoing appraisal of own and others' work will be useful tools in driving on the individual's performance. Actors may keep a personal log, they might maintain a 'video diary', centres might keep a 'diary room' where learners record the progress of their drama.

For learning outcome 3, performances will be filmed, and learners will need a variety of challenges in order to demonstrate their skills. Centres will require digital camera facilities, lights and sound recording equipment, in order to provide the vocational context for the unit. An editing suite will allow learners' work to be shown effectively. However, learners working for this unit do not have to be involved in the technicalities of filming and camera work, even though interest in contemporary technology will mean that many have the skills necessary for these processes. This unit is principally about developing acting skills for the camera and all learners taking part will have to show their awareness of the camera, angles and shots, action and re-action.

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 |
|--|
| <p>Introduction to unit: familiarisation with the procedures and conditions of studio and location work, basic production techniques and health and safety aspects.</p> <p>Teacher guided workshops in film and TV acting techniques; Stanislavski's system.</p> <p>Review of TV and film acting samples of various genres and acting styles; vocal and physical characterisation; specific film and TV acting techniques.</p> |
| <p>Assignment 1: Working to Camera – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2</p> <p>Analysing camera shots.</p> <p>Identifying suitable acting material for single camera and studio recording.</p> <p>Setting teams and schedules for filming.</p> |
| <p>Assignment 2: Making a Showreel – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3</p> <p>Introduction and experimenting with Single Camera Work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">learning how to work for the camera and experimenting with various shots, still, movements, reverse shots, listening, responding. <p>Developing vocal technique, tone, pace, pitch, pause, projection, inflection, modulation, intonation, articulation, spontaneity of matching voice and facial expression.</p> <p>Developing movement skills; gesture.</p> <p>Use video excerpts and tutor guided analysis of filmed experiments.</p> |
| <p>Introduction to TV studio working discipline; familiarisation with health and safety, the camera, the live editing procedures; rehearsing and recording rehearsals; analysing own performances and retaking shots.</p> <p>Rehearsing material towards filming; ongoing recording, evaluating, retaking shots and experimenting with editing ideas.</p> |
| <p>Assignment 3: Soap Opera – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3</p> <p>Filming of performances to be assessed: tutor and peer feedback; screening of final recordings; collating and submitting actor's journey video.</p> |

Assessment

Learners' work will be assessed in the workshop, the rehearsal room and the studio. Evidence will be in the form of tutor and peer observations, witness statements, practical demonstrations, performances, the actor's log/diary, film/DVD footage and in final recorded materials. Records of personal review and observation need not be written down, they might be spoken, noted and recorded by the tutor. Peer discussions could provide very good evidence of progress and these may be filmed or recorded. Tutors might lead discussions of learner progress or learners themselves could interview each other as work goes forward.

For P1, learners will take part in workshops where they explore the techniques and practitioners' ideas necessary for the development of appropriate skills for acting to camera. Learners will show skills and techniques appropriate to the demands of the role they are playing and these might range through movement and vocal skills, use of gesture, awareness of the needs of the director, taking on the decisions made in blocking a scene, and the camera position and being on their mark during filming. This work need not be polished, but be taking place during warm-ups, technique workshops and rehearsals.

For P2, learners will be working in the rehearsal studio, cooperating with other performers, a director, lighting and sound technicians. Learners will be cooperative, willing to take risks, memorising their lines and being on their mark. They will engage with role or character development, sustaining their spontaneity and thinking about how to refine their own performance.

For P3, work will be seen in performance as acting performance created for film or TV. This implies that all performances that are assessed for learning outcome 3 have to be recorded. Recordings do not have to be carried out by the learners themselves. The tutor, the learners themselves or other groups of learners, may film the work, for example, where learners are taking courses involving film and TV production.

To achieve M1, learners must show a consistent and competent approach to their development of acting skills for the performance of a role or character; they should deploy the ideas of recognised practitioners as well as the techniques they are working on in the studio. For M2, rehearsals should be a collaborative process, where learners work with commitment to the needs of the group, giving and accepting objective criticism. There should be a clear acceptance of the relationship of actor to director and the needs of the piece in question.

Learners who achieve M3 will show appreciation of the needs of the medium in which they are working by, for example, being able to develop and sustain emotion over the course of several takes or episodes of filming or being accurate in recalling past decisions about the exact needs of a scene or section of dialogue. Lines will have been accurately remembered.

Learners who reach D1 will have acquired skills of acting to camera sufficiently to fully exploit the potential of the particular role they are playing. For instance where an actor is playing a character in a narrative work, that character will be fully developed in relation to others in the cast and, most importantly, to fulfil the director's concept of the film or TV piece. Learners can be assessed in the studio, during preparations for filming and in workshops. For instance, where a role requires that the actor is convincing as a character within their own space, learners might use an exercise in deploying objects, based on the ideas of Lee Strasberg, so that they use something that helps them play this highly naturalistically.

Learners who reach D2 will attack rehearsals with energy, focus and commitment. Their performance will be accurately recalled and they will have the facility to change and develop it as the director wishes or the need arises. Finally, learners who achieve D3 will exploit the medium of film or TV – always working to the correct camera, always on their mark, understanding how camera angles require different approaches. These learners will always be interested in how their work comes across on film, watching rushes, becoming involved in the creation of the finished product, where one is being made. They will have mastered how 'less is more' in their acting, creating performances that truly combine their skills with a medium that can expose the most delicate of nuances.

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, D2 | Working to Camera | You have been asked to create a promotional taster session for some younger students, to raise their interest in TV acting. Make a DVD short, showing how actors work, how they train, how they prepare for working to camera. You will be able to use a rehearsal space, a studio, with lights sound and an editor. | Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVD short • tutor observations of workshops and rehearsals • actor's log/DVD diary. |
| P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3 | Making a Showreel | You need to make a short film or DVD showreel to take to an audition to show off your talents. You have a single DVD camera. You will need to choose your script, rehearse and perform it to camera, work with an editor and show your final filmed work for scrutiny by the group. | Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutor observations • unedited DVD footage • editor's feedback • edited DVD • actor's log. |
| P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3 | Soap Opera | You are an actor in a short promotional recording for a soap opera. Rehearse and perform your work in the studio, work to camera. | Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutor observations of rehearsals • director's critique • unedited DVD • edited DVD • actor's log. |

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 |
| | Performing Scripted Plays | Applying Acting Styles |

Essential resources

Visual and sound recording equipment, in the form of film or DVD cameras are essential resources for this unit. An appropriate studio space is also essential. Other equipment may include monitors, an editing suit, a mixing desk, lighting facilities, wardrobe, makeup, set and props.

Where centres offer the BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Media or Multimedia, resources and projects may be shared through undertaking joint aspects of the production and post-production phases of the recording. Working links with the BTEC Level 3 National Media courses, their learners and staff within the same or a neighbouring centre will enhance the work in this unit. Although it is useful for learners to experience aspects of production and technical functions associated with film/TV studio work, it is not a necessary component of this unit. Performing arts learners must develop skills in acting for the camera to encompass the learning outcomes of this unit, not those of film or TV production.

Access to reference books and periodicals and the internet is required for research; this may also include interviews with professionals and visits to broadcasting studios.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres may wish to set up links with other educational institutions that offer higher level qualifications in related subjects and that will help support learner work. Studios involved in film and TV production are good places to visit and professionals who are connected to this industry can be invited to talk or work with learners. Outside professionals make good judges of competitions and might be persuaded to set assignment briefs for learners.

Local independent cinemas and film clubs are good places to watch more unusual films and to experience film history on the big screen.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Barr T and Kline E S – *Acting for the Camera, Revised Edition* (Harper Collins, 1997) ISBN 9780060928193

Bernard I – *Film and Television Acting: From Stage to Screen, Second Edition* (Focal Press, 1998)
ISBN 9780240803012

Caine M – *Acting in Film: An Actor's Take on Movie Making, Revised Expanded Edition* (Applause Theatre Books, 1997) ISBN 9781557832771

Carlson S – *Hitting Your Mark: Making a Life – and a Living – as a Film Actor, 2nd Revised Edition* (Michael Wiese Productions, 2006) ISBN 9781932907124

Davies R T – *Doctor Who: Shooting Scripts* (BBC Books, 2005) ISBN 9780563486411

Nicholas A – *99 Film Scenes for Actors* (Avon Books, 1999) ISBN 9780380798049

Shepard J W – *Auditioning and Acting for the Camera* (Smith & Kraus Publishers, 2004) ISBN 9781575252759

Tucker P – *Secrets of Screen Acting, 2nd Edition* (Routledge, 2003) ISBN 9780878301775

White D L – *Acting For Film And Television: A Professional Guidebook* (CreateSpace, 2008)
ISBN 9781434824769

Journal

The Stage

Websites

www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom

BBC Writers Room; forum and information

www.screenonline.org.uk

BFI guide to Britain's film and TV history

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 ... |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Independent enquirers | using acting skills to camera that are appropriate to the role rehearsing and developing work for the camera |
| Creative thinkers | using acting skills to camera that are appropriate to the role rehearsing and developing work for the camera |
| Reflective learners | rehearsing and developing work for the camera |
| Team workers | rehearsing and developing work for the camera performing a role through the medium of film or TV |
| Self-managers | using acting skills to camera that are appropriate to the role rehearsing and developing work for the camera performing a role through the medium of film or TV |
| Effective participators | rehearsing and developing work for the camera performing a role through the medium of film or TV. |

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 ... |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Independent enquirers | exploring the work of actors on film/TV working on drama exercises in the development of performance |
| Creative thinkers | trying out ideas for rehearsals and performance running rehearsals and workshops |
| Reflective learners | working on personal preparation in the development of a role keeping an actor's log or diary |
| Team workers | supporting others in their work and rehearsals preparing for a shoot |
| Self-managers | exploring ideas in rehearsal working to master a prop learning lines |
| Effective participators | helping a crew to set up a shoot helping with editing striking a set. |

● Functional Skills – Level 2

| Skill | When learners are ... |
|---|---|
| ICT – Use ICT systems | |
| Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs | researching film and TV performances |
| Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used | keeping a video diary writing evaluations and work/rehearsal schedules |
| Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices | working in a film or TV studio working on set |
| ICT – Find and select information | |
| Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task | researching screen performance |
| English | |
| Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts | working with a group in the studio and in workshops |
| Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions | working with scripts |
| Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively | keeping an actor's log developing scripts for rehearsals writing evaluations. |