



Self-tape best practice guidelines

May 2025

Prepared by members of MEAA/Equity Australia, in consultation with Performer Representatives and Casting Directors

Preamble

The following guidelines have been drafted to address issues raised since the rise in Self-Tape requests following the Covid 19 pandemic. Turnaround times, technology, finding readers, and finding space were major areas of concern for performers responding to a MEAA survey, along with lack of direction and the need to create a professional 'look' without having the equipment to do so.

It was noted that the ability to call for a wide number of submissions may also impact the capability of Casting Directors, Performer Representatives, producers and directors to actually view the increased number of tests.

Following consultation with Casting Directors in the process of negotiating these guidelines, it became evident that CD's overwhelmingly had no requirement for complex camera angles or strong production values. CD's also stated that they applauded the ability to see more auditions via self-tests, and that they were committed to viewing each test that was submitted.

These guidelines aim to balance industry needs with performers well-being and ensure a more sustainable, equitable self-taping environment and are continually reviewed by both the CGA and MEAA to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

1. Turn around times

Casting Briefs need to provide:

For TVCs Casting Directors will aim for a **48 hour minimum turnaround**, excluding weekends and public holidays, from issue of first scheduled media release.

Performer Representatives will aim to submit briefs to actors as soon as possible after receiving them.

Actors and Performer Representatives will accept/decline audition offers as soon as possible after receiving them, so as not to disadvantage other actors who may be called if offer is declined.

For TV, Film and Streaming Services - Casting Directors will aim toward:

- For tests of 3 pages or less: a minimum 3 working-day turnaround;
- For scripts of 4-6 pages: a minimum 4 working-day turnaround;
- For tests of 7 pages or more a minimum 5 working-day turnaround;
- And for serial TV: a minimum 3 working-day turnaround

Weekends and public holidays are excluded. (i.e. if a brief for a TVC is given to an actor on a Friday afternoon, it will be submitted no earlier than the following Tuesday afternoon. In this example, if the Monday is a public holiday, the submission day would be Wednesday.)

In circumstances where it is not possible to comply with these provisions, it is up to all parties to work together to find a possible compromise. CDs are encouraged to provide more time whenever possible.

2. Theatre self-tapes

Where possible, outside of extreme circumstances such as lockdown, in-person auditions should be prioritised for theatre. However we acknowledge that more actors are given an opportunity to audition with self-tapes, and in some cases self-tapes may be more suitable to an actor. Therefore both in-person and self-tape options should be available to all. Casting Directors should however acknowledge that theatre self-tape auditions, especially musical theatre (with the complexities of musical arrangements and dance calls) are not ideal for actors.

- Where a self-tape audition process is being utilized by the performer for a non-musical theatre audition, a 5 day minimum turnaround is required excluding weekends and public holidays.
- A Performer auditioning for a role requiring an accent and/or singing expertise, shall have at least two weeks to prepare for the audition, but it is recognised that extraordinary circumstances may sometimes make this impossible. At all times best endeavours will be given to provide adequate time with the material.
- No more than two scenes should be requested.
- Theatre self-tape submissions should where possible be mid-shot rather than close-up.

3. Standard shot size and instructions

In acknowledgement of the often limited resources and space available to performers, shot size requirements for self-tapes will be restricted to mid-shots or close-ups.

There will be no requirements to zoom in or out during a scene and no requests for large or complicated movements or techniques such as panning or slow motion.

Casting briefs will provide clear and specific instructions for self-tapes, provided either in writing or via a recorded video, available to all auditionees.

Where an actor is having difficulty providing a self-tape, actor and/or representative should liaise with the Casting Director to find a solution which may include a Zoom or an in-room audition.

Call-backs, if not able to be done in-studio, will be conducted via Zoom and paid for at the current MEAA rate.

Performers should be able to audition with 'script in hand' if this is in line with their individual process.

4. Audition Responses

It is important that Casting Directors and theatre companies understand how important it is for a performer's mental health to know the outcome of their audition. Casting Directors and theatre companies will continue to investigate and instigate a method of informing performers (and their representatives) about the outcome of their audition, positive or negative, as soon as outcomes are known.

5. Scripts/Sides

As stated in Section 3, actors may test with the script in hand if they wish to.

Where possible and appropriate within the production, actors will be sent the full script of the production they are auditioning for.

6. Readers

It is acknowledged by all parties that a non-actor may be used as a reader in a self-test. If an actor is struggling to find a suitable reader, they can communicate this to their representative and Casting Director and all endeavours will be made to assist.

For call-backs, when on Zoom or otherwise, a reader should be provided by the Casting Director.

7. Submission of Self-Tapes

Actors will not be expected to pay to submit their self-tapes. Whichever submission platform is used will be free and easily accessible to the actor when the actor is the person submitting.

It is understood by all parties that these provisions will not always prove practical due to the fluid nature of our business. In circumstances where the recommendations set out are challenging to implement, the Casting Director involved is urged to make this clear to performers and their representatives, and to keep the lines of communication open.

More information:

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