

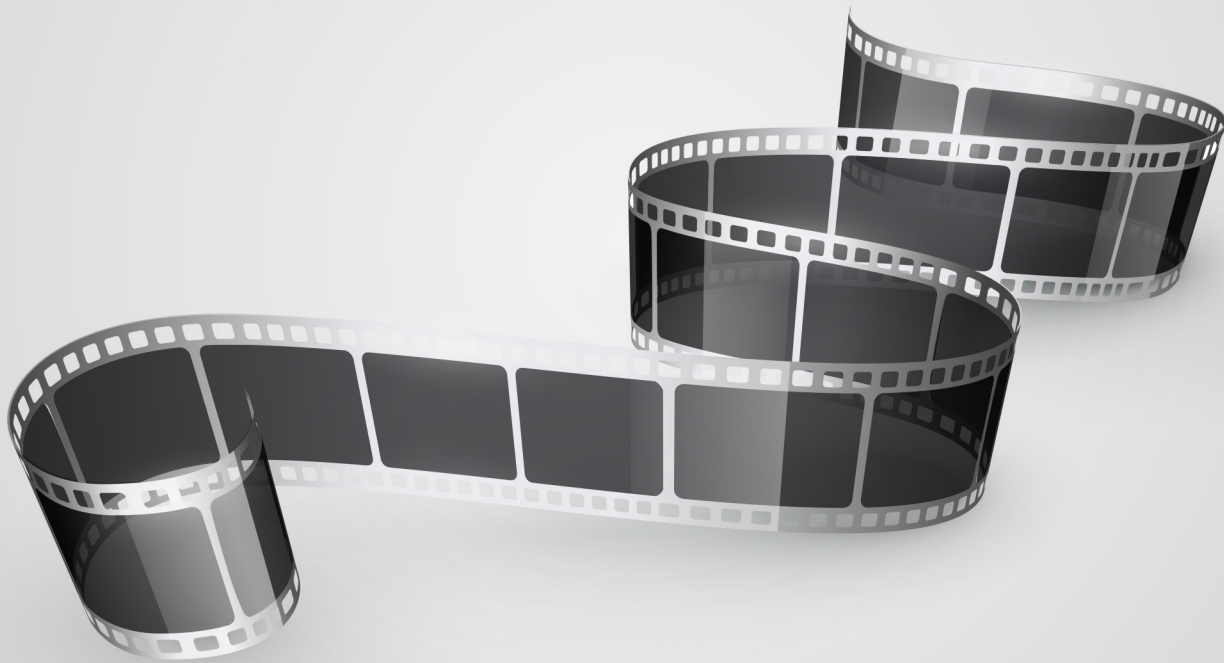
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**Acting in London**

BEGINNER'S GUIDE ON HOW TO MOVE TO LONDON AND BECOME  
A WORKING ACTOR WHEN YOU HAVE NO EXPERIENCE

# ACTING WITH NO EXPERIENCE



- What's it like living in London as an actor
- How to start acting with absolutely no experience
  - Where to train and what classes to take
- How to get a visa and move to London for acting
- Headshots, reels, resumes and other essentials
  - Survival jobs, living costs and rent in London
  - ...and a lot more

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*I hope you'll enjoy this read we've all put together for you and find it helpful on your journey to becoming an actor!*

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**“I know how to learn anything I want to learn. I absolutely know that I could learn how to fly the space shuttle because someone else knows how to fly it, and they put it in a book. Give me the book, and I do not need somebody to stand up in front of the class.”**

**– WILL SMITH**

# INTRODUCTION



SCENE	TAKE	ROLL
DATE		
PROD. CO		SOUND
DIRECTOR		
CAMERAMAN		

Every aspiring actor knows how difficult it is to make it in the acting industry. Think of the journey towards becoming a professionally working actor as the Olympic hurdle with a distance of a marathon – many are competing for the same title for a long period of time, and it's easy to stumble if you lose your focus. This illustrates why one needs to train hard enough that the end result is what they want it to be.

Thankfully, in acting, one does not have to train their abilities with extensive athletic workouts involving hurdles. But just because you're not doing an insane amount of squats and running the distance of two fields that does not mean that training to be an actor is easy. It isn't – it's actually hard, exhausting, frustrating and time consuming. After being an actor for almost ten years now, I still find this to be true. But it's also very rewarding.

If you're a little unsure about whether or not you want to dedicate the majority of your time to acting, here are a few questions you should consider before making any permanent decisions:

- ◆ **Is becoming a professional actor really what you want out of life?**
- ◆ **Are you willing to put your life on hold in order to try and achieve this?**
- ◆ **Will you be able to keep going even when you get rejected 9 times out of 10?**
- ◆ **Are you willing to put in all the necessary effort for little to no reward?**

If the answer to all of the questions above is yes, then considering the ratio of failed actors today, you may be labeled as certifiably insane, but you're in the right place. If you are determined to commit yourself fully to the acting craft, and everything that surrounds it, then the next step is rather simple - choosing where to begin and where to go.

Seeing how there are plenty of options for you to pick from, as well as having to decide when to pack up and leave for what might be an entirely different continent, you better prepare yourself well. Some of the main locations aspiring actors think of when they finally decide to begin their acting careers are London, Los Angeles or New York City.

These places above are glorious cities with many different outlets for drama, from the famous West End and Broadway stages, right down to the biggest TV shows and largest film industries

in the world. In this book, I'm going to focus only on London as the primary location; however, majority of this advice can be applied to many other metropolitan cities almost to a letter.

I started my acting career in the UK, ending up in London before I eventually moved to Los Angeles, California. London's main focus is generally theatre, which is where I come from, but after moving to LA – the entertainment capital of the world – my priorities switched to film and TV acting.

I can't say one is better than the other; they're just different, and I do enjoy doing both. However, that is not to say that having preferences is wrong – not at all. No creative endeavor is superior to another, so if you wish to be a film actor and not do any stage work, that's totally fine and completely accomplishable.

Regardless of what your choice of creative outlet is, be it stage, film, television, improvisation or comedy, you'll find the information in this book helpful in getting you started on a path to becoming an actor in London. This entire book has been created to assist actors of any outlet to find their way in this huge city, and it's applicable to any thespian's case.

Not only will I be attempting to help you with questions such as “how to become a working actor”, but you'll receive some decent, easy to understand and relatable advice (if I say so myself) on how to actually get there, set up and finally begin your pursuit of this crazy albeit extremely fun goal.

Before you continue reading, there's something I need to repeat again. Trying to make it in London – on stage, on screen, or any other medium – is going to be really difficult. I know you've probably read stories about actors moving to a big city with 300 dollars in their pockets and quickly becoming movie stars.

Unfortunately, most of those stories aren't real, and they paint a wrong picture of what it takes to make it in this industry. You will need to be able to sustain yourself financially and mentally for a long time, and have a good work ethic to continue pushing further. I will talk about this and the importance of consistency later.

As an actor, you'll have to be constantly in training and working. There's going to be sweat, tears, rejection and possibly some blood if you don't watch yourself carefully enough. But those things aside, learning about what makes you passionate, what you want to do for the rest of your life, and why you want to do it, as well as then taking that to the next level through learning and hard work, will make it this hard journey completely worth it.

## KEVIN SPACEY'S ADVICE

Before we begin, I would like to remind you what Kevin Spacey once said to an acting student who asked him for advice, "Mr. Spacey, how can we appreciate this early experience, these lean years, these very difficult years, leading up to the ultimate prize?" Here's what Kevin Spacey had to say.

“

*There is no prize 'out there.' The only prize is this one, [points to himself] and what you feel and what you want to accomplish.*

*I watch a lot of young people sort of meander around without any idea of why they're doing what they're doing. I mean, to want and to be ambitious and to want to be successful is not enough. That's just desire. To know what you want, to understand why you're doing it, to dedicate every breath in your body to achieve... If you feel you have something to give, if you feel that your particular talent is worth developing, is worth caring for, then there's nothing you can't achieve.*

*You're going to grow up with your colleagues, you're going to watch them have success and you're going to watch them have failure, and you're going to watch how they deal with it. They can be as much a teacher for you as anybody here or anyone who's privileged enough to come here and speak to you.*”

To this day, I think this is the best piece of advice any successful actor has ever given to those who are just embarking on this journey. I encourage you to write this down and keep it somewhere close to remind you that there is no 'prize out there.' You must enjoy the process just as much as you think you'll enjoy the result.



An aerial night view of London, England, featuring the illuminated Tower Bridge and the River Thames. The city lights are visible in the background, and the bridge's reflection is seen in the water. A semi-transparent dark blue rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

# 1. LIVING AND ACTING IN LONDON

## 1.1 Actor's Life in London

What's it like for an actor to live in London? Londoners are known for their passion about the city, thus most people have nothing but positive things to say about relocating here.

This also includes newcomers who are just starting out on their acting journey in London, as well as established actors who have been on the big screen (Kevin Spacey even moved here!) So what is it these people love about London? Let's take a look.

### ◆ *Public Transportation*

---

You don't need a car in London, period. With one of the best urban transportation systems in the world, you can easily get around without having to own a personal vehicle. This is one of the biggest draws for actors just starting out – there's no need to worry about the cost of buying a car, filling it with gas, buying auto insurance and doing regular auto maintenance.

Instead, there's all kinds of different public transportation options: the famous London Underground, or 'tube'; buses (including the famous double deckers), trolleys, railroads, and ferries. Options are all very affordable, and make getting around the big city a breeze.

If you're into getting some exercise while you travel, London also has one of the world's best bike rental systems. Hop on one of the 10,000 **Boris Bikes** found around the city, and the first 30 minutes are even free!

## ◆ *Free Cultural Activities*

---

A lot of people come to London for the culture, and you'll be happy to know that plenty of activities here are free, whether you are a resident or a tourist.

Some of the best free things to do in London include the more popular museums and art galleries, such as the British Museum, Museum of London, and the National Maritime Museum. Not only do these activities make for a great day trip, but they can also help you learn more about the British culture, life in London and help you work your creativity muscles and inspiration.

## ◆ *Outdoor Life*

---

London is one of the greenest cities in Europe, and their parks prove it. They have tons of parks spanning hundreds of acres, offering plenty of activities like hiking, biking, golfing, and more. There's also plenty of beautiful waterfronts that you can walk along or kayak on. Parks are one of the best places to go to relax, observe people, practice your lines and generally see how Londoners live.

If you're big on outdoor activities and move here, you don't need to worry about the lack of options: you'll still be able to get plenty of outdoor exercise despite being in the heart of a major metropolitan city. Needless to say, all parks in London are free to visit and there's no need for any expensive park passes.

## ◆ *Television*

---

A lot of people who relocate to Great Britain from the United States tend to notice that there's a lot of different type of television shows, which can be a breath of fresh air for some. For actors, it's especially important to keep an eye on what's currently being shown in case you audition for it.

From fan favorites like *The Office* and *Doctor Who* to lesser known hits like *Fresh Meat* and *The Hour*, you'll have things to watch and study and keep the boredom at bay. As an actor, you may try to study what types of roles might be available to you in the near future. If you love comedies and want to break into that type of acting, London is definitely the place to be.

## ◆ *Food Options*

---

London, and also England in general, tends to get a bad rap for bland food options and gross meals. People often notice the limited options and the weird mashups, like beans on toast, which is as British as it gets.

However, many people find that upon moving to the UK, there are tons of delicious options available, including lots of different cultural delicacies. Since London is such a melting pot of cultures, you can find everything from American classics to Indian fare like curry and kebabs.

In addition to the wide variety, top chefs from all over the world come to London to practice their craft too, meaning you get to experience some of the most delicious meals the country has to offer. Not only that, but London has arguably the best high-end world-class restaurants in the world. The downside, of course, is you might have a hard time if you need to go on diet.

## ◆ *Cinema*

---

Actors in love with film will be happy to learn that London is home to a whopping 1/5th of all the UK's cinemas. Part of this is due to the high presence of aspiring and established actors and celebrities in the city.

In addition to movie theaters that offer mainstream new releases, there are tons of independent cinemas that feature older movies, classics, and cult favorites. As someone who is invested in acting, this is a great way to keep up with your passion and explore some hidden gems while still being able to experience the magic of a big screen.

## ◆ *Living Green*

---

While this may take a little adjusting for most former Americans, you can feel good living in London knowing that things are more environmentally friendly. In addition to the public transportation that helps reduce overall fuel use, you'll find that Londoners try hard to reduce energy consumption and waste output.

Using your own re-usable bags is a big deal in the UK, and you'll even be charged for needing plastic bags at the grocery stores if you forget yours. Air drying clothing is also more common here, rather than using dryers (and it's great for saving money too!) Ultimately, London living is a perfect way to be a little more environmentally friendly and find ways to save some extra money here and there.

## ◆ *Coffeeshouses*

---

London is famous for its great selection of teas and coffees as well as the places that serve these beverages. You'll not only find great coffee, but also a cool or artsy place to meet up and connect with friends, take agent meetings or generally come to get your dose of caffeine and charge up for the rest of the day.

Actors are known for their passion for coffee houses and you'll often see at least one person working on lines or writing a screenplay. And did I mention the coffee is great? There's tons of variety in local shops and mom-and-pop stores, all with different concoctions to try, some of which may surprise you. So don't go to Starbucks; visit a cool little place for a cheap cup of the most amazing coffee.

## ◆ *Affordability*

---

London is expensive, period. It's likely that most of you aspiring actors trying to get started aren't rich yet, and if your plans involve attending one of London's drama schools, you better continue saving up those pennies. Rent is a lot more expensive than it is in Los Angeles, and a little more expensive than New York City. It's not surprise to anyone, however.

A major metropolitan city that offers resources and tons of work for aspiring actors is always going to be somewhat expensive, as the trend shows. But comparatively, London *can* have lower cost of living than NYC or LA, if you know how to do it right. A major part of saving money in London is using the public transportation, but we'll delve deeper into this later.

## ◆ *Celebrities*

---

Just like many expect to see famous people occasionally in New York City and Los Angeles, it's also a very common occurrence in London, partly thanks to the size of the city and the amount of film/TV work available here. If this is something you're really interested in, the opportunities are there.

These are just a few of the main reasons people, and especially creative and artistic types, love to live in London. It is a beautiful mesh of different folk, cultures and experiences, and it's one of the best places to be for people who want to work in the arts, and that means you, actors! Talk to anyone who lives there, and you'll likely hear a lot of gushing about certain aspects of London that are just perfect for those in the field.

## 1.2 Tips About London

Just moving to London itself can become a little stressful if not done right. The same can be said about living in London, traveling and finding entertainment here. From me and my wonderful London friends, tailored especially for actors looking to join the hustle and bustle of London's artsy life, we've wormed out all of the best tips on how to survive in London.

### ◆ *Stand on the Right*

---

When travelling in London, it is not acceptable to stand anywhere else on an escalator than the right. Always, without exception, even if you are with friends, drunk or dying you must stand on the right side.

There's a reason I'm listing this one first. Nothing irks a Londoner more than someone blocking the path by standing on the wrong side, and this is the most common way we distinguish between a foreigner and a local.

## ◆ *Go Contactless*

---

Depending on where you're from, if you're going to be living in London, either register your contactless bank card with Transport for London, or get an Oyster card. This will make your travelling around London so much swifter.

Oyster and contactless payment (which, apparently – and to my big surprise – doesn't even exist in the USA) will automatically calculate the cheapest fare so it's never been simpler to travel around London. Also take note that London buses don't even accept cash anymore, it's all high-tech. Catch up, America!

## ◆ *Don't Talk to Strangers*

---

There are some unwritten rules about talking to people whilst travelling. The general rule is don't do it unless you want to freak someone out and convince them you belong in an episode of American Horror Story: Asylum. However, there are some key exceptions.

For example, when the weather is doing something freaky, you can comment on this and you will likely receive a response with some solidarity. If the transport system is having a fail, you can comment on this and will most definitely get a response.

If you're ever lost in London and you need directions, know that most Londoners LOVE giving directions. Although majority of us also haven't got a clue what we're talking about so make you sure you download apps like StreetWalk or GoogleMaps to be on the safe side.



## ◆ *Don't Dilly Dally*

---

When travelling in London during peak hours, try to keep up with the pace. Especially in the morning.

After asking around, it seems that the only thing that drives a Londoner more insane are people who dilly dally carrying massive backpacks who aren't in a hurry to get somewhere. The same goes for your Oyster or contactless card – be speedy and keep it to hand so it's ready when you need it.

## ◆ *Walk Where Possible*

---

Don't just get the tube everywhere. Some stations are so close it isn't worth the money or the hassle. It's actually quicker to walk from Leicester Square to Charing Cross than it is to get any kind of public transport!

Not only will you get to know the most of the major London streets but you will also save money. The tube is quite expensive here in London. Using the bus is the cheapest option but often the roads are so clogged, it's quicker to walk.

## ◆ *Tuesdays in London*

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This is when TimeOut magazine hits our fingertips full to the bursting with the latest listings from cultural events in London to the 'venues de jour,'

Some of these may include things like street food markets, West End shows, best London events to see and other entertainment options. As a new Londoner, *TimeOut* is your weekly bible and cannot be missed.

## ◆ *Go Green*

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Similar to the lifestyle in New York, many Londoners live in tiny apartments with little to no outside space so it's not surprising that on every glimpse of sunshine, you will find us hanging out at one of the many beautiful parks.

Personally, I love Greenwich Park these days and grabbing breakfast at Chapters in Blackheath. We always sit outside under the heat lamps and watch the world go by, while pondering on our artistic endeavors and future acting career plans.

## ◆ *SpareRoom.co.uk*

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SpareRoom.co.uk is a great place to find flat mates (roommates) and rooms to rent in London. I have used it three times and have never had a bad experience yet.

House-sharing is not only a great way to meet like-minded actors or just new people in London, but it also cuts down on bills, especially if it literally is someone just renting out their spare room for a bit of extra cash.

## ◆ *Go Digital*

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British TV drama has never been better in my opinion. Take advantage of streaming and get on to the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 to catch up with some of the latest and greatest new drama.

If you need recommendations, I'd say "River" has become my ultimate favourite this year. Dark, gritty and very, very British. Check it out for the ultimate British experience.

## ◆ *Join Meetup*

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Nearly everyone I've met who moved to London from elsewhere is on Meetup.com and in at least one group.

I'm in an actors and writers groups because those are my "things." However, there's plenty of other hobby and professional based groups to get involved with for those living in London, and it's a great way to meet new people and start making friends in London.

## ◆ *Pubs*

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This is a guaranteed way to meet people. I've met some of my closest friends in London down the pub. When you're living in London, get to know your local and you could be surprised who you might meet.

It's perfectly acceptable to go for a drink alone in London. Take a paper, a crossword, a book, your tablet, whatever you fancy and pull up a stool at the bar. With karaoke nights, quiz nights and live music events, the pub will always be the place de jour.

## ◆ *Emerald Street*

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This is probably one of London's best kept secrets and now I am sharing it with you. A step up from *TimeOut*, Emerald Street offers reviews of everything you need to do and everywhere you need to go in London.

If it's hot, it's in Emerald Street.

## ◆ *London Theatres*

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Actors must watch plays. Even though West End theatre tickets are insanely expensive these days, you really need to go to the theatre. One top tip from a Londoner Laura is to get your tickets on the day as they are often cheaper.

There are hundreds of stalls selling tickets in London. If your budget doesn't stretch, leave the central zones and head to the outer boroughs like Bromley, Croydon and Barnet where touring musicals, plays and various artists from comedy to music can often be found for half the price.

## ◆ *Leicester Square*

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Leicester Square (pronounced "Lester") has got to be the most cheesy, touristy, glitzy part of London (like Times Square in New York City), but you still have to go and soak it all in.

Behind all the gaudiness and thousands of pigeons lies a rich history of London. I'm also told that a trip to Waxy O'Connor's is obligatory and a rite of passage for any a new Londoner.

## ◆ *London Culture*

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There are districts all across London that attract pockets of other cultures but you can find pretty much every country in the world dotted around the whole city in shops, bars, cafes, restaurants and more.

Favorites and classics of mine are China Town (check out The Four Seasons for the best roast duck you will ever eat) and Brick Lane (check out anything there for one of the most authentic curries out of the East).

## ◆ *Museums*

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Unlike majority of other world's metropolitan cities of this size, London encourages people to get educated while having fun. Many of London's museums and art galleries are completely free to enter.

As a new Londoner on a budget, you can soak up knowledge, culture and history without spending a penny. It's also perfect for those times in the month where purse strings are tight but you don't want to be housebound.

## ◆ *Central London*

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When living in London, you must explore. You will be missing out on so much if you don't get out of Zones 1 and 2. Public transport, when it's running on time, is a great vehicle to experience all the different neighborhoods of London.

Crystal Palace in South East London is the new hotspot with quirky restaurants, bars and cafes. Stoke Newington in North London has always been cool to anybody living in London, particularly its boutique and vintage clothes stores.

## ◆ *Markets*

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Of course a trip to the gentrified Borough Market selling deliciously fine wares should be on your agenda, but it's not really reflective of everyday London culture. For this you need to head down to your local market where you will find a hustling, bustling place of toiletries, veggies and tat.

You can always find a bargain and a decent cup of tea in these places. If you want something with a little more finesse, farmers markets are

more on-par with Borough Market but because they're local, they are less expensive and a lot smaller. This means smaller vendors selling local produce.

### ◆ *Libraries*

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All of our London public libraries are also free and there are literally hundreds of them. Not only can you take a trip to the beautiful British Library but you can also sign up to your local library.

The Crofton Park Library is architecturally beautiful as well and also houses a community café. There are often other events going on too. LGBT History Month often has events going on at local libraries for example.

## 1.3 London's Cost of Living

As with any major move, the cost of living is going to be a huge factor to consider. Even though London can get very expensive very fast, there are ways around it where you can save a little extra money and continue pursuing your career dreams.

The move to London itself from what might be an entirely different continent can be costly and almost every step towards getting there involves spending money. It all starts with visa fees, then flight tickets, buying things you'll need for the move, accounting for the cost of hotels and transportation in your first few weeks, costs for the apartment, its security deposit and several months' rent, buying new things once you're settled in and so forth. All of this means you need to have savings and make smart, calculated decisions.

Moving to a new country, or even city, is a step you need to think through very well and far in advance. When I was moving to London and then to Los Angeles, I would always

make a list for all potential fees and expenses, even groceries, and then add them up and calculate the amount I'll need to save up.

Unless you're a rich, you should probably start saving up for the move many months beforehand, possibly even a year to give yourself enough wiggle room and planning time, and to make sure you have the means to get to your new place and have enough cash to survive there without a job for at least three to six months. This type of planning will prevent a lot of stress once you get there.

Okay. So you've managed to save up enough money to get to London (or any other metropolitan city for acting), and it should be smooth sailing from there, right?

Not quite so. Not only do you need to have enough funds to move to a new city or country in the first place, but you also need to have the resources to get on your feet once you are there. The rule of thumb is usually to have enough funds to cover 3 to 6 months of living. Below is a breakdown of how much it's going to cost to live in London.

## London's monthly cost of living:

- ◆ **RENT:** £750-£1,200 (either a small room, a studio or one bedroom flat)
- ◆ **BILLS:** £30-£200 (depending on what's included in the rent)
- ◆ **TRANSPORTATION:** £120-£350 (Oyster card)
- ◆ **GROCERIES:** £150-£300 (if you cook at home, no take outs)
- ◆ **ENTERTAINMENT:** £100+ (depending on how often you're going out)
- ◆ **GYM:** £30+ (varies significantly)
- ◆ **EXTRA:** £100-£200 (any additional expenses)

Let's break down some of the costs you can expect while living in London.

## ◆ *Housing*

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This is going to be your biggest expense after you move to London, as most people pay their biggest bill towards their home or apartment. In London, you can expect to rent a flat (apartment), as houses and condos are scarce and extremely expensive, like in most big cities.

London has many options, from studios to three bedrooms, but the most common choice is a standard one bedroom flat. For actors who are on a very tight budget, a one bedroom flat may not be affordable, thus consider a studio, or possibly even sharing an apartment with another actors or maybe even several actors.

Remember, real estate in these areas is a hot ticket item! Plan ahead for the expense and plan to apply early. There may be a waiting list to get into the home you like, so start looking months in advance, even before you make the move.

In London, a standard one bedroom apartment typically ranges from £1100 (that's GBP, which is approximately \$1,430 USD) to £1700 (\$2,211) depending on the location and if it is furnished or not (renting a furnished flat is pretty common in the UK).

One last important note about looking for housing in London: most places will list the cost of rent by week, not by month like it is in the US. Don't think you are suddenly getting an amazing deal only to realize that's ¼ of the cost. If you aren't sure, ask the landlord or listing agency to clarify how much you'll owe and when.



## ◆ *Transportation*

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Getting around is another thing to consider when it comes to budgeting. In London, costs are going to be very different from living somewhere like the United States. If you live in the States, chances are you will have a car and will need to transport yourself around the city. This is especially true for LA, which doesn't have a lot of public transportation options.

Having a car in London won't make sense, logistically and financially. You'll find petrol (gasoline) is going to be \$2.50 to \$3.00 more expensive overseas, which can really add up. Since most people don't own their own cars, you'll also find that the cost of purchasing a vehicle outright is more than in the United States as well, which is true for the rest of Europe.

Luckily, London has extensive public transportation options available, and they are much more affordable for the average resident. A one-way ticket using the bus, tube, or train is typically around £2.5 (\$3.25), and you can save money by purchasing a monthly unlimited pass (Oyster card) for an average of £130 (\$169).

Since you'll be using the London Underground, ferries, and buses to get to everything, having an Oyster card is a bargain at twice the price. Use the widely available public transportation and avoid the extensive fees taxis can charge – a whopping £5 (\$6.50) a mile.

## ◆ *Food*

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Food is obviously a necessity, so don't forget to include it in your budget for moving to London. You'll find that food is going to be a bit more expensive in this city, but this is partly due to the quality of food and the types of meals available. Eating in London may or may not be slightly cheaper than in, say, New York City, but it all depends on the neighborhood (or zone) you're in.

An inexpensive restaurant will likely charge around £15 (about \$19.50) for one meal. This is somewhat similar price range to Applebee's or Chili's in the United States. Fast food is generally around £5 (\$6.50) for a combo meal, like something you'd find at McDonald's.

Like to drink? There's plenty of pubs in London, and you can expect prices from £4-£5 (\$5-7) for a pint. A glass of wine may be a bit less, and you can usually get a mid-range bottle for £10-£15 (\$13-\$20). Coffee is also readily available, at more reasonable prices from £2-£3 (\$3-\$4).

When it comes to regular grocery shopping, be prepared to make some adjustments due to the availability of certain products. Some things are going to be much cheaper than in the U.S., while others will shock you with their price.

A good example of shocking prices is milk. If you live in the United States, it's usually a few bucks here, maybe \$3 tops. In London, expect to spend at least \$5 for a gallon. On the flip side, other foods such as bread and produce are a couple dollars cheaper. When you move to London, just be aware of the prices you see. Shop products that are a reasonable price, and always look for sales to maximize your food budget. Most grocery stores always have tons of deals going as well as discounted items all day long.

## ◆ *Utilities*

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When you move to London and find your own place, you'll need to remember that you'll be responsible for utilities, including electricity, heat, water, garbage, and internet. Even if you rent with a roommate, you'll be responsible for at least part of the bill.

You'll find that required utilities like electricity are going to be more expensive overseas at around \$180-\$200 for all basic utilities in about 1,000 square feet of living space. However, monthly internet costs hover around only \$32, compared to the \$50-\$75 range in the United States. So, your bills will look a bit different while living in the U.K., but overall it will basically even out.

As you can see, living in these metropolitan cities isn't cheap, but it's doable. If you're like me and most other actors moving to big cities to pursue their dreams and bite off a big chunk of opportunities there without the support of rich parents, you're going to need to find a way to get money. Such practice is normally called "getting a job."

But it's not as simple as that. Remember that the reason you're moving to a new city is to study acting, begin auditioning and eventually start working as an actor (probably on unpaid gigs first). The majority of your time is going to be spent training and auditioning, and the tiny amount left after that will probably be dedicated to getting a good night's sleep.

However, a job is also going to be the only way you get a consistent income, so before you move, you should try searching the Internet for job vacancies in the area that will accommodate your goals. Obviously, a survival job should be your first priority if you don't get a monthly allowance from your mom and dad. We will discuss survival jobs for actors a little later.

## 1.4 Budgeting in London

As we have already established, London is very expensive. However, there is a way to live cheaply in London. Below we'll provide you with some tips on budgeting and planning to live cheaper in London.

### ◆ *Accommodation*

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First thing's first, you're going to need to set aside a significant proportion of money for rent in London and bills. This will vary substantially depending on where in London you live.

The outer boroughs are typically less expensive but more affluent areas such as Muswell Hill and Belsize Park in the North and Dulwich and Crystal Palace in the south command much higher rents.

This doesn't mean you have to live in the back of beyond, but it's important to do your homework. To keep costs down, you should look into 'up and coming' areas and these are usually located just a few miles from the expensive places.

Watch out for my article on South Norwood neighborhood sometime next week for a better breakdown on this specific area. It's less than three miles to Crystal Palace and 15 minutes by train to central London but with rents that are considerably lower.

#### HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- ◆ *Try to avoid renting a one-bedroom or studio flat, because it will cost you a lot more money (duh). Finding people to share with or looking for rooms to rent in existing shared-properties will be much cheaper.*

◆ *Sites like AirBnB are great if you're planning a short-term trip but if you're staying for 6 months or more don't use them long-term. Why? Because you pay a premium plus AirBnB fees. Instead, consider taking on AirBnB or equivalent room for your first month while you look for something permanent.*

According to WorkGateways.com, rent in London can be anything from £350 per month upwards for a double room across the London Boroughs. However, you can cut your costs by an average of £100 if you take a single room.

These rent costs may be a little hopeful as well because the estimates provided for the average cost of a one-bedroom flat in London fail to take into account the competitiveness of the current market and the availability of cheaper places.

### ◆ *Personal Experience*

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First Whilst it is really smart to do your homework and plan costs using internet sites like WorkGateway.com, from personal experience, they might be a little out of touch with the reality of the rental market in London right now.

This is coming from personal opinion. My partner and I recently rented a flat in South Norwood. It's a South London postcode here, so according to WorkGateways.com we should be paying £600-700 per month.

Whilst we did see places advertised for around £800, our flat actually costs us £1050. Part of that is because we have a pet and required a garden but when doing your search on sites like WorkGateways.com or

others, keep in mind that their estimates are at the lowest end.

Check out the London Rents Map from the Mayor of London where you can search by area and see where the lowest prices will be from a more realistic perspective.

## ◆ *Bills*

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So here's the boring stuff – alongside your rent, you also have to take into account your bills. Based on three people sharing a house in South Norwood, you should be budgeting around £155 per month for basic bills.

### Here are the averages you can expect for bog-standard utilities in London:

- ◆ **WATER:** £40
- ◆ **ELECTRICITY:** £60
- ◆ **GAS:** £80
- ◆ **COUNCIL TAX:** £125
- ◆ **TV LICENCE:** £145.50
- ◆ **BROADBAND:** £17.50

People moving to London from outside of the UK may not know what Council Tax is, so I recommend you to read this article. And the TV license is basically your cable, for the Americans out there.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS BELOW:

*Try to narrow your search for places where bills are included. Many people in London rent out their spare rooms to help towards their high overheads and this could be good news for you. Benefits include one single payment each month, a knowledgeable landlord and sometimes, even the chance to live in a super cool area without the high costs of doing it from scratch.*

*If you come to London and go to a drama school or long-term acting class, check whether the course is among those where you can claim exemption from council tax. As a rule, all degree-based and NVQ courses will be covered. For more info on this, check out the UK government help pages.*

### ◆ *Food Shopping*

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So Average spend for a single-person on food shopping in London is £20-30 per week.

Supermarkets in England aren't that expensive compared to those stateside. It's actually a great time to come to the UK right now as the traditional supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's are stepping up their game to compete with the budget but quality new stores like Aldi and Lidl. This means great deals for you!

Where to get these deals? To get money off coupons on stuff you buy regularly, loyalty points and money-off vouchers, you need to get store loyalty cards and they all have different benefits.

## HERE ARE THE TOP FIVE:

### 1. SAINSBURY'S.

*Sainsbury's isn't the cheapest supermarket in the UK but they often have good offers on groceries and butcher items plus they are part of the Nectar Card scheme which is the best loyalty card out there (get it!)*

*The reason Nectar Card is good is because you can get points from a whole array of other partners including your energy company if you're with EDF as well as eBay purchases and more. You can also opt to spend your Nectar points on social stuff like the cinema and meals out!*

*The downside of the Nectar Card is that you don't get as many points to your pound as you do with others but the upside is that you can use it in so many places, you can boost your points balance without really needing to shop at Sainsbury's that regularly.*

### 2. TESCO.

*Tesco is the kind of supermarket that caters for everyone's tastes. There are luxury ranges, mid-ranges and budget options, meaning you can mix and match depending on where you want to save and where you want to splurge.*

*Their veg is among the best as far as supermarkets go. They also offer a loyalty card ClubCard that allows you to spend your points on cinema tickets, days out and meals out with regular promotions to double and triple the point value in exchange for these treats.*



### 3. WAITROSE

*Sainsbury Waitrose is a top-end supermarket (meaning it's expensive) but you shouldn't discount it automatically. Firstly, their basic range is very high quality and can rival its budget competitors. Secondly, they often stock 'forgotten cuts' like pig cheeks for tiny prices.*

*The big selling point of Waitrose is the loyalty card which gives you the option to choose your own offers as well as enjoy free tea or coffee in-store at the café or on the go. A great way to keep costs down and indulge in some luxury produce from time to time.*

### 4. MORRISONS.

*Morrisons is one of the best supermarket to shop for budget meats. They stock nearly every cut, including stock bones and the prices are great. Their wine, beers and spirits, soft drinks and household items are also really good value.*

*Their More Card offers one of the highest amount of loyalty points for cashback vouchers to spend in store plus monthly promotional offers.*

### 5. ICELAND

*Iceland is already a great budget option because most of their produce is frozen (but be careful not to get stung on their fresh stuff, it can be pricier).*

*The benefits of their loyalty Bonus Card are pretty basic, but it's worth signing up where you get a chance to win back your shopping in a monthly prize draw, receive monthly money off coupons and get free home delivery on orders over £20.*

## ◆ *Going Social*

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So by now, after your rent and your food shopping, you have about £52-62 left over for recreation per week.

£50 a week is actually my budget so I thought I'd give you a breakdown of my week and how I stay on top of my money as well as having a very active social life along with a few other practical tips. So here we go!

### MONDAY

Monday night is movie night! This means movie night with streaming, that is. Something from Amazon Prime (which currently has 30-day free trial!) on poor weeks or a new release on rich weeks.

For a new release, you can pay about a fiver, but if you subscribe to Instant Video for £7 per month, there's a whole bunch of cool movies for free. This week we watched Now You See Me for 99 pence over homemade jerk chicken with rice 'n' peas. (That's £1.)

### TUESDAY

It's takeout night this week so we're trolling the net for offers. Papa John's always has money off but it can be pricey.

However, if you search your local area for the best fried chicken joints (it's Morley's in South London) you can eat like a king for less than £4! (Okay, so that's £4.)

### WEDNESDAY

By mid-week, we often have a few friends come over. I cook and everyone brings a bottle or two of cheap plonk or a crate of beer so there's plenty of everything to go around.

Chill con carne (or veggie version) costs about £2 per person (including seconds) so for an average night in there's three of us plus a bottle of wine (whichever Merlot is on offer at around £4) and Saturday night sets me back £10. (That's £10.)

## THURSDAY

Somehow, this Thursday we seem to have been convinced by our friends to go out for wine.

Everyone was on a budget so we went to The George in Beckenham which has an amazing beer garden, perfect for this lovely summer and a bottle of wine costs as little as £8.50. (So we got £8.50 here.)

## FRIDAY

Friday night was spent meeting up with my dog-walking crew and taking a stroll around South Norwood Country Park before heading over to The Albert Tavern in South Norwood for some reasonably priced Malbec.

Joining a group based on outdoor interests like walking, running or cycling can be a great way to socialise without spending too much money plus the incentive for a trip to pub afterwards is a great reward!

I took out £10 from the cashpoint (ATM for the Americans) and had a bit of change, which went straight into the piggy bank on return. (And that's £10.)

## SATURDAY

Saturday we headed back to The Albert with a bunch of friends for Karaoke night which was awesome! Most Karaoke nights in South London attract some pretty good singers and the local crowd here will embrace anyone who gives it a go, especially if you can give a good tune.

Don't be fooled by its appearance here – I got the biggest round of applause I'd ever had after belting out some Les Miserable and that was from the burly men! (£12.)

## SUNDAY

Come rain or shine, Sunday is adventure day! Depending on how much we can afford to spend on travel costs, we take to Google and find a good walk and get lunch afterwards. Lunch can also be cheap to get!

I recommend you check out pubs owned by breweries like Green King or Wetherspoons for great lunch deals or head to the local bakers for some tasty pastries. On a really tight, week, we throw together a picnic with leftovers from the fridge.

This week, we took a trip to the coast in the car. The three of us put £5 each in petrol, leaving £14.50 to spend on lunch so I splurged a bit and ordered the flat iron steak with hand-cut chips at The Ship in Winchelsea with a shandy, leaving me with just enough change to cover the tip.

## FINAL TIP

I always, always empty my spare change from my budget into my piggy bank. If I can get to the end of this month without touching it, I'll have £30 'spare.'

I either use this to do something extra special or save it some more for a big weekend trip. So maybe you can do the same?

## 1.5 Survival Jobs in London

While you are waiting for your big break, you're going to have to find survival jobs so that you can afford to stay in London. There's a lot of options for people who aren't native to the area, but remember that you'll need to have the appropriate visa in order to apply for work – a travel visa won't cut it.

If you've got the proper paperwork, below we'll list a few ideas for survival jobs you can start with while you're also trying to auditioning for acting jobs or fishing drama school. But before you drop everything and move to London to pursue acting, thinking that you can do bartending or be a waitress, know that it's not going to be easy to get a place in any of the employment options mentioned below.

Many actors have already figured out what kind of work will allow them to pursue acting on the side, and they're going after the same thing you want to. Nevertheless, the jobs are out there for those who are willing to look and try hard to get them.

The below list of survival jobs for actors is ranked from “worst” to “best”. These are arbitrary terms, and I'll explain why each day job is good or not good for an actor.

### ◆ *Script Reader*

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Being a script reader is an interesting job to have if you want to see how the film industry works, particularly if you're either in London, Los Angeles or New York City. You can also learn a lot about writing your own screenplay and producing your own projects.

As a script reader, you read various spec scripts (see the dictionary) on a daily basis and pick the ones you like and think would make a great film. Then bring those to the producer or your supervisor for them to approve it.

This can be a good part-time gig if you're already making some money from acting, or if you have another day job set up. Unfortunately, it's not really possible to survive just on script reader's salary, let alone fund your acting career, too.

Most script reading jobs aren't full-time, and with the pay being close to minimum wage, actors need another source of income. Moreover, there isn't that many openings for script readers anywhere other than Los Angeles.

Why it's good	Why it's not good
flexible (ish), part-time and you get to work in the industry.	hard to find these jobs, pays little, and it's only part-time.

## ◆ *Bartending*

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Bartending is one of the best survival day jobs for actors there is in bigger cities, if you can get this gig that is. Not only will you be working evenings and nights, which leaves your day free to go to acting classes, auditions and even work as an actor, but being a bartender means a decent pay when you include tips.

Bruce Willis, Mark Ruffalo and Tom Cruise are known for working as bartenders for a long time while they were studying acting and getting small acting jobs. They were all fond of this gig as well, with everybody enjoying their time as bartenders.

On their own, bartenders are payed the most out of the whole serving staff, and depending on the place they work, it could be by a significant amount. Then come the tips and again, depending on the establishment,

tippers might be extremely generous.

Unfortunately, it's hard to get this position, because most actors have already taken them. Plus, you really need to be a good bartender with solid experience and amazing personality to even be considered. Don't expect to simply throw bottles in the air for your job interview and get the job.

Why it's good	Why it's not good
good pay when including tips, great hours and it's a fun job.	very difficult to get a good bartending gig if you're not already experienced.

## ◆ *Temp Agencies*

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By "temp agencies" I mean getting hired through an agency that will place you in some office to do routine work on the computer (usually). That type of temporary employment is always a good choice as one of the day jobs for actors, because you get paid pretty decent (for an actor, doing a job you aren't trained for) and you don't have to stay there for too long.

There isn't any flexibility in terms of "leave when you need" or "work at nights", however. You will have to come in at 8-9am and leave at 5-6pm, so there won't be any time for you to audition during the day, nor will you be able to work as an actor.

On the bright side, the fact that you work one week so that you can have the next week off (which is how it often works out with temp agencies) can be a good thing for some. The pay isn't huge, but if doing this on a

regular basis, actors can live off temporary jobs if they develop a system of being called in on a regular basis.

Why it's good	Why it's not good
<p>isn't too difficult to find these jobs, it's easy to do and the pay is good enough.</p>	<p>temporary, and usually during day time.</p>

## ◆ *Waiting Staff*

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This is arguably the most “famous” occupation most actors have taken on before breaking into the entertainment industry. More than half of struggling actors all around the world have tried waiting on tables, some more successfully than others.

Being a waiter/waitress is a good job to have because of the flexibility it provides, especially if you work at a fancy restaurant that gets busy only during night time. On top of that, there is always someone who can cover your shift if you are willing to cover that person when they need it.

Covering shifts is an unwritten rule among waiters. That's because it's likely that most of the waiting staff will be pursuing something in the entertainment industry too, especially if you're in a city like London or Los Angeles.

While the job itself doesn't pay as much as bartending, nor do you get as many tips as bartenders do, it is still possible to survive and fund your acting career on this alone if you include tips and live on a budget. The only problem is again, sometimes it's hard to get these gigs.



Why it's good	Why it's not good
can be flexible and you always have someone to cover your shift.	not always easy to find a flexible-enough position.

## ◆ *Freelancing*

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Being a freelancer is easily one of the best survival jobs for actors for obvious reasons. Freelancing jobs vary, and there are many things you can do, from writing articles online to creating graphic designs and logos.

For those who have their way with words and are friendly with grammar, there's always a business or a website that needs content. The same applies to graphic design or any other service you can provide. Maybe you can do voice overs if you have a way to record it at home, or take great photos of products if you own a decent DSLR camera?

The reason is that as soon as you start getting clients who value your work and constantly ask you for more, you develop a client-base, which is a regular return with great pay.

In addition to this, you also set your own working hours and work from home, which means actors can easily work during the night and audition during the day. Or if there are no auditions, do even more writing in advance to have some days free later.

The only problem is that this will require some initial time investment. You'll probably need to spend a few weeks writing, creating graphics or providing other services for very cheap or almost free to set up a good track record. It really is an investment, but the one that will pay off long-term.

Why it's good	Why it's not good
<p>extremely flexible, can be very profitable, and you can work from anywhere.</p>	<p>takes initial investment in time, doing work for cheap or even free.</p>

## ◆ *Small Online Business*

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At the number one position we have setting up your own online business with a website. This can stem either from being a freelancer and then moving away from freelancing platforms and into your own venture, or you can immediately start with creating your own business on whatever you decide.

Setting up your own online business is easily the best thing actors can do for their acting careers and their life in general. The reason being is because once it's all ready, you're not only earning money to support your acting career, but you're also building something for the future.

When it comes to all other survival jobs for actors listed above – you're working for somebody else. That means when you're done, you have almost nothing to show for it. However, if you start your own venture, it's something that will stay forever. You can continuously scale it and earn more as you continue to expand your business.

The best part is that if you ever decide to quit acting, this can be your fall-back plan. You'll already have another passion and career choice to pursue, the one that can potentially turn into a million dollar company should you decide to go in that direction.

The disadvantage of starting your own online business is that it requires the most time from you with little to no return, and also initial investment. However, starting an online business today is the easiest it has ever been, and you could launch one within 24 hours and with just £100. After that, spend just a few hours a day growing it until you start earning enough.

Why it's good	Why it's not good
super flexible, work from home and for yourself, no earning limits, build your own venture that's sustainable and can be scaled.	requires the most time to start and some initial investments.

The above list of six types of survival jobs is what majority of actors should and will be looking to get into after moving to London. Here are just a few more ideas for those who do not feel like the above six cut it.

### ◆ *Front of House Assistants*

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As you know by this point, London is full of theatres, art galleries, music halls, and more. These places always need to have employees to take care of the front of house duties, and it can be a perfect part-time job for someone looking to break into the acting world. Some positions might be permanent, but you're more likely to find temporary positions for the big events that come up a few times each year. In positions like this, you'll need to have excellent customer service, and expect to be working in the evenings and on the weekends (perfect for auditioning).

## ◆ *Servers/Line Cooks*

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Another popular part-time job for people in a drama school or those constantly auditioning is working at a restaurant or cafe as a server or cook. Places like this are always hiring people to help their restaurant run smoothly. You can usually find positions available year round, but expect to work a schedule based on the busiest times of the day. This usually means nights and weekends. The flexibility these jobs provide is usually great for actors, who may want to go to classes or attend auditions during the day.

## ◆ *Retail/Sales*

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London is full of all kinds of shops, and stores will need people to run them. There are a variety of both full-time and part-time jobs available in these fields, at stores varying from clothing boutiques to grocery shops. This is a great choice for someone who needs steady work while working towards drama school graduation or trying to find their first acting gig. Stores have a variety of hours available for work, but expect to be asked to work during their peak hours – often in early evening and during the day on the weekends.

## ◆ *Tutoring*

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If you have a lot of knowledge in a certain area or a special skill, you may be able to find work as a tutor, consultant, adviser or teacher's assistant. If you have schooling experience in a field other than acting, you may be in a good position to apply for this type of jobs. Tutoring can pay very well, and there are a lot of opportunities for students in elementary school through university. Tutoring is also a part-time gig, meaning you'll have plenty of off-time to pursue auditions and acting gigs.

## ◆ *Finding Work*

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Even though London is very expensive, the good news is that it has the biggest job market, and there are plenty of places that will hire young, unqualified people to be waiters, cleaners, valets and so forth.

These positions are ideal for you because a lot of them offer work in the evenings and weekends, which is the only time you're going to be free. Allow me give you some resources.

### Here's where actors find survival jobs in London:

- ◆ Gumtree is great for UK job ads:  
*<http://www.gumtree.com/>*
- ◆ Use Monster for more specific job vacancies:  
*<http://www.monster.co.uk/>*
- ◆ An alternative to Monster in the UK:  
*<http://www.totaljobs.com/>*
- ◆ Mostly for professional positions:  
*<http://www.indeed.co.uk/>*
- ◆ Language-related jobs:  
*<http://www.multilingualvacancies.com/>*
- ◆ More language-related jobs:  
*<http://www.toplanguagejobs.co.uk/>*
- ◆ Find Job Centre Plus in the city:  
*<http://www.allinlondon.co.uk/directory/1386.php>*

What job should you get as your first survival gig? Obviously, a lot of this will depend on your personal situation: your experience, where you live, how much it pays and what's your time schedule, among others. However, I found that there are about 8-10 types of survival jobs that fit actors best, and I'll list them below.

*For the conclusion of this chapter, here's a list of best survival jobs for actors according to surviving artists and actors themselves:*

1. **BARTENDING** – evening hours, good tips;
2. **FREELANCING** – flexible hours, but low pay at first;
3. **TEMPORARY WORK PLACEMENT** (through agencies);
4. **PERSONAL TRAINING** – for those who know what they're doing;
5. **DOG WALKER/SITTER** – more people outsource this to others;
6. **YOGA INSTRUCTOR** – easy to get this job if you know yoga well;
7. **CATERING/HOSPITALITY SECTOR** – the cliché job for actors;
8. **TEACHING/CONSULTING** – using your skills to teach them to others;
9. **PERSONAL ASSISTANT** – can be good pay but hours aren't always good;
10. **SUBSTITUTE TEACHER** – if you can make the hours work, it's perfect.

I hope this list will give you a head start on what to focus on, but of course you don't need to specifically look for these gigs alone. If something else comes along, take it for the time being and get yourself on feet first before you can afford to be picky about this.

*“When I first came to London, I loved hanging around in cafes, smoking, scribbling, and dreaming. It was life-affirming and fun.”*

– PETER CAPALDI

## **2. PREPARING TO MOVE**



Packing up and moving to a new place is never easy, especially if you're moving to an entirely different city or even country. There are quite a few things you need to take into consideration before moving to London. You need to be prepared, and you cannot expect to move from one place to another without any sort of planning. I learned it the hard way – smart planning is key to a stress-free transition.

In this chapter, I will discuss life in London, costs of living there as well as preparation for moving to this new metropolitan city where you plan to start your acting career.

## 2.1 Why Move to London?

When it comes to the acting hubs of the world, London is right up there at the top of the list with places like Los Angeles and New York City. Known as the “Mecca of theatre”, London has dozens of acting schools, drama schools, plenty of large and small theaters, and more hubs and neighborhoods for aspiring or established actors.

Although London has more opportunities for stage plays and tours at the moment, it is rapidly catching up to Los Angeles in terms of jobs available in film and television. Even Los Angeles-based productions are now often casting actors in London either for shooting in the UK or bringing them to Hollywood.

### ◆ *Acting in London*

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For aspiring actors outside of major cities, moving to London is a smart career choice. There are a number of reasons why as an actor, whether a beginner or a veteran performer, you should consider a move to London. For new actors or those just getting into show business, London's drama schools and acting classes are the biggest draw.

There are dozens of places available to choose from to start your acting training. Well-known acting classes have new actors taught by



experienced professionals in a variety of different acting techniques, voice and movement training, and any other skills that actors often find helpful to further their careers.

Drama schools are the epitome of best, most rigorous acting training a thespian can receive, and those are found all over London. In fact, many experienced American actors as well as performers from all over the world often choose to move to London in order to train at one of these prestigious places. Some of them choose a full three-year formal training course while others may take a shot at shorter yet more intensive training.

In addition to the numerous schools that an actor must train at to continue to progress, London offers a plethora of theatres for performances and shows. Whether you're brand spanking new or already have a background in performance arts, there's a part for you.

Auditions are held all the time and the number of productions continues to grow. London's variety of different shows allows actors to build up an impressive resume of stage plays, all while staying in one major city. Not only is this convenient for someone who wants to perform, but it also makes the city a vibrant home for people who love the arts. You can definitely find people who share your passion here.

With these reasons coming together, it's clear that London is one of the acting capitals of the world. While it may not be as easily recognized as Hollywood or Bollywood, it's clearly an important area in the world of acting and drama, whether you're looking for work and experience in theatre, film, television, comedy, improv or new media.

## 2.2 Paperwork and Legal Stuff

Unfortunately, moving to London from another country isn't exactly easy. Moving to any different country is going to require a lot of planning and paperwork, but their requirements are especially very strict in order to become a resident of the U.K. Luckily, there's a lot of information available to help you get started on your journey overseas. We've gathered some of the more important steps in the process here for you, so you can ready your documentation and start planning.

**DISCLAIMER.** *This section is going to be important for anybody moving to a different country, particularly when you need to acquire a visa to be able to study and work long-term. However, note that I am NOT an attorney, nor do I know all the laws of immigration to give you a completely accurate advice. Below is what I have found to be true for myself and many other actors from doing a lot of research. I highly recommend you to look into this further yourself and check the links.*

Remember that if you live anywhere within the European Union (EU) or in a country that's part of European Economic Area (EEA), and you're planning to move to the United Kingdom, you need not worry about this step, because the laws of immigration have already permitted all EU citizens to come and go as they please. With potential changes as a result of Brexit, the situation may be different, but there were no plans for changes at the time of this writing (October, 2016).

If you're moving to the UK from anywhere outside of EU, such as from USA or India, then this chapter is specifically for you. Immigration is an extremely important step that needs a lot of careful planning before you can even consider packing up and leaving.

## ◆ *Moving FAQs*

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The only way you're going to be able to train and work as an actor in London is if you have a legal right to be there. Make sure to start looking into this at least a year before you decide to move to London. I've immigrated to several countries over the years, including UK and US, so this comes from a lot of personal experience.

### HERE ARE SOME OF THE COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

#### ◆ *Why do I need a visa when moving to US or UK?*

You cannot enter the country without a visa. You need at least a tourist visa to go through the border.

#### ◆ *Can I come to the UK or US with a tourist visa?*

You can come, and you can even join a short-term acting class, but you cannot earn any income on a tourist visa, and you cannot stay for too long either.

#### ◆ *How long can I stay on a tourist visa?*

Usually, tourist visas allow people to stay in the country somewhere between 3 and 6 months.

#### ◆ *What acting training can I do on a tourist visa?*

Most private acting schools will accept you for training and won't even ask about the visa, but you have to keep in mind the term of their training since your stay in the country is limited.

◆ *Can I go to a drama school on a tourist visa?*

No. When you're applying to a drama school as an international student, they will explain you everything about visas, and help you get one for the period of your study.

◆ *What visa do I need to move to and work in the US?*

There are two ways you can move to the US, stay for a prolonged period of time and legally earn income as an actor. You need either O-1B visa, or a Green Card (more of these below).

◆ *What visa do I need to move to and work in the UK?*

UK has a few Tiers on visas, but as an actor, you will have to apply for either Tier 2 (less likely) or Tier 5 (more likely) visas. More on this below.

Now let's talk about the most important visas that you can try to acquire and the only ones that will allow you to move to and work in UK or US. I'll begin with the USA visas.

◆ *Tier 2 and Tier 5 Visas*

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United Kingdom's visa regulations are a little more complicated and difficult to define, so you're going to have to work with a professional to acquire the necessary visa that will allow you to stay and work in the UK.

Tier 5 is a common visa for actors, which allows you as a Creative Worker to temporarily stay and earn income within the country. These are good for one year, and you can extend it afterwards. Tier 2 visa is an

occupation based visa, usually given to applicants in the fields where there is a shortage of UK workers. I haven't heard of any actors coming on a Tier 2 visa to the UK, but I encourage you browse through the below resources anyway.

- ◆ General UK immigration info:  
[\*https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration\*](https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration)
- ◆ See what visa you need:  
[\*https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa\*](https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa)
- ◆ Official visa application website:  
[\*https://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk\*](https://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk)
- ◆ More information on UK:  
[\*https://www.internations.org/london-expats/guide\*](https://www.internations.org/london-expats/guide)
- ◆ Forum for further immigration questions:  
[\*http://www.immigrationboards.com\*](http://www.immigrationboards.com)
- ◆ Tips on moving to UK:  
[\*https://www.internations.org/london-expats/guide\*](https://www.internations.org/london-expats/guide)
- ◆ Tier 5 visa:  
[\*https://www.gov.uk/tier-5-temporary-worker-creative-and-sporting-visa/\*](https://www.gov.uk/tier-5-temporary-worker-creative-and-sporting-visa/)

No matter where in the world you are from, the only way you're going to get a visa is by going to one of the official UK government websites and finding out from there what it is you have to do. The visa process is complicated and takes a lot of research to understand what specifically applies to you. Each country may vary in prices and application, but at the end of the day, these websites will be your best bet for efficiently getting all the necessary information.

Let's take a closer look at visas, various documents, passports and what other paperwork you may need to take care of before you can move to London.

**A QUICK NOTE.** *For the rest of this chapter, we'll use a US citizen as an example of someone wanting to move to London, UK from overseas. However, all the tips are usually applicable to majority of other countries and the process and documents are similar in one way or another.*

## ◆ *Passport*

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The first obvious thing you'll need is a passport. Your passport will serve as the best identification of yourself and your nationality anytime you go overseas. Your U.S. license or identification card won't matter; it's only good in the States. You'll need this document if you want to visit London before you move, and you'll also need it to apply for a visa.

If you don't have it yet, then getting a passport is not a quick process in most countries. It can take up to two months for it to be processed and completed, so you should do this as soon as possible. If you really need to, you can pay a hefty fee to have it expedited. If you've never had a passport before, you'll need to apply in person.

When applying, make sure you bring all the necessary documents; you'll need your proof of citizenship (usually your birth certificate) and a photo identification (usually your driver's license). They'll want a photocopy of these documents, which you can have ready before you go, or they can do it at the office.

You will also need to have a suitable picture of yourself ready for your passport. From doing a bit of research, it seems that most countries do not take a pictures at the offices.

There are many requirements for the photo; it must be in color, a 2"x2" square, printed out on thin, photo-quality paper. It must be from within the last six months and must show your full face. You should not wear any hats or headgear, but if you normally wear glasses or other aids, you should include those in the photo. The picture must be taken in front of a white or off-white background.

Worried about getting the right photo by yourself? Many places will offer passport photography. If you live in the US, then check CVS, UPS, and similar places.

Finally, you need the form "DS-11: Application for U.S. Passport". This must be filled out by hand, but you can complete it before you visit the office. The worst part of the whole ordeal? You'll need to fork over \$165 for both types of passport. After everything is set, you'll receive your new passport in the mail.

Getting a passport in your home country is actually the easiest portion of paperwork you'll deal with when moving overseas. The worst part? Visas.

## ◆ *Getting Visas*

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We're back to visas again, since it's an important topic to cover and many aspiring actors about to move to the UK are often confused by this complicated process.

Once you have your passport for travel, you can visit the UK for up to 6 months as a tourist with no special visas required. If you're a US citizen, then your passport acts as a 'tourist visa'. The same applies to many other countries that maintain a relationship with the United Kingdom.

However, if you want to move to the UK and live here, just the passport alone won't do. You'll need to apply for another type of visa that permits you to stay for a longer period of time and allow you to work. For aspiring actors, the most common visas are student visas (for drama schools) and work visas (regular acting jobs). These two types of visas will grant you access to London for a longer period of time, allowing you to continue the process of immigration once you arrive.

While the visa is the most important part of paperwork you need to move to London, try not to get overwhelmed. The process for obtaining a visa is actually fairly simple as long as you have the correct identification and information.

Coming from the United States, you won't have as much to worry about when it comes to applying for a visa. The UK government website is also a great resource that walks you through the process of immigration. To get started, check out this short 'quiz' that tells you if you need a visa and if so, what kind of visa you'll need to apply for.

If you plan on studying in London's drama school, a student visa is the way to go. There are three different visas: short-term, child, and general. As long as you are over 16, you'll be looking at the general visa option. Applying for the visa can be long and stressful due to waiting and the unknown, so be sure to give yourself several months to finish the process and receive approval.

To qualify for the student visa, you must have been offered a place in a course. This includes London's drama schools. You must be able to speak, read, and write English and have enough money to support yourself and pay for your courses. You will be able to stay in the country for as long as you are in school, and can apply to extend your stay as needed. The visa



also allows you to arrive early to prepare before beginning the course. A student visa costs £328, or \$426.

The other type of visa you may consider is a work visa (<https://www.gov.uk/tier-2-general>). There are many different kinds of work visas, and the kind you'll apply for depends on your skills and the work you'll be doing.

Most people will be applying for a Tier 2 General Work Visa. In order to qualify for a work visa, you must have already been offered a 'skilled job' in the UK. You must also have someone willing to sponsor you. In order to be a sponsor, they must be recognized by the government and be related to the field you want to work in.

A Tier 2 General visa is valid for up to five years and 14 days, depending on the job, and can be extended as needed. For a regular three year visa, you'll pay £575 (\$746) the first time, or slightly less if your job is currently in demand. For longer than three years, you'll need to pay £1,151 (about \$1,500) for your visa.

In addition to these application fees, you'll also need to pay the healthcare surcharge for Europe's universal healthcare plans. This will vary depending on how long you will be in the country; check to make sure, as this can easily add another \$1,000 to the fee. If you are applying for a work visa, your family is allowed to come with you. Just be prepared for additional fees, especially when it comes to the healthcare surcharge.

These are only the most common visas; there are many other options available. You will likely only be getting one of these two, however, as they are the most used visas.

You can pursue a short-term student visa or temporary work visa if you

just want to get into the country. However, it's always better to plan ahead so you don't find yourself stranded with no way home if your visa runs out before you can find a longer course or employment that allows you to get a work visa.

Many people run into problems getting a visa because they haven't gotten the proper documentation either from the drama school or their employer in the UK. It's important to plan well in advance, and to gather as much documentation as possible while you apply to drama schools or acting jobs here.

Make sure you keep in touch with the school or employer so they know you are going to be coming from another country. They can help you navigate the process of applying for a visa and should be willing to provide information as needed.

Remember, the visa process can take a few months, so ensure you and your potential employer and school are on the same page about when you will actually start work or a course.

Once you are sure you have everything you need to fill out the paperwork, you can start the application. If you're an American, then it's very easy to get this process started in the United States, but it's also similar for many other countries. Check out the UK's government link for more information on applying here.

People applying from the US can submit their application online, making it very convenient. When submitting your online visa application, you'll also need to pay the fee. Have your payment method ready!

Once your application is complete, you need to schedule an appointment

at a physical location for your photo and fingerprinting. This information is needed for your UK biometric residence permit. There are US Department of Homeland Security Application Support Centers located all around the country, but depending on where you live, you might have a bit of a drive for your appointment.

To make sure you're prepared, have your passport, a printed copy of your complete application, and the receipt from your paid application. You can log back into your visa account at any time to print this information. When visiting the ASC for your appointment, remember that you will not be allowed to use any cell phones or cameras inside – be prepared!

After your appointment, you'll have everything you need to mail your supporting documents and visa information out. You need to have it in the mail within five days of your appointment, so don't dawdle!

Make sure you include your completed application form, your stamped biometric confirmation receipt from the appointment, and any supporting documents proving your identity and work/school obligations in the UK. Don't forget your passport – without it, your visa will automatically be refused!

You'll also need to include a prepaid electronic shipping label so that your paperwork and passport can be returned to you. If you want to keep track of your application after it's shipped, pay an extra fee for priority service before mailing it out. Include the receipt for priority service with your application.

Once everything has been put in the mail, your part is done! Now you just have wait. The amount of time it takes to review and approve your visa can vary greatly, so try to be patient. It can take a few months.

## ◆ *Residence Card*

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For people who've been in London for years now, this should be the next step. If you already have a work visa or plan to apply for one after finishing school, you can apply for settlement in the UK, also known as 'indefinite leave to remain'. This will let you receive a new biometric residence permit saying you have settled permanently. This basically qualifies you as a resident of the UK, and helps you travel into the country more easily, gives you benefits and services provided to residents, and shows your eligibility for employment.

To qualify for a Residence Card, you must have been working using your work visa for 5 years. You have had continuous residence in the UK during this time. You must still be employed, and your job must pay over a certain amount. Certain exceptions can apply, so ask questions often as you move from the immigration process.

To get started with the application, you'll need the complete application form, two passport photographs, your original passport or other identification card, work visa verification, job verification, and salary info. As these documents will all need to be processed and verified, the application for permanent residency can take over six months.

You should start preparing to file the application with the government before your visa expires so there will be no lapse. When sending your application out, don't forget that there is a large fee - £1,875 (nearly \$2,500) per person. If you apply in person for priority service, you'll pay £2,375 (\$3,082).

While applying for a visa is usually simple enough to do on your own, it is often recommended to use the services of an immigration officer for your application for permanency. There are a lot of things to go through,

and it's always possible something can go wrong, leaving you high and dry.

While using a professional can obviously make the process more expensive, it does help you ensure it goes through the first time, and that you don't end up owing more fees for having to apply more than once. It also helps you avoid lapses in legal residency, which can lead to you being deported. Your job may be able to help you with the process, and some companies have dedicated immigration specialists for their workers.

## 2.3 Choosing Acting Training

I'm a big fan of planning when it comes to things like this. I strongly believe that knowing what you're going to do helps you avoid stress and falling into those pitfalls of simply meandering around, trying to jump on opportunities. Before you move to a new location specifically to pursue a career as an actor, you must have a plan of action.

It goes without saying that training is every actor's first priority. Actors must always stay in training when they're not working. When it comes to choices for training, London has plenty of those. You only have to decide what type of training you're going after, and which one you can afford both financially and time-wise.

For example, a drama school will take you 3 (UK) to 4 (US) years to complete, and you'll be in school every single day, 9 to 5, training. It's a big commitment. Private acting schools, classes and workshops are a lot easier on your time and your pocket, but you also train less. There are a lot of evening acting classes that you can choose from in both cities.

**A QUICK NOTE ON TRAINING.** *All throughout this book, when I mention drama schools, I refer to accredited 3- or 4-year programs in official institutions with versatile acting training and academic curriculum, just like any other University or College. When I mention acting classes, I'm referring to any type of acting schools, classes and workshops that are privately held and have no accreditation or government backing. Most of these private acting schools hold their classes in the evenings, are very short and more specific, but some do have long-term programs that emulate those seen in drama schools. For more on the difference between drama schools and acting classes, I recommend you read this article.*

If you pick to go to a drama school for your long-term, all-around training, then you can't very well move to London and expect to join it right off the bat when you haven't even applied to train there. Drama school application process is not only long where you need at least 6 months in advance to apply and audition for it, but it's also difficult. Many apply to drama schools, but not that many get into them. Acting schools and classes are usually much easier to join, most don't require auditions, and it's likely you will find one or two that you can become a part of right after you made the move.

Either way, whether you're planning to commit to drama school's long-term training, or choose to do weekly evening acting classes instead, all of this requires at least an application or registration, and a little bit of planning. So let's plan together as I walk you through the process in a few concise steps. If you want some really in-depth advice on how to research, choose and get into a drama school in the UK or the US, find the "drama school" book on Acting in London website.

## ◆ *Make a Choice*

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First, we need to do some research and find places where you can apply once you made the move. This can be rather hard as there are quite a few schools to harness your acting abilities in London – each of them

offering different courses over different periods of time. It's inevitable that choosing just one school is going to be hard, particularly when it comes to drama schools, but you cannot go to all of them. With evening acting classes, you will have more time, therefore you may be able to pick several.

There are a few important factors you need to take into consideration when researching places to study acting: 1) the location, 2) the fees, and 3) what type of acting training the school specializes in (for acting classes only; drama schools are all-around). School's reputation, both for evening acting classes and drama schools, can also mean a lot, because no actor's training is equal.

Here's a word of advice on acting classes from personal experience. Do not choose a place to study acting just because it's the popular choice among many others, or because you know someone who went there, or because you believe it will look good on your resume. You need a quality institution that has acting teacher(s) who can help you become a better actor – not an average school that's marketed well and is recommended because everybody else goes there. That will backfire.

If you're really having trouble choosing a drama school or acting classes because you like the sound of them all, then this is what you do. For acting classes, find top five choices in the city, and keep that list. You don't need to enroll before moving there, but it's a good idea to inquire them over email with all the questions you have. For drama schools, research the best ones and compile a top three list of schools you would like to enroll in, and apply to them all to raise your chances of getting accepted.

It is then up to you to get the application, fill it out and send it through. It

should be rather obvious that this needs to be done before entries close, as you cannot apply to a school that's no longer accepting applications. All deadlines for applications can be found on that particular drama school's website, and if you're ever in doubt, then simply email or call them. The admissions office are there to help people in your situation.

The application process can take a while for the school to get back to you and tell you what's going to be happening from there on end, so you should try and apply as soon as you can – that way, if you have to move to your new location a little earlier to audition for the school, you can. Again, with acting classes, it's not important to apply this early. A month in advance is usually more than enough, unless it's a long-term study program.

## 2.4 The Moving Process

By now you've checked out London and gotten your visa for travel. Now what? Well, now comes the fun of planning for your actual move. Unfortunately, it's not like you can just rent a truck and drive all of our belongings to your new home if you live overseas.

For the Americans (or people in a similar situation), since London is “across the pond”, you'll have to look into getting your items shipped. It's not exactly easy, but we've compiled some tips to help you start following your acting dream in the great city of London. Remember, you should start planning for your move as soon as you've made your decision to settle here.

The process of moving overseas can be very long, and depending on paperwork, you can look at several months of preparation and planning to get there. The earlier you start preparing, the sooner you can arrive in your dream city for your dream job!



## ◆ *Moving Company*

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Once you have decided to relocate to London, you should start looking at different moving companies. These days, there are dozens of international moving companies that can help you transport your belongings overseas. You should look at a few different options to ensure you find a moving company that works for you and your move.

### WHEN CHECKING THEM OUT, MAKE SURE YOU GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THESE QUESTIONS:

- ◆ *What insurance does the company carry, and what is covered?*
- ◆ *How many moves to London have they completed for other customers?*
- ◆ *Are they familiar with the route for this specific move?*
- ◆ *How long has the company been in business?*
- ◆ *What is the price for moving your goods to London?*
- ◆ *Are there any extra hidden fees?*
- ◆ *Who's handling customs forms, you or the moving company?*

Once you've made your choice about which company to go with, make sure you get a contract up front detailing your responsibility, the price of the move, and the delivery date for your items. Keep this with you during your journey so you'll have the details and their contact information in case of any issues.

## ◆ *Inventory*

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The first thing to do when you have your move date in mind? Take inventory of everything you own. If you aren't attached to it, get rid of it! Seriously, you want to bring as little as possible with you.

If you can easily some of your stuff in London, get rid of it. Don't use it anymore? Get rid of it. Something big and bulky you don't often need? Get rid of it. It's going to be more expensive and time consuming with more things that you try to bring with you, so seriously downsize before your big move.

In addition to being a hassle to move your things, the UK has a limit on the amount of items you can bring into the country before you have to pay duty or tax. The rate for items declared after your allowance of £390 (\$506) worth of items, you'll pay 2.5% duty on any item valued less than £630 (\$818). More will be owed on items with a higher value.

On top of that, you may be responsible for paying Import VAT on the total value of your items. The typical cost for this is a whopping 20% of your total, so plan accordingly.

When going through your things, make sure to check with the London laws to ensure your items are not restricted. Restricted items will be seized and you may find yourself in some legal trouble. In a worst case scenario, your visa will be revoked and you'll have to leave the country.

### Things to avoid:

- ◆ **ILLEGAL DRUGS**
- ◆ **WEAPONS OF ANY KIND**
- ◆ **FIREARMS**

- ◆ PEPPER SPRAY OR MACE
- ◆ CERTAIN PLANTS
- ◆ MANY FOODS
- ◆ PORNOGRAPHY
- ◆ PIRATED MUSIC OR MOVIES
- ◆ ROUGH DIAMONDS
- ◆ EXCESSIVE AMOUNTS OF LIQUOR OR TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Don't feel like you should throw all your old belongings away. This is a great opportunity to make some extra cash for your move. You can use sites like eBay, Reddit, and Facebook to list items for sale that you don't want to bring.

A garage or tag sale is also a great idea to get rid of those last few things. You might be able to find your stuff a new home while also earning some pocket money. Anything you can't sell, you can always donate. Places like Goodwill and Salvation Army are always looking for things they can pick up.

## ◆ *Pack Up*

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Obviously, packing is something you'll need to do for any moving trip, but it requires a bit of extra care when moving overseas to London. Your stuff will be in transit for quite some time, moving from trucks to boats and back to trucks. It's too easy for your things to get damaged if you skimp on good packaging supplies and avoid proper packing advice.

Start by gathering up the supplies you'll need. You want heavy-duty packaging tape, sturdy cardboard boxes, and plenty of bubble wrap or other padding products for fragile items.

While you can use lower-quality boxes for short moves, such as those picked up from a grocery store or a friend, you'll want to splurge and get the good stuff from a hardware store or moving company for your relocation to London. Don't forget – your stuff will be crossing an ocean, possibly getting damp and salty; having the sturdy box is a smart idea.

Next comes the packing. You can always have a moving company do this, but it will be pricey and you might have trouble finding exactly what you need when you arrive in London. If you can, just watch some videos from moving companies and people who have traveled overseas on how to properly pack.

Remember to use lots of padding in the form of bubble wrap, blankets, and even clothing. Make sure you fill boxes enough so the content won't rattle around as they are moved. Once the box is full, tape it up securely and consider doing a second layer so everything stays sealed.

## ◆ *Insure Your Goods*

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Accidents happen. In order to protect yourself, you need to have your items insured. As we discussed above, your moving company should have insurance available for themselves and your goods.

However, you may need to choose a plan that is right for you and the amount of things you are transporting. Make sure to always read the fine print of any insurance policy you take through a moving company, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

You can also insure your goods through another company. This can most often be done through the home or renters insurance you have before moving. Often times, you can call them and extend your policy through when your items will arrive in London.

Note that not every insurance company will provide this service, so don't assume it applies to you. Call and make sure you can be covered.

## ◆ *Pets*

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If you have any furry friends, you'll need to make the tough decision of whether to bring them with you, or leave them in your home country with family members or another home. Luckily, if you do decide to bring your pet with you to London, the UK has less strict requirements on animals entering the country from the USA (it may be different for other countries).

To enter the country with your pet dog, cat, or ferret (other small animals have no limitations, although a quarantine may be needed), you'll need to ensure they meet the requirements.

### There are three very important rules to be followed:

- ◆ **YOUR PET MUST BE MICROCHIPPED;**
- ◆ **YOUR PET MUST HAVE A PET PASSPORT;**
- ◆ **YOUR PET MUST BE VACCINATED AGAINST RABIES.**

Why is it so important to make sure these tasks have been fulfilled? If you try to enter the country with your pet without meeting all these requirements, your pet could be placed in quarantine for up to 4 months. They could also be refused entry. This could cause you a lot of logistical problems and fees – not to mention the fact that you and your pet will be separated.

You'll need to have a veterinary visit before you try to move your pet overseas. This is where you'll get your pet's passport, which includes all their health and vaccination information. You should schedule your veterinary appointment at least a month before the move – if your pet needs a vaccine, it will need to be done at least 21 days before they arrive in the new country.

After you ensure that your pet is in good health and meets the UK requirements, your vet can also help you learn how to make your pet comfortable for traveling, whether you'll be sending them off by sea or air.

In addition to meeting these requirements, your pet must also arrive in the UK the same time you do. There is a 5 day window in which your pet can arrive, either before or after your own arrival. You'll need to ensure the pet travel service is an approved company as well. You should provide the travel service with your pet's vet records, bill of health, and other important documents so they will be ready to go upon their arrival in the country.

Take the same amount of time and care with your pet's paperwork that you do with your own. Remember that if you are using an immigration professional to help you with your visa, they will also be knowledgeable about moving with pets. They can help you with paperwork and advice on moving your furry friend overseas.

## ◆ *Currency Transfer*

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One of the last things to do, right before you move, is transfer most of your currency into pounds (GBP). You'll want to be able to purchase things right away, so you'll need to be prepared before you actually arrive in the UK.

There are a few different ways to transfer your currency, but the easiest way for immigrants is to either see if their bank offers the service or use a currency broker. Using a broker familiar with British pounds will ensure you can get the best exchange rate. In a pinch, you can also try to transfer money using an online service such as PayPal. If you are leaving soon and need some spending money, this will work in the short-term.

Any way you transfer funds is going to be efficient, but be aware of any fees you may incur. This is especially true with your bank and PayPal. They may have expensive transfer or ATM fees, especially when it comes to international use. Also, make sure you are knowledgeable about the current exchange rate. Even if you let someone else take care of exchanging your currency, make sure you stay involved so you know what's happening with your money.

## 2.5 Researching, Planning and Packing

Whether you're moving from another country or just another city within the country, it would be a good idea to research the differences between where you're from and where you're going. Being prepared for these differences will make you so much more at ease when it comes to moving and will make the experience significantly more pleasant in general.

If you're moving from somewhere else in the UK, then there won't be too many changes that you'll have to endure, unless you're moving from a really rural area. If you have never been to London before, it's going to be substantially different experience from any other places you have ever been to because of how fast-paced, big and crowded this city is. It's also one of the world's most expensive places to live, as we have already established. Moving from somewhere else in the world, especially if it is a place that's the polar opposite of London, can be quite a culture shock, therefore, it would probably be wise to acknowledge these differences before you fully immerse yourself in them.

Aside from the cultural thing, you will quickly notice how dependable you are on public transport in London (which is great, by the way). But taken this into consideration, also the fact how busy the streets are which makes driving almost impossible, you will need to plan each excruciating detail of everything that should or could happen from when you arrive to your new home city onwards.

## ◆ *Planning Arrival*

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Naturally, if you know someone in the city you're moving to, it would be a good idea to ask them to help you when you arrive, as it's more reassuring to know that somebody from there will be waiting for you on the other side. If you haven't planned out your trip to a "t," then this whole journey can turn into a disaster very fast.

If you don't know anybody in London before moving there, and you need to find a way to get to where you're staying by yourself, then the best thing to do would be to simply grab a taxi cab or Uber once you're at the airport. For the peace of mind, you can grab five taxi phone numbers online before leaving, but this really isn't necessary: everybody has a phone with an App and 4LTE connection these days.

Also, one thing you'll quickly notice once you're in London is how many taxi cabs they have around. In general, people are friendly and very helpful in this city, so don't be afraid to ask if you're ever lost.

Quick advice from personal experience: don't plan to use public transportation on your arrival. You'll get confused, lost and will start to panic. Have the address of your end destination – be it a hotel or a place you've rented out in advance – written down on a piece of paper and in your phone, and spend a few pounds on a taxi or Uber to complete your trip calmly and stress-free.



## ◆ *Your New Place*

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After you've laid out the whole journey for yourself on how it is you're going to get from point A (airport or train station) to point B (where you'll be staying), then there's not much else you need to plan for, as the rest is pretty easy.

It would be a good idea to compile a list of everything that should be done to ensure you start off your journey in London on a positive note. For example, if you're trying to save money, buying food for home cooking should be pretty high up on that list; it's very easy to start indulging in everything big cities have to offer food-wise.

But do remember to spend some time enjoying yourself for a week or so, exploring the city and just relaxing for a bit before the journey begins. Once you're ready, focus on what other essential things you need to do, such as finding a place to live, opening up a bank account, looking for a job, getting into an acting class or preparing for drama school classes, networking and finding friends, or any other assignments to get you all set up and going in London.

Don't forget to research some emergency numbers – like the number for an ambulance, police, or the government, if you're in that kind of trouble – just to have them with you at all times in case you need them. Having a solid plan is always reassuring, so make sure to plan as many details as you can, including what you need to take with you; that way it's less scary to be in a new place on your own.

*If you're too lazy to research this, let me help you a little:*

**112 or 999** – police, ambulance or fire urgent emergencies in London

**101** – non-urgent police emergency or to report a crime

*Also, just in case, I've put together a quick list of things to take for your consideration just so that you don't miss anything:*

◆ **PAPERWORK**

Visa papers (if required), passport, ID, drama school paperwork (if necessary), travel insurance, plane/train/bus tickets, hotel booking confirmations. And take copies of your IDs/passport and store them safely somewhere just in case.

◆ **MONEY**

Have cash and cards ready, and if you're moving from overseas, have some British pounds with you before you arrive.

◆ **UK PLUG ADAPTORS**

Buy a few of these before leaving home (thank me later).

◆ **LAPTOP**

You can't do anything without a computer these days.

◆ **SMARTPHONE WITH GPS, MOBILE DATA AND GOOGLE MAPS**

I highly recommend preparing this and making sure it all works; it will save your life.

◆ **CHARGERS FOR EVERYTHING**

For everything!

◆ **CLOTHES**

Seasonal clothes (only for the season), some casual wear, something to wear for job interviews, black canvas kit for acting classes (black t-shirt, black trainers, black comfy shoes).

◆ **BOOK(S)**

This is for those long trips on the plane/train/bus; but don't get too distracted!

- ◆ **ADDRESS OF END DESTINATION**

Have it on a piece of paper as well as in your phone, just in case.

- ◆ **LIST OF EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS**

I listed those above.

- ◆ **SMALL NOTEBOOK AND TWO PENS IN HAND LUGGAGE**

Again, you can thank me for this tip later.

- ◆ **SNACKS AND WATER**

For longer trips.

That's about it for the really important stuff. Don't go crazy packing – your new life begins elsewhere from now on, and you'll probably want a fresh start.

- ◆ *Packing*

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Once you've finished planning, and everything's good to go, it's time to commence with the dreadful task that is packing. Some people enjoy packing and planning, but I don't; I believe it's the worst part of moving, simply because there's so much effort involved in putting away stuff that you're just going to take out again later. To top it all off, there's the really hard decision you have to make on what to pack and what to throw away.

Simply mailing a bunch of things will probably cost you more than if you were to buy them on location, which is why you need to spend a good

amount of time deciding what to take, and what to leave behind. Plus, isn't it exciting to take as few items with you as possible and then start your acting journey in a new city from a clean sheet of paper?

Firstly, you'll have to decide which household objects you desperately need to take with you. Note that very often student accommodation or a place you'll rent will supply you with a bed, and so if a bed is all you need, then congratulations, you've just saved yourself a ton of money (this was my approach which I highly recommend). If it's not, and you feel the intense need to take your entire bookshelf, all the wardrobe, a massive desktop PC, and a giant stuffed bear, then you're going to have to research how to get it all to London, and how much it'll cost you.

It's also a good idea to check how long it'll take to arrive, that way you can send it beforehand and hopefully have it come shortly after you do. Don't forget to research how much it'll cost to take all your luggage with you via different forms of transportation, i.e. plane, train, bus, rentals, etc. My personal word of advice on clothing: if the size of your wardrobe is bigger than the size of your suitcase, it's a good indication that you should leave some of those clothes behind.

## 2.6 Things to do Before Moving to London

Moving to London to pursue a career as an actor is a big decision that requires careful planning and thorough understanding of what awaits you. You need to plan your move well to avoid any pitfalls, and to save yourself time and money.

Nevertheless, it's a move that's inevitable for majority of ambitious actors whose dreams do not align with keeping acting as their hobby and performing in community theatres on the weekends. On top of that, you get to live the true life of an artist and surround yourself with other like-minded people who share your passion and understand your goals.

## ◆ *Have a Plan*

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This is what this book is for, to help you plan your journey. It was said many times before that something called “overnight success” does not exist outside of celebrity magazines. Therefore, in order to start from the right foot after moving and then living in London, as well as get somewhere in this big pool of talent and competition, you need a great business plan for yourself.

Consider your options and what you’re going to do once you make the move. Think of ideas how you can start earning acting credits and experience as soon as possible in case no auditions come your way just yet.

My first advice would to try and produce your own content if nothing comes along right off the bat. Don’t wait for someone to cast you; cast yourself! Maybe you can write a short film or a web series and find people to produce it with? Try connecting with folks from your new acting class, or even your survival job.

Knowing exactly where you’re going and what you’re doing will save you time and money, that way ensuring that you’re working efficiently the minute you land (or arrive to) in London. This is especially true if you want to spend the least amount of time exploring and more time moving your acting career forward.

This reminds me of the way great director Ridley Scott works. He believes in thorough planning to avoid any types of mistakes, and to move efficiently and effectively thorough the filming process of the movie.

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**“Never take your notes into a pitch, because you’ll turn a good film into a development deal. Once you’re green lit you can change it then. I storyboarded the entire film, right through everything. they aren’t stick figures, they are wide shots, mediums, etc. With the power of the board — we doubled the budget...”**

– RIDLEY SCOTT

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The exact same system of thorough planning (storyboarding) should be applied to an actor’s career, and particularly when you’re just starting out. Therefore, when you’re planning your arrival to London, what you want to think of are things like where you’re going to stay, where you are going to take acting classes, how you’ll find survival jobs and what else you can do with your time.

If you decide to produce your own content, which is one of the best decisions you can make for your career at the very start, then plan for that as well. Consider where to go to find associates or how to raise a little money for your project. Revise your business plan before the actual move so that you spend less time thinking and have more time for action when you’re at the location.

## ◆ *Get Experience*

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Actors who aren't in a rush yet (maybe you're saving money for the move) can take advantage of that time as well. If you're just thinking about moving to London and are yet to make the leap, then consider gaining some real acting experience first in your hometown.

There are many things you can do while you're waiting to save enough cash and move. Anything from starting your acting CV/resume (more on this later), researching the industry, reading acting books and making connections through social media with people in the city you want to move to will be very beneficial.

To start with, get into an acting class or join a local community theatre or a drama club. On the basis of these activities, you will understand whether acting is something you want to dedicate your life to. You will also gain the knowledge and hone your acting chops so that you're ready for the bigger market with larger pool of experienced talent and competition.

## ◆ *Make Connections*

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In these times when everybody is on the social media platforms, and emails are the primary form of contact, it's fairly easy to make connections anywhere in the entertainment industry. On top of that, those connections can bring you much more work than any acting training or drama school degree could (more on this in later chapters).

Find like-minded people and fellow actors or filmmakers from the city you're moving to and discuss potential opportunities. Maybe they're thinking about launching a new project and looking for a partner? You

can possibly shake hands on a project you'll do together (a short film, web series, or a spec commercial) and secure yourself a job right off the bat.

Once ready, ask your new connections questions and don't be shy to inquire them for advice. Usually people are more than happy to share their own experience and knowledge with newcomers in showbiz (we all have egos). Sometimes, such conversations might lead to more valuable connections, like a filmmaker who's currently producing a short film and would like you to audition for.

## ◆ *Join the Union*

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In the UK, all professional actors will have to join Equity actors' union. In the US, you'll have to become SAG-AFTRA eligible first, and then join whenever you decide. Making this one of your priorities before moving to London may benefit you a little but it's not essential. How can it benefit you?

First, you'll have one less thing to worry about when you're in London and you're already struggling and worrying about too many other things (there's always less pressure in your hometown). You may also want to join Spotlight – the UK's #1 casting website – as soon as you're eligible to do so. It's not easy, however.

Second, pushing through everything just to be able to become a member of the Equity union (which requires some acting experience) will make you a better actor and you'll understand how much effort it takes to actually make it in this business.



## ◆ *Save Up*

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This one is the last on the list, but it's arguably the most important part of your planning and preparation. Saving money could be either a tough assignment to accomplish, or an easy one, depending how rich you or your parents are. Unfortunately, money is a big factor for a newbie actor (or any actor, really) who's just started pursuing this career in a very expensive city like London.

Don't buy into all those stories of actors coming to the city with no money and sleeping in theatres. It's not realistic and not sustainable for most of us, and it's likely that majority of those stories have all been made up or at least extremely exaggerated. Without having saved up some cash, you will most likely go broke in a week, starve for another week and then go home defeated. This is how it goes for many new actors who decide to move on a whim with no proper planning.

To avoid that downfall, you must maintain a healthy balance of naiveté. Being naive for an actor is not necessarily a bad thing, as the quote from Steve Martin below says, but you also should maintain a good amount of skepticism and ground yourself in reality.

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**“Through the years, I have learned there is no harm in charging oneself up with delusions between moments of valid inspiration.”**

– STEVE MARTIN

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Be one of the few smarter actors when it comes to pursuing your acting career goals and plan well. Prepare yourself properly by reading plenty of books, researching this industry, talking to other people and knowing exactly how you're going to launch yourself into the market as soon as you move to London.

Money, experience, connections and your acting career's business plan are just some of the things you should strongly consider before making the big move. If anything else pops into your head what you can do before packing and leaving, then write it down. A good plan of action will never hurt your career.

Be a clever actor, make smart choices and prepare yourself for that "overnight success". It will only happen if you make it happen.

**“When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.”**

**– SAMUEL JOHNSON**



# **3. MOVING TO LONDON**

## 3.1 Smart Move

Moving to a new city is very exciting, especially if that city is London, but it can also become difficult and stressful, especially if you're moving there by alone. Metropolitan cities are huge, so not only is there a change of scenery, but there's a change of pace, people, environment, attitude and so forth.

There's not much involved in the actual moving, as all you really have to do is get your suitcase and get on a train or a plane – it's the preparing that's the hardest. But if you plan well and stick to your game plan, you can minimize the pain of moving.

### ◆ *The Journey*

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If you're from somewhere else in the United Kingdom, moving to London isn't going to be too scary, as your family is still in the same country as you are. Therefore, getting on a train, a car, or a bus, and saying goodbye might be hard but it won't be scary.

Regardless of how far away you're moving from, you can enjoy the trip by dreaming and planning your next 5 years (that's what I did): where you'll study, how you'll start looking for auditions, how you'll begin your acting work, what job you're going to get and so on. It's an exciting time!

### ◆ *New City*

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Finally, you arrive to one of the world's entertainment capitals after all that planning and stress. This is going to be very exciting, not to mention fulfilling. It can actually become a little scary, especially if you're on your own, but the new sense of independence, freedom and potential prospects and great future will probably be more overwhelming than your nerves. It's time to get setup.

It might take a while to fully get on your feet, as setting up your new living arrangements – as well as adjusting to them – can be rather hard. There are many things you need to do before you feel fully at home in this big, strange, welcoming, cold or hot, artistic, crowded, energetic, fast-paced, empowering city.

In case you're travelling "heavy", when you get there, don't wear yourself out with unpacking and structuring everything for the next week. You don't want to start unpacking all the stuff the minute you get to a new place, but you also don't want to be living out of a suitcase, surrounded by a jungle of boxes.

It would be a great idea to unpack all of your clothing and two or three boxes of necessities in the first day after you arrive, and spend the rest of the time exploring and "consuming" the city. There's a great many places to visit and things to do, but most importantly, walking around your new hometown will inspire you for the journey that is to come.

## 3.2 The First 30 Days in London

Moving is always a trial, no matter where you move to. There's always an adjustment period, even if you are just moving down the street. When you move to another country, that adjustment becomes even greater. If you are relocating to London from overseas to become an actor, and to train and work as a thespian, then be prepared to spend some time adjusting to the new city.

As the case may be with most of us, sometimes you will feel homesick and miserable, but remember that it simply takes time to get used to a new way of living. Here's some of the things you can expect in the first 30 days of your London residency.

## ◆ *Homesickness*

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This should come as no surprise – even though you have moved to London to pursue your acting dreams and have new exciting opportunities ahead of you, you should expect to experience some homesickness for your old home and your native country.

Even if everything in London is better than you thought, you'll still likely feel some loneliness and insecurity when you first arrive. Things are definitely going to be different in the new country, and there's going to be an adjustment period. Take the time you need to miss your old home – there's nothing wrong with that.

To help deal with any loneliness that may arise, it's important to try to keep in touch with your family and friends from your old country. This can be a little tricky thanks to time zone differences, but your loved ones will be willing to make it work.

Try not to isolate yourself, as this can only make your loneliness seem more pronounced as you try to integrate into the new country. When you move to London, plan on going out to discover new places and meet new people. You'll find that once you start interacting with the acting scene in London, it'll be pretty easy to find people with similar interests and you can start to make friends in your new home country.

*If you are still struggling, here are some popular ways to meet people in a new area:*

◆ **INTERNET**

Use an online friend-finding service.

◆ **MEETUP.COM**

Look for local meetups. Check out online actors meet-up groups.

◆ **CLASSES**

Join an acting class as soon as possible, if you're not going to a drama school to have plenty of like-minded people around you.

◆ **HOBBIES**

Alternatively, explore other hobbies, organizations and opportunities for meeting like-minded folk. Book clubs is a popular way to meet people.

◆ **GATHERINGS**

Attend local film festivals and other events; these are a great option for networking and meeting actors, filmmakers, screenwriters and other industry folks which you can also work with in the future.

◆ **OTHER STUFF**

Take a non-acting related course that may also benefit your acting career, such as dancing, vocal classes, horseback riding, stage fighting, etc.

If you are really struggling with homesickness, don't give up. Just keep reminding yourself that it's a phase and that it's going to take time to adjust to your new home. Use the support of your family and friends to help you feel less alone, and don't be shy about asking them to send you things that you miss from your home country (that's what most of us do after moving).

You can also order stuff you want from home thanks to the internet. Do whatever you need to get through the first few tough months of adjustment and don't give up.

## ◆ *Culture Shock*

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The UK is an English-speaking country, but there are a lot of cultural differences to be found, especially in the big city of London. You'll encounter British (which includes UK as a whole) and English (only those in England) culture in London for the most part, as well as cultures and backgrounds of many, many other countries. While this might not be as much of a change for someone coming from the US, it is still going to take some time to get used to, and it may be a little uncomfortable at first.

To help you adjust and avoid any potential faux pas while dealing with the public, read up on the culture and lifestyle in London before you make your big move.

### A few key points to help you get started:

- ◆ **People tend to keep to themselves; personal privacy is important!**
- ◆ **Physical contact in public is generally frowned upon and may make people uncomfortable.**



- ◆ Handshakes are an appropriate gesture when meeting someone, but hugging should be only done with close friends.
- ◆ People may seem very formal to you, but manners are very important to the English.
- ◆ Some people, especially older adults, will still use the 'class system' to address people. Younger people are less concerned with class.
- ◆ Small gifts and thank you notes are appreciated when visiting someone's home for a party or gathering.

Don't worry too much about trying to hide your differences; instead, embrace them. And after all, people will recognize you are from a different country thanks to your demeanor and accent anyway, and you'll be cut some slack (on most occasions).

However, it's always better to be prepared, and showing you care about London culture goes a long way to making a great impression with a potential friend, boss, or co-worker. People everywhere love when foreigners are interested in their home country.

### ◆ *Independence*

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The For most folks, moving to a country causes some great feelings of strength and independence. You should take some time to celebrate the fact that you were able to complete such a big move and have finally arrived to settle in your dream city, getting ready for a dream career.

Moving overseas is not easy for most of us, and you should feel proud and confident that you've finally made it. Let some of this good feeling carry over; it will help you make friends and find work too. Maybe it's time to celebrate?

## ◆ *Financial Order*

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When you move, you'll likely be set for at least a little while. However, you don't want to get complacent. Once you get settled into your home, it's time to start thinking about finding the local amenities you need to save money and keep your affairs in order.

One of the first things to look for is a bank. You'll want to have a local bank available for cashing or depositing checks (in case you need that for whatever reason), withdrawing money, and other financial issues that may pop up. But ultimately, you just need to open a bank to confirm your residency, get your local bank debit card and open a bank account. It's great to have an online bank from your home country, but you'll want to ensure you have something local to cover all your bases. It makes everything more official, too. There are a few different ways to look for a local bank, but one of the best methods is to simply use Google and then consider pros and cons of every bank.

Alternatively, if you have a roommate, ask them which bank they use and if they are happy with their services. If you are working or in school, you can also ask your peers. Try to set up an account as soon as possible so you'll be prepared if any issues arise.

You'll also want to use your resources to find the best places to shop for cheap groceries (if you're on a budget). There are going to be plenty of high-end expensive shops and more affordable options with very low prices.

The most important place to find first is an affordable grocery store that's very close to you. You need to eat, and there's no reason you can't save money while doing so. Finding a cheap store for produce is not only going to help your finances, but having your own 'regular' place is going to make London feel a bit more like home too.

## ◆ *Utilities*

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When you move in, it'll be time to set up some utilities (if you haven't already). One of the first things you'll want to do is set up your internet service. This is a must-have as soon as possible, since majority of other assignments you'll be doing will require internet connection.

On top of that, internet is simply vital to stay in touch with family and friends, find work, complete your school tasks, and more. There are plenty of different companies available, including popular options like Sky, Virgin Mobile, BE, and O2, and some will offer bundled services with phone and cable television as well.

Another thing to get set up right away is an Oyster Card for public transportation in London. The Oyster Card is a smartcard that holds credit so you can easily pay for bus fare, tube entry, and more public transportation options. You can do a pay-as-you-go plan, meaning you load up your Oyster Card as you wish, or you can pay for a pass, which gives you unlimited use of bus or trams for one week, one month, or a full year.

There are a few ways you can sign up for an Oyster Card, but the best way to do so is online. Since Londoners rely so heavily on public transportation, this is something you'll want to do ASAP. We'll talk more about public transit and Oyster Card as well as costs of everything related later in the book.

## 3.3 Finding Accommodation

You may not think so at first, but I can tell you from first-hand experience that your place of living can have a huge impact on your career, your goals, and your motivation as well as on you as a person and an artist. The longer you plan to stay in your new place, the more thought, research and preparation you have to put into this, especially if you're moving from a different country.

London is a big, crowded metropolitan city, and it's definitely not wise to move there without a plan on where you're going to stay. Most likely, if you don't know anybody in the new city you're moving to, you will not be able to secure an apartment until you're actually there. My advice would be to try AirBnB.com service or get a simple hotel to stay for a week or two while you're looking for an apartment.

## ◆ *How to Search*

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Ideally, you want to do all the research and find several potential places to live before you move to London. That way you only need to confirm the time of viewing with the realtor or landlord and go check those places. Or at the very least, find potential prospects for rent, write them down and get to work as soon as you're settled in your hotel or AirBnB rental in London.

In terms of where to stay, a lot of it will depend on whether you're going to study in a drama school for the duration of three years, or you chose to work, audition and attend weekly acting classes. If you opt for drama school training, I would advise to consider living with other students in a dormitory at least for the first year. If you're going to be on your own, working and auditioning during the day and training in the evening, then try to find something that would be close to all those places. London is very big and packed, and you don't want to waste time in traffic.

To find affordable accommodation, you'll need to spend time online. Simply using Google search can bring you some decent results, but it's not the only way to find an apartment. You can try one of the many student-friendly websites out there that were created for the sole-purpose of helping people like you.

You can also go to the website of the institution you're planning to attend – they will help link you to safe places to live in and/or help you find

accommodation near your drama school campus, but again, this comes at a much higher price. If you cannot afford that, I suggest you look into private rentals and simply make sure that it's all safe.

### TAKE A LOOK AT THE BELOW RESOURCES FOR FINDING ROOMS AND ROOMMATES:

- ◆ Great resource for students coming to London:  
[\*https://www.unite-students.com\*](https://www.unite-students.com)
- ◆ Find an flat to share with a roommate:  
[\*http://www.spareroom.co.uk\*](http://www.spareroom.co.uk)
- ◆ UK's most popular ads site:  
[\*http://www.gumtree.com/\*](http://www.gumtree.com/)
- ◆ Student accommodation in London help:  
[\*http://www.crm-students.com/\*](http://www.crm-students.com/)
- ◆ Another one for London students:  
[\*http://www.studentpad.co.uk/\*](http://www.studentpad.co.uk/)
- ◆ Popular UK rental website:  
[\*http://www.rightmove.co.uk/\*](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/)
- ◆ More on how the accommodation works in the UK, and what type is ideal for you:  
[\*http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Student\\_Accommodation\*](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Student_Accommodation)

One more thing I want to mention is this: it's rarely a good idea to move to a new city before visiting it first. Any metropolitan city such as London will be huge cultural shock to you. There are a multitude of different neighborhoods and areas, and everything will seem confusing. So if at

all possible, I recommend visiting the city for at least a few weeks first, getting a feel for it and then going back home to do further research and planning (maybe even save money for another year). This will cost you more money in the beginning but save you money and stress in the long run.

I'd like to stress the location one more time. When you're deciding on where to live after you move, where you'll be staying geographically matters a lot. Once again, London is a gigantic city, and everything will be scattered all over the place: your school or acting classes, your job, potential auditions, filming locations, etc. Obviously you can't plan for everything, but spend some time on this to try and find the most optimal way possible to get around the city and get to everything on time without stretching yourself too far.

Renting a flat in London is going to be very expensive. No matter where you're moving from, it is very likely that the prices will not be the same as they were in your hometown, so account for that. Also, don't forget that accommodation of any kind will always ask for a security deposit, with some places asking for as much as the value of two months' rent. It is imperative that you keep a look out for the price, so that you can factor it into the amount you need to have with you before you move.

### **3.4 Best London Neighborhoods for Actors**

While the entire city of London is a great place for artists, there are a few neighborhoods that stick out as being the best choice for actors and other creatives. These London neighborhoods will have plenty of places to meet fellow actors, as well as amenities that cater to those interested in the arts.

Below are a few of the best choices for your relocation to London. We'll start with the outer limits of London. Not surprisingly for a great metropolis such as London, the further

you live from the centre, the cheaper the living. That needs to be balanced against the greater cost of your commute to work or study, but there are acceptable compromises to be found, or you could cycle.

Just to be sure, we've ignored any areas more than 30 minutes by Underground ('tube') from Piccadilly Circus, the hub of London's West End and the gateway to its theatre district.

### ◆ *Shepherd's Bush*

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This West London district offers plenty of variety and has excellent transport links. Its proximity to the now-abandoned BBC Television Centre once made it a favourite home for newbie actors, and many still like its convenience.

The western end of the district is nicest, with pleasant residential streets and large houses suitable for sharing. The area around Shepherd's Bush Green is nastier, with smaller houses, while over it looms the monstrous Westfield shopping centre (mall).

Some might feel a sizeable Australian population makes 'the Bush' unrepresentative of the London experience, but few parts of this multiracial and international city offer that.

Three tube lines service the area (under 30 minutes to Piccadilly Circus), along with several bus routes, including night buses. Road links are especially good, with both north-south and east-west arteries close by.

Restaurants and cafés along Uxbridge Road and Goldhawk Road comprise a wide range, from greasy-spoon diners to some genuine treats. There's a big supermarket across from the main tube station, while the open-air market offers an eye-assault of multicultural tat, as well as the occasional bargain.

There are lots of pubs and night-life is active in Shepherd's Bush, although a bit feral in places. Unusually for a London borough, there are no parks, but Ravenscourt Park is not too far to walk.

#### **RENTAL COSTS:**

*Rents start from around £140 (\$213)/week for a decent furnished room in a house or flat (apartment), with shared facilities. That should include all bills and taxes and it's cheap for an area within fairly easy reach of the city centre.*

### ◆ *Colliers Wood*

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I'm breaking a key rule (this area is nearly 40 minutes from Piccadilly Circus by tube), but included this south-west London district because of its summer theatre and music festivals, for which some have named it 'Colliewood' (beware English irony; it isn't remotely like Tinseltown). The festivals, which run for two months in summer, offer aspiring actors an opportunity to get noticed.

The previously drab borough is undergoing extensive redevelopment, importantly including Colliers Wood Tower, very visible, and once voted London's ugliest building. Its overhaul is due for completion in mid-2016, by which time the whole area should be much improved in both amenities and aesthetics. As it is, there are several green spaces, including walks along the River Wandle.

There's a good selection of shops, including a large shopping centre, as well as restaurants, cafés, and pubs. However, don't expect a vibrant night-life in Colliers Wood.



### RENTAL COSTS:

*Rents for shared flats, or a room in a house with shared facilities, both furnished, start at about £160 (\$243)/week, including all bills and council tax, the local-government levy for rubbish (garbage) collection, street maintenance, lighting, and policing.*

## ◆ *Brixton*

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The hub of Caribbean culture in London, this formerly edgy, even dangerous, south London district is rapidly becoming gentrified as young professionals move further from areas, such as Battersea or Clapham, no longer affordable to them. It's not pretty, but it's upbeat, eccentric, and full of creative types, including actors.

It's not all urban clamour; award-winning Milkwood Community Park offers a wildlife trail, as well as an amphitheatre for festivals and events in summer.

Most of the major retail chains are represented on the High Street, but the real Brixton experience is to be found in its market, where Caribbean, Asian, and European cultures jostle together, offering entertaining eye-candy and, sometimes, good bargains (rip-offs, too: take care).

Transport links to the city centre are excellent, with a tube time to Piccadilly Circus of under 25 minutes. Buses are also plentiful, including night-buses.

### RENTAL COSTS:

*Rents for shared flats and houses start at around £170 (\$258)/week, including utility bills, but not council tax. However, I've seen a self-contained studio flat (single combined sleeping/living space with its own kitchen and separate bathroom/toilet) for £180 (\$274)/week, so online research could unearth a place of your own at reasonable cost by London standards.*

## Other best neighborhoods in London that are affordable-ish and are worth a look include:

- ◆ Acton (a bit rough)
- ◆ Bethnal Green
- ◆ Bow
- ◆ Stratford (don't confuse it with Stratford-upon-Avon)
- ◆ Whitechapel (artsy)

Moving along, let's take a look at medium-cool type of London neighborhoods. This group is more solidly middle-class, but most of these house a mix of educational and occupational backgrounds, so generalisations can be misleading.

### ◆ *Maida Vale*

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Not far north of the West End (only 20 minutes from Piccadilly Circus), this leafy residential district offers tranquility and charm. Public and private housing sit cheek-by-jowl, making for an eclectic mix of residents, but also implying you need to look carefully to find good value.

Because of its proximity to the BBC's main London recording studios, the area of Little Venice, next to a pretty canal, has long been a favoured locale for working actors.

Regent's Park, one of London's best, is close by, as is Abbey Road, with its historic recording studio and iconic zebra (pedestrian) crossing; take a selfie with friends in a Beatles pose. It's a quiet district, however, with no night-life to speak of apart from the usual pubs, of which there are a number of good ones.

Transport links are excellent, whether by tube or bus, and it's also close to main roads leading out of the city. Paddington mainline railway station is two stops away on the tube.

Shopping is good. While the main supermarket chains are only represented by small outlets, there are lots of local stores and specialists of every kind, and there's a big Tesco in Edgware Road, just a few minutes away on foot.

### **RENTAL COSTS:**

*Rents for shared houses, flats, or the occasional self-contained studio flat, start at about £170 (\$258)/week, but that's for streets bordering Maida Vale, not actually within it. Even so, they are nicer than Brixton, if not quite as cool. Add at least £20 (\$31)/week, and up, for the heartland. These prices include utilities and council tax, but only for shared accommodation, not self-contained units.*

## ◆ *Islington*

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Few of the best neighborhoods in London offer such varied ambience as Islington. Some parts verge on squalid, some are being upgraded as affluent owners move in, and some are already very fashionable. All sorts live there, including theatre, TV, and film people. It's busy and rather noisy, but convenient, well-serviced, and lively.

Angel is the smartest area, while City Road, Upper Street, and Essex Road offer as varied a shopping or entertainment experience as you'll find anywhere in London. Pubs, cinemas, and small theatres are all within easy walking distance.

One drawback is a shortage of parks; Islington has the lowest ratio of open spaces to built-up areas of any London borough. However, Highbury Fields is good for joggers and has public tennis courts, while Finsbury Park is pleasant and only a short walk away. You can also walk along the canal towpath to Regent's Park.

Football (soccer) fans are well-served: Premier Division Arsenal FC, the 'Gunners', has its home ground in Islington.

Transport links are excellent, with several tube stations (about 25 minutes to Piccadilly Circus, but also up to 35 minutes, depending on where you alight), lots of buses, including night-buses. It can be just a couple of tube stops to reach King's Cross, one of London's principal tube and mainline rail hubs. Islington is also en route to the A1, the country's main north-south arterial road.

### RENTAL COSTS:

*Rents are all over the place, as one might expect in so large and varied an area, but don't expect to pay much below £180 (\$274)/ week for a room in a shared house or flat or for a small studio flat, with the same inclusions and exclusions already noted.*

## ◆ *The Borough*

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Borough, as it's usually called, is part of Southwark, close to Lambeth and London Bridge, and is often thrown in with all three in conversation. It's far the trendiest of my three middling selections, so is becoming very popular and, in parts, expensive.

It's famous for its market, one of London's oldest and a haven for foodies; for the Shard (Britain's tallest building, with a viewing gallery near the top); for its popular acting schools (Shakespeare's Globe, the Young Vic, the Old Vic); and for the Tate Modern art gallery.

The area is also one of London's greenest (in the traditional sense), with a reported 130 parks and open spaces, of which the largest is Southwark Park. The environs of the market are dense with restaurants of every hue, and there are lots of pubs and cafés. Altogether, with the River Thames also close at hand for breezy walks, you could have a terrific time, day or night, and never leave the place.

Transport links are plentiful, both for tube and bus, while Waterloo and London Bridge mainline stations are nearby to take you out of town, should you need or wish. The tube ride to Piccadilly Circus takes 20-25 minutes, less from the northern edge of Borough.

### RENTAL COSTS:

*Furnished rooms for rent in shared flats or houses start at around £200 (\$305)/ week, including bills and council tax, but you'll be lucky to get much at that price. If your budget stretches closer to £250 (\$380), you should find a good supply of modern, well-equipped, flats in the medium-rise developments that have mushroomed across the district over the past decade.*

## Other middling locations worth scouting include:

- ◆ Holloway (said to be up-and-coming)
- ◆ Cricklewood (leafy but somewhat distant)
- ◆ Paddington (convenient but hotel-ridden)
- ◆ Canary Wharf (modern, well-resourced, soulless)

Further on the list are the “almost famous” type of London neighborhoods. These top choices feature value more than prime locations or exclusivity. If you want those characteristics, even one of them, prices are in another league entirely.

### ◆ *Fulham*

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The epitome of middle-class London, Fulham is one of the best neighborhoods in London – it's varied, charming, quirky, and, well, comfortable. You won't find many surprises here, but also nothing that upsets.

While young professionals are the backbone of the community, it's also home to artists, actors, and writers, although many of those seem likely to swap creative uncertainty for the steady job their country-dwelling

parents constantly nag them to take.

But for the anciently unreliable District Line, the tube might reach Piccadilly Circus in the claimed 25 minutes, but it could well be 45; it might not arrive at all. Better to take a number 14 bus, a London favourite, which starts in Putney and winds through Chelsea, Knightsbridge, and Hyde Park Corner, before crawling along traffic-jammed Piccadilly and turning into the heart of Soho. It's slow but enthralling.

Shopping is reasonable for a mainly residential area, with small grocery retailers dotted along the main streets. Fulham Broadway has a good-sized shopping centre, offering most things needed to eat and live. For a more down-market experience, wander through North End Road's eclectic range of shops and market stalls.

The Broadway has a selection of reasonably-priced eateries and there are pubs, good, bad, and mediocre, all across the area. Otherwise, night-life is almost non-existent. Parks are mainly at the edges of the district, but Bishops Park is a small gem, bordered by the River Thames. Joggers have the run of riverside paths.

#### **RENTAL COSTS:**

*Rents go from about £200 (\$305)/week for furnished rooms in flats and houses, with studio flats at similar levels, subject to the usual exclusions and inclusions. If you elect to pay your share of the bills, you can get better deals, but you'll be hostage to the punctiliousness, or otherwise, of your co-dwellers when payments are due.*

## ◆ *Bayswater*

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Convenient and varied, with a strong middle-eastern flavour, you'll either love or loathe this quasi-upmarket district. It offers handsome Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses (row-houses), with views of Hyde Park, backed by endless and duller versions, and roaring commercial thoroughfares.

The park is, arguably, the main attraction and, when combined with Kensington Gardens, is claimed to be the world's largest city-centre green space. Everything happens there: football, tennis, swimming, dog-walking, horse-riding, rock concerts, Speakers' Corner, celebrity-spotting; the list never ends.

Transport links are peerless, with the tube whisking you to Piccadilly Circus in 20-25 minutes, while buses are frequent, including night buses. Adjacent Paddington has a big mainline rail station.

Shopping is good, with large and small supermarkets spliced with a variety of specialists serving the area's multinational residents. It's a short walk to Notting Hill, with a cinema, wine-bars, and pubs, and, beyond them, the huddle of Portobello Road's famous antiques market. In the opposite direction, you can walk to Oxford Street, London's main mass-market shopping thoroughfare, in about 20 minutes.

### **RENTAL COSTS:**

*It's not that expensive, but you must look diligently; there's a lot of really nasty stuff. A decent furnished room in a shared house or flat, including bills and tax, rents for £200 (\$305)/ week and up, but you're unlikely to find a self-contained studio for under £250 (\$380).*



## ◆ *Soho*

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Not only one of the best neighborhoods in London, but also one of the most well-known. Soho is London's night-life centre and is slowly shedding its red-light character as Tinder, Grindr, and other adult casual-encounter websites bleed the resident professionals of their trade. They're still there, however, as are the peep-shows and strip-joints, but most exude an end-of-days aura.

In their stead has come a blast of pubs, clubs, bars, takeaways, and restaurants of every description and price-point. Some, like Ronnie Scott's jazz club and the 100 Club, launchpad for dozens of legendary British rock bands, have been there for decades, but many more are relative newcomers. The streets throb with people and megawatt bass-lines until the early hours. Make sure your room has double-glazing.

Access to Piccadilly Circus and theatreland? You're pretty much there already, and there are plenty of tube stations and buses at hand to take you elsewhere. Shops are plentiful, especially supermarkets and specialists, and most stay open late. In normal hours, you can find just about anything you need within easy walking distance.

If it's all too much, a 15-minute walk along Piccadilly will land you in spacious Green Park, with beautiful St James's Park just below it, next to Buckingham Palace, the Mall (it rhymes with 'pal', not 'awl'), and Horse Guards Parade. You could say all of tourist London is at your feet.

### **RENTAL COSTS:**

*Rents run from £350 (\$530)/week for a pleasant, furnished, and well-equipped studio flat, but that excludes utilities and tax.*

Unless you move into the very top bracket, there's not much else that competes with these selections of best neighborhoods in London listed above, but you might look at:

- ◆ **St John's Wood (very fine, but dull, dull, dull)**
- ◆ **Camden (hip, noisy, overrated)**
- ◆ **South Kensington (lots of charm, but smug and pricey)**
- ◆ **Chelsea (ditto, but even more so)**

## 3.5 Shopping for Necessities in London

Living on your own in London means taking responsibility and gathering all the necessities you'll need in order to thrive. As mentioned before, getting food will probably be high on your list of things to do once you begin setting yourself up. If you're a starving artist already and looking to really save money, do your research before accidentally spending money on food in one of the most expensive restaurants in town. It would be best to get a weeks' worth (or more) of stuff for home cooking.

### ◆ *Cheap Stores*

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Below is a list of stores that are considered cheaper or at least affordable for most, and have everything you might ever need in London.

- ◆ Aldi: <https://www.aldi.co.uk/en/about-aldi/useful-information/store-locator/>
- ◆ Home Bargains: <http://storelocator.homebargains.co.uk/>
- ◆ 99p stores: <http://www.99pstoresltd.com/find-a-99p-store>
- ◆ Poundland: <http://www.poundland.co.uk/store-finder/>
- ◆ Poundworld: <http://poundworld.net/find-a-store/>

You can easily live off these cheap stores without compromising too much on quality at all and saving a ton of money with smart shopping. In addition, always check out popular supermarkets' (ASDA and Tesco) "value" items and "reduced/clearance" isles. Sainsbury's or Morrisons in London are a little more expensive, but not by much and can have great deals on occasion.

For those who have some money to spend, London has an amazing farmer's market scenes. Check out this list of all London markets and visit some.

You will also want to open a new bank account as soon as possible (if you're not from the UK and don't have one yet), especially if you're going to get a job while you're living in London. It would be best to try and pencil in some time to go and do that – possibly at the same time you go and get your transport and other similar arrangements sorted out.

## 3.6 Getting Around in London

Another highly important necessity you'll need in order to survive London is transportation. In an ideal world, it would be great to simply walk wherever you need to go (I mean who wouldn't want to save a ton of money and also get really fit in the process); however, that's not always the case.

Getting around London is likely going to be much different from what you have been used to in the States or other country. For example, in most cities in the US, pretty much everyone has their own car, and commutes by themselves to school or work. In London, you'll find exactly the opposite – almost no one uses their own vehicle to get around; public transportation is used almost exclusively.

Luckily, London has a much better transit system than most US cities, and you'll find you save both time and money using it to get from point A to point B, whether you have a commute for school, work, or just shopping.

## ◆ *Oyster Card*

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The best way to get yourself set up for public transportation is to get an Oyster Card. This pass will give you quick access to things like buses, the tube, and trams – you won't need to fish around for fare and waste time ensuring you have money for transportation.

The Oyster Card is a simple swipe card that has your fare pre-loaded, so all you have to do is swipe and go. There are a variety of different payment plans for the pass, and you can load it up anytime online. It's the most convenient way to travel in London.

Basically, you can use it for any type of public transportation, but you'll be most thankful for it when going on the tube back and forth all the time. London's underground system is one of the best: it's simple and quick, but can really put a dent in your pocket if you insist on using it frequently. The cost will depend on the "zones" you'll be visiting most frequently, so research well and know how much you definitely need to spend before you do so.

For more information, visit [this government website](#) to learn all about Oyster card.

## ◆ *London's System*

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The city also provides residents with free travel maps, which is definitely recommended if you are new to the area. There are a lot of different routes for each mode of transport – bus, London Underground, trolley, ferry, and more – so you'll want to make sure you keep a map with you in case you get turned around.

Using maps and familiarizing yourself with London Zones is going to be especially important in your first few weeks of living in London as you try to get to auditions, your drama school courses, and survival jobs or acting gigs. You never know when you might get delayed or need a different route, and in order to avoid being late you must be prepared. Getting stranded in the city of London isn't fun for anyone, and it's easy to do.

It would be smart to get your hands on bus and train timetables as well (or simply get an app), that way you can plan what you need to do around when the trains and buses are timed. Trust me when I say that an actor's busy life requires a lot of thorough planning from the minute you get up in the morning and all the way throughout the day: job, classes, auditions, acting work, shopping, socializing, etc.

## ◆ *Learn the City*

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This part of getting set up in a new city is probably going to be the most exciting, as it involves exploring a new place. After years of living in London and now several years of living in Los Angeles, personally I still always find places and locations I haven't been and something that fascinates me in either city.

There's only so much you can learn via the internet, and nothing on a

website will ever fully show you what that “something” truly is until you see it with your own eyes. Take some time out of your day to scope out your new neighborhood without dressing in black, slinking around alleyways and looking shady.

Explore where you live and find out things you can’t research online. At one point, when I was in London, I stayed in Camden and a few other artsy neighborhoods with very active life and cool people everywhere. These were the most exciting times for me; there was always something going on.

## 3.7 Meeting People in London

One of the hardest things about moving to a new country is losing all the connections you have made back home. It can be difficult to feel like you have to start over upon arrival in a new city. Luckily, we have a few resources for you to help you make new friends and connections once you arrive in London. Not only will this help you have a happy social life, but it can also boost your acting career by getting you connected with the right people and the right places. Networking is everything for actors!

If you are looking for some social outlets and new friends, a great place to start is with the people you already know. Even if they live back in your old home country, they may know people or have relatives in the UK. This is one of the ways to get connected, and it can ensure you already have someone to talk to when you arrive in London. If no one you know has anyone living overseas, don’t worry; there are other ways to meet people.

### ◆ *Being Social*

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Another good way to find a community you can relate to is to look online for “expat” events and gatherings. “Expats” are other people who have moved to a new country and settled. These communities will often have parties, gatherings, and outings to help people get adjusted to the new

country, and they usually understand your situation well. Since London is such a hot spot for people from all over the world, you're sure to find some of these communities near your location.

Local activities are also a great way to find people with similar interests. London is a big city, so you'll be able to find some kind of gathering no matter what you are into aside from acting: books, arts, knitting, vintage cars, or fancy cuisine. Of course, start out with your main interest – acting, filmmaking, theatre, directing, etc. – and see where that takes you and what likeminded people you can meet.

The best place to look for these groups and activities is online, but you might also see them advertised around the city. Check bulletin boards at your drama school or work, and check popular places like the pub, although make sure you're always safe.

## ◆ *Making Friends*

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Coming to live in a new place and not knowing people can make anybody feel like the local neighborhood hermit, which is why you need to go out there and make new friends. If you're going to attend a drama school, then you'll have more than enough connections and people who will drag you out on Friday nights for drinks and food. Otherwise, friends can be found anywhere if you make some effort to be outgoing. The best place to look for likeminded people is acting classes, acting workshops, community theatre and similar gatherings.

I can't even count how many times I was grateful to have actor friends who supported me when I needed their support, who helped me with tips and practicing for auditions; and returning the favor feels just as great. Most importantly, it's about the fact that you have people who

understand you, what you're going through, and what you want out of life, because you're all in the same boat. Build and cherish those relationships as you go through your actor's journey.

## ◆ *Network*

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If you're looking to network and make professional connections as an actor in London, you're going to be looking for some different types of events. The best places to network include industry parties or gatherings, film festivals, and special screenings or plays. Some of these may be open to the public, but others might require advance notice or an invitation. Your school or job may be able to help you get invited to these social events.

Networking is a whole different beast compared to trying to simply make new friends. You need to remember to treat your interactions professionally. There are also a few pointers of effective networking you should keep in mind, such as:

### **Be genuine**

Don't go out of your way to impress someone with lies or embellishments. The truth will come out eventually, so be honest from the start.

### **Be polite**

Avoid discussing certain topics like politics or controversial viewpoints, as you never know who you might offend. Always use proper manners; this is especially important with Londoners.



### Stay focused

Remember that you want to try to connect with this person on a professional level. While it's always fun to talk about personal interests, try to keep your conversation zeroed in on professional topics while you try to network, although maintain a healthy balance and don't go in too deep.

### Be courteous

Don't take up all of the person's time; they want to socially interact with their friends too. Don't be pushy and read their body language to know when to step back and give them some space.

### Don't push

It can be tempting to sell yourself as much as possible and keep pushing until you get your listener to give in and say what you want. Avoid doing this. Being too pushy will kill any interest your contact might have had. Simply be honest, and genuinely interested in the person.

## 3.8 Getting To London: Step by Step

If after all this you're still considering making that big move to pursue your acting dreams, we've compiled an easy-to-follow step by step guide on moving to London. There are a few steps involved, but take it slow and give yourself plenty of time to figure everything out. Make sure your move to London isn't hasty.

1. *Consider whether or not you want to relocate to London. Weigh the pros and cons for you personally. This is a big decision; don't take it lightly!*
2. *If you want to go to the UK on a student visa, look at drama schools in London that will sponsor that visa. If you want to audition and get acting*

*gigs in London, look at what is required for a work visa and start looking at available jobs. Send out applications if the only way for you to get here is through sponsorship.*

*3. Start planning as though you are moving to London right away. Look at rentals and draw up a mock budget for your new life overseas. Make sure you will be able to make things work financially if you move. Figure out what to do with your current housing situation: will you let your lease expire, do you need to sell a house? If you need to sell or find a new renter, start working with a real estate agent as soon as possible since the process can take a long time.*

*4. Start gathering paperwork to apply for your passport and visa. Find an immigration professional if you want to use their services for relocating to the UK.*

*5. Complete the paperwork for your passport and receive this identification in the mail. If you have pets, review the UK's policy on bringing them overseas. Make an appointment with your veterinarian and get your pet their up-to-date vaccinations, medical records, and pet passport.*

*6. By this time (which could be several months later) you should have accepted a job offer or school invitation. This information will be required in order to apply for a visa. Use the information from your passport and work/school obligation and complete the paperwork for the appropriate visa. Make sure to pay the appropriate fee. At this time, make sure your pet is still up-to-date on their vaccinations.*

*7. While you wait for your visa to be accepted, start looking at international moving companies. Check their consumer reviews, insurance qualifications, and more. Narrow down your choices to no more than three companies. Keep in touch with your school or work to ensure they know where you are in the relocation process.*

- 8.** *Once your visa is approved, you can start really getting into the moving process. Contact your moving company and set up the contract for moving your belongings to London. Start calling rentals in London to find a place to live. Narrow down your arrival date and keep your work or school informed. Start packing! Sell things you don't need online or at a garage sale.*
- 9.** *Book your flight to your new home, and any hotels you may need before you arrive. Make copies of all your important documents you'll need to keep on your person while you travel. Do the same for your pet, if you have one.*
- 10.** *Pay your taxes and other fees due for moving to the UK. Ensure your account is settled before you arrive, as it can cause complications if you owe the government money upon arrival. Start looking at transferring your money from dollars to pounds. Contact your bank to see if they operate overseas or if you should open a new account with a new banking service.*
- 11.** *As your departure date draws near, finish packing. Change your address at the post office and let family know of your new address. Cancel any recurring bills that you won't need, such as cable, internet, electricity, etc.*
- 12.** *On the big day, gather all the essentials that will be coming with you. Prepare your pet for their travels as well. Remember all your documentation. Make sure you haven't left anything behind in your former residence and say any final goodbyes to neighbors and friends. Lock up and get ready for the next adventure of your life in London!*

"I've never worked as hard as when I was at drama school.  
It's the most professional environment I've ever been in."

- JAMES MCAVOY



**4. YOUR  
ACTING  
TRAINING**

I'm not going to lie to you, starting your acting training in a new place with new people and teachers - be it a drama school or weekly acting classes - is going to be nerve-wracking for some of you. But it's also exciting, fun and rewarding. You will end up getting a ton of new friends and pushing your inspiration through the roof. Know that you'll most likely be anxious and nervous, and that's completely okay - everybody will be the same.

This is why it's a good idea to take a step back and tell yourself that you're not taking these classes, and getting trained, because you're already perfect at acting. No, the reason you're taking these lessons is to better yourself as an actor, and what's great about the whole thing, is that everybody else in the class is doing the exact same thing. So set out there to fail, to experiment - this is your time to find out what works for you as an actor.

## 4.1 Acting Class Expectations

If you don't have a clue on what to expect from your upcoming acting class, that's perfectly okay. Very often these classes you'll be attending will give you a schedule summing up exactly what you'll be doing for the duration of your time there, which makes it a lot easier to prepare yourself for what's to come. This is particularly true for drama schools. If you chose to get to an evening acting classes that's happening a few times a week, then there's going to be a lack of variety and you pretty much know what to expect.

When in a drama school, one thing is for certain: you're not going to sit on your butt and learn theory all day. Prepare to be on your feet the first day. Most acting courses in drama schools begin with some ice breaker games and team building exercises. Since acting is a physical art, expect to get physical. In a weekly acting class, however, a lot of the students will already be regular so there's no ice breakers; you just have to join in and become a part of the class by yourself.

Make a good impression on your first day and come prepared and ready to work hard. Have your favorite monologue and/or musical theater song ready to go, especially if this is a drama school course. Most likely the instructor is going to want to assess you to see

where your strengths lie. This is not a test, so don't be worried. Just do your best and let this be your starting mark.

Wear clothes you can move in. If you're enrolled in an acting for a camera class – wear makeup, be freshly shaven, and make sure your hair is how you want it. You only have one chance to make a first impression. Don't blow it!

Whether your first class focuses on movement, singing, camera work, auditioning or scene study, every single class will:

- ◆ **Develop your talent, as well as your technique.**
- ◆ **Prepare you for the reality of acting professionally.**
- ◆ **Build up your confidence.**

As you work through the class, focus on these above things and make them your goals for the class. You have to be getting consistently better at it.

### ◆ *Upcoming Acting Classes*

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Now is the time to put your thinking cap on. You will be expected to retain what you've learned so you can continue to move forward in your training. Take notes. Bring a recording device. So much of acting training involves working as a team. Don't be the one holding everybody back.

Another advice I would give is to read about the class beforehand. Get online and research teachers, the school, previous and current students – all of this helps you familiarize and consume the information within the class much easier. If it's an evening acting class based on some technique (e.g. Meisner Technique), then grab a Meisner Technique book before joining a class and read about it. You won't learn how to act, but you'll grasp the theory and will be a better student when in the class.

## ◆ *Preparation*

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You've gotten the ice breakers and assessments out of the way. Now it's time to work. Each class will be designed to test your endurance, stamina, and mental focus. Again, this is particularly true for classes in a drama school where there's a lot of serious physical and mental work involved. Weekly evening acting classes will be a bit more relaxed (unless you take a Physical Theatre class or something along those lines), and they will usually be focused on your inner self.

Either way, spend some time preparing and do your research to know what to expect. A lot of hard work is on the way. Sure, acting is fun, but it also requires dedication and preparation. Here are some tips on how to always be prepared for each and every class:

### **Have a pencil and eraser**

In scene study class you will be jotting down blocking notes. In musical rehearsal you will be notating cuts and key changes. In movement class you will be writing down your choreography. Don't be that person who has to borrow a pencil. And also, don't use a pen. Erasures are much more appealing than ink scribbles all over your material.

### **Keep an open mind**

You may have come in to your acting training pretty sure of yourself and your abilities. Guess what? That's going to be turned upside down and inside out. You're going to be asked to do things that you thought you couldn't do, that you didn't think you should do, and never wanted to do. If you keep an open mind, you'll emerge a wiser and better actor.

### Clear your schedule

Without a doubt your acting work will not end when class is done for the day. You'll be working on songs with your accompanist and scenes with your scene partner outside of class.

### Go see theatre

This is the fun part. Do your research! Expose yourself to your craft. See how the experts do it. Most theaters in London have will call or SRO tickets. Get out there!

These are all minor things, but once you eliminate any chances for “small” issues, you'll be able to stay focused on your bigger tasks at hand, consistently.

## 4.2 Training Process

There's always a lot of students in professional acting classes that are already the crème de la crème of their hometown. It can seem like a real blow to your ego to learn new techniques or be told to do something different than what you're used to. With so much “constructive criticism” being hurled your way, it's important to be kind to yourself. Take a deep breath. Try unwinding at the end of your day.

### HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS THAT I'VE BEEN GIVEN:

- ◆ Invite your fellow actors out for a pint.

*Blow off some steam together, and trust me, you will cultivate relationships off stage that will be very beneficial on stage.*



◆ **Find a yoga class.**

*A great many actors practice yoga. Why? Not only does yoga help keep you fit, it's a keen way to manage stress.*

◆ **Practice.**

*Don't leave your acting profession at the door of your acting school. Take the initiative to practice on your own time without having the teacher telling you to do it.*

These are just some suggestions. I'm sure you can think of a lot more on how to keep in touch with your actor friends and continuously improve as an actor. Staying loose, relaxed and friendly helps you not only as an actor, but just as a person. You want to make new friends and be good at what you do, so again – you need to work at it.

◆ ***Avoid Giving Up***

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It's not easy being told you're not ready, you're not perfect, or you're not quite there. But remember, you're in training. You may want to throw in the towel after the first week, but here's a word of advice: don't. Yes, simply stick with it. This is a bit like the military. They have to tear you down before they can build you up. Enlist the help of your friends, keep working hard. Your drama school or acting classes are the places for you to fail and experiment, so do expect failure to happen and be okay with it.

Here's a fun exercise to assess your progress so far. When you're ready to begin your acting career, many casting directors will want to submit

you for specific roles, and it's always best if you can help them along by being very specific about what types of characters you do best naturally. To gain a little bit more power over your acting career, ask yourself the following questions. And be honest.

1. Name five roles you could get cast in right now. (*Notice I said, "Get cast in," not "what you think you can play."*)
2. What age range do you play? (*Not necessarily how old you really are*)
3. Name three special qualities you bring to your roles.
4. What physical limitations do you have that could limit your cast-ability?
5. What's the one thing you really need to work on?
6. Does your "look" and photos/CVs really represent you?

Now have other people answer these questions. "Other people" could include your friends, fellow acting students, and roommates, or family. Tabulate the results and see where the similarities lie. The results may be astonishing. Remember that having others remind you of your talents and what roles you can play may be just the push you need to get over any hurdles. Have fun!

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**"The only thing we have to fear is fear,  
itself."**

- AMERICAN PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

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## ◆ *Moving Forward*

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There are three major hurdles to overcome when beginning your acting training.

### **Fear**

So many things in life are given up because of fear. But when you can harness that fear and make it work to your advantage, you can become unstoppable.

### **Knowing what you want**

One of the first things you'll hear in acting class is "Be specific." Anyone can play act. What will set you apart from non-actors is your specificity.

### **Facing rejection**

It's really how you look at it. You can see failure to secure an acting gig as rejection or as a chance to practice your skills and learn something new. It's up to you.

## 4.3 A Change of Mind

After you've given it a semester's time and you still find you're out of place, maybe it's time to reassess your acting goals. I'm not advising you to give up, but perhaps there are different classes or courses you can try instead. Perhaps you originally saw yourself as a musical theater performer, but are finding that in a professional setting, you don't enjoy it as much as you did before. Perhaps Shakespeare is more for you. Remember, this is your time. Get the most out of it!

**IF YOU'RE STUCK, REMEMBER THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF PERFORMING TO CHOOSE FROM. TRY ONE OF THESE:**

- ◆ Musical theatre
- ◆ Acting for camera
- ◆ Shakespeare of classical theatre
- ◆ Scene study for contemporary theatre
- ◆ Movement and dance
- ◆ Writing for the stage or screen
- ◆ Directing
- ◆ Producing
- ◆ Comedy/sketch/improv

Sometimes we ourselves get in our own way. The point of acting training is to find out what you're good at and perhaps discover some new and hidden talents! Make it work for yourself.

## ◆ *Something Is Wrong*

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You've stuck it out. You've kept trying, you put yourself out there. But what if you find at the end of your semester that the acting profession really isn't your thing?.

### HOBBY VS. PROFESSION:

- A** *Some people are perfectly content doing acting gigs as hobbies. They appear in local community theatre productions, they sing in the church choir. They love to have something to look forward to after a long day at the office.*
  
- B** *Others will not stop until they can make a living doing acting. They live, breathe, and sleep theatre. They know that even though the odds are stacked against them, they will never give up.*

Which one is you? You may have begun your acting training as a (B), but now you find yourself as an (A). There's nothing wrong with this. You gave it a shot. My acting professor once told me, "If you can imagine yourself doing anything else in the world other than acting, then do it."

The acting business isn't for everyone. It's much more than singing songs and reciting monologues. It's cutthroat, mean, and honest. If you find that after a semester you don't want this kind of life, then get out now. Keep it as a hobby.

“To succeed in business, to reach the top, an individual must know all it is possible to know about that business.”

– J. PAUL GETTY



# 5. PREPARING FOR ACTING JOBS

Auditioning for a role is kind of like applying for a job - if you don't have the necessary requirements, they won't even consider you. This is why you need to make sure you have all the pieces, before you even attempt to do the puzzle - which is just a creative way of saying you need to have all the requirements before you audition.

## 5.1 Actor's Essentials

An actor's kit sounds like a first-aid kit for people who aspire to act, and in a way I guess it is, as it includes everything you'll need to survive in the acting business. An actor's kit is kind of like that emergency bag you pack in case you need to suddenly flee the country, only instead of multiple currencies and fake passports, you have all the necessities you need to be immediately prepared for an audition.

There are a few things you need to include in your actor's kit, with the obvious choices being your resume, show reel and headshots.

- ◆ **Regular marketing stuff**

*Headshots, resume and demo reel (showreel).*

- ◆ **Pen or pencil**

*You may want to make corrections, so it's always useful to have one or two.*

- ◆ **Scripts and sides**

*If you've received a script or sides for an audition, make sure you have a printed copy with you at all times, that way you can easily whip it out.*

- ◆ **Highlighters**

*to highlight (obviously) the parts you'll be reading.*

- ◆ **Business cards**

*to hand to anybody you feel could become a connection.*

◆ **Dance/movement clothes**

*“That’s great. We’d like to see you dance.” What if you’re wearing a skin tight pencil skirt? Always have something to change into so you can be ready to move at all times.*

◆ **Extra clothing**

*You never know what audition may come your way. Have a variety of clothes.*

◆ **Dance shoes**

*For the same reason as above. You don’t want to be hindered by your très chic stilettos when auditioners want to see you move.*

Let’s get into more details about some of the most important marketing tools actors must have on his or her person at all times, and how you get them.

## 5.2 Headshots

The word headshot is often something assassins say in action movies, which makes it a word people usually tend to avoid. However this kind of headshot is very different and vital if you plan on getting anywhere in the industry. If you don’t already know what it is, a headshot is a photo that is taken from the shoulders upwards – basically, it’s a shot of your head, hence the term headshot.

◆ ***Why Headshots?***

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The reason is simple - casting agents always have a set idea of what the character needs to look like. Therefore before they even audition you, they need to know if you fit the requirements. This is why a headshot is very important, and highly recommended, as without it, you don’t stand



a chance of even auditioning. Secondly, once you audition, they need to remember you.

Basically, you don't want this happening to you: "Ahh...that one girl was perfect, you know, the one with the ginger hair. Which one was she again?" With headshots, you won't be lost in the memories of your auditioners.

Unfortunately, it's not very professional to use a selfie as a headshot - no matter how hot you think you look in it - so you'll have to fork out some money for a professional photo. Now, before you rush onto the internet and type in "looking for someone to do my headshots" on Google, there are a few things you should consider first.

### ◆ *Cost of Headshots*

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How much it costs all depends on where you get them done - as different places have different prices. But that said, you get what you pay for. Do your research. You can get a somewhat okay headshot from a photographer just starting out for around £125 / \$100. You can also opt for the hard-to-get famous photographer who has thousands of successful clients for as much as £1000 / \$1000. Check your budget and plan accordingly.

My personal advice would be to shoot for the range around £250-400 / \$300-500 and not go below or higher. This is of course once you can afford that price tag; no need to rush.

## ◆ *Getting Headshots*

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The best way to find a good photographer for you is to ask around. See a fellow actor who has a killer headshot? Ask who their photographer is. The search for the perfect photographer can be as complicated or as simple as you make it.

1. **Set a budget.** How much are you willing to spend?
2. **Ask around.** Can someone recommend a good photographer?
3. **Research online.** So many professional headshot photographers have their own websites with portfolios listed. Even if you end up not choosing that particular photographer, you may get an idea of some “looks” you want for your own shots.
4. **Set up a meeting with the photographer.** If you don't feel comfortable during your shoot, your photos will reflect that. Make sure the two of you have a certain chemistry and see eye to eye on what you want done.

Try to stay proactive in your search for a photographer, and don't settle for the first cheap headshots services you find on Google. In the same manner, do prepare for your headshot session – research what you need, ask your new photographer what to bring. Get ready to be professional all the time as you're trying to become a working actor!

## ◆ *Best Headshots*

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Your headshot should be an 8x10 high definition picture of yourself, preferably in portrait orientation (not landscape). While at one time, black and white photos were the way to go, today, color is the only choice.

The aim of a headshot is to show casting agents how you look naturally, therefore it is imperative that in the headshot, you look exactly the same way as you do in real life. This means that you shouldn't have anything on you that isn't always there – e.g. makeup, jewellery, coloured contacts, hair extensions, etc. It's understandable that you'd want to look your best for a photograph, especially since a lot of people will be seeing it, but you need to let them see the canvas and not the finished painting.

As for how to dress, there aren't many restrictions, but it would be a good idea to wear something that makes the focus of the photo, your face – meaning try not to wear anything that distracts whoever's looking at your headshot, by pulling their attention elsewhere.

## ◆ *Using Headshots*

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If you hold your headshot up next to your actual head, look in the mirror, and see the exact same person in every way, then yes. What this means, is that if you look exactly like you do in the photo, at that very moment, then you can use it. If there is anything that differs – from a new haircut, to a tattoo you got done across your forehead – you cannot use that headshot. It would be a good idea to not change your look too often, as keeping your headshots up to date can be really expensive.

Most actors have at least two different shots that they can choose from. You may not want your musical theatre headshot to be the same as your

film and commercial headshot. If your budget allows for it, have two different headshots. The simplest choice? One serious and one smiling. Some film actors have “composite cards” which showcase 5-6 different looks/characters they can play. Put this goal on your 5-year plan. It’s best to start simply and with photos that don’t pigeon-hole you right away. Down the road your agent or manager can discuss this with you. But for actors starting out, 1-2 shots should suffice.

My personal advice would be to shoot for the range around £250-400 / \$300-500 and not go below or higher. This is of course once you can afford that price tag; no need to rush.

## 5.3 Acting Resume/CV

If you didn’t already know, an acting resume is a detailed list of all the work you’ve done previously – kind of like a regular CV, only instead of focusing on the summer job you had at a fancy retail shop, it focusses on the work you’ve done involving acting. It indicates how much experience you have in the business, which is what makes the resume a crucial asset when applying for any audition.

In show business, the better your resume is, the better your chances are of getting the role which, makes creating an acting resume, when you’re an up-and-coming actor, rather hard. It’s the endless cycle of “need experience for work, need work for experience” all over again. It’s not hard to create a resume, and unlike a headshot, the only thing it will cost you is some time.

### ◆ *Good Resume*

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Creating an acting resume is rather simple, as all you really need to do is talk about yourself – and by that I don’t mean hand in a detailed essay extensively describing your facial features (that’s what a headshot is for).

The main aim of a resume is to inform a casting agent – or whoever you’ve given the resume to – of your previous achievements; what training you’ve received; where said training took place; and if you have any special talents that could benefit the role you’re auditioning for.

You should include the following information in your resume:

- ◆ **Contact details (i.e. email and website)**
- ◆ **The name you prefer to go by on stage.**
- ◆ **The agency or union you’re connected to.**
- ◆ **Personal information** (*i.e. height, weight, eye colour, hair colour etc.*).
- ◆ **Previous work experience.**
- ◆ **If you’ve done acting trained and where.**
- ◆ **Any skills you have that could contribute** (*i.e. accents, languages, sports.*)

Note that it doesn’t say you should put your birthday on your resume. This is because you don’t want the little details to affect how you look to somebody else. If you look twenty to a casting agent, and you tell them you’re actually thirty, that will totally corrupt the way you’re seen by them, which may completely ruin your chances of getting the role.

It’s really simple to put together a resume, and while part of you may want to get someone else to do it, you need to remember that nobody else can make you look as good as yourself. If you can learn how to structurally put together a resume, then there’s nothing holding you back.

## ◆ *Resume Length*

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A resume should be short, sweet and straight to the point. No casting agent will accept anything over a page long, so you're going to have to really constrict it to fit on one page – unless of course you're only an aspiring actor with like three credits to your name, which in that case it probably won't be any trouble at all. If you have tons of previous experience with acting, and have a lot to put on your resume, you're going to have to really compromise by choosing which are the most important. The main aim of a resume is to inform a casting agent – or whoever you've given the resume to – of your previous achievements; what training you've received; where said training took place; and if you have any special talents that could benefit the role you're auditioning for.

You should include the following information in your resume:

### How do you present your actor's resume?

The best idea would be to hand it to the person of your choice and have your headshot stapled back to back with it. Make sure they're neat, well printed and easy to read before you hand them over to anybody.

## 5.4 Acting Reel

A show reel (or showreel, or demo reel) is basically a montage of clips all put together into one, that you hand in at the same time you do your resume and headshot – it's kind of like a visual resume, as it shows all the previous work you have done. While not as important as a resume or CV, it may be the push you need to land you that audition, especially for film and TV jobs or out-of-town jobs.

As an up-and-coming actor, a show reel can be highly tricky to put together, as you don't have much to put on there, due to your lack of experience. Every actor starts off like that, though, so don't worry as there are plenty of ways to get your hands on some footage of you doing what you do best.

## ◆ *Creating a Reel*

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As mentioned before, finding material for a show reel can be hard as often aspiring actors don't have a lot to show for their time as an actor. Therefore you'll need to find ways to produce material that is worth putting onto your show reel.

### HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES ON HOW YOU CAN GET THE FOOTAGE YOU NEED:

- ◆ **Participating in plays at school.**
- ◆ **Being involved in student film productions.**
- ◆ **Taking a class that specializes in creating show reels.**

Even if you don't get paid to work for student productions, or school plays, you gain material that can be used to get you paid for real productions later on. So whenever and wherever you can, try and get yourself involved. Remember that the aim is to capture yourself on film, so if there's not going to be someone filming the play, then there's no point. As mentioned above, some schools do have courses that specialize in creating show reels as well, so it would be a good idea to check those out and see if they would benefit you at all.

## ◆ *Your First Acting Reel*

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If you hold your headshot up next to your actual head, look in the mirror, and see the exact same person in every way, then yes. What this means, is that if you look exactly like you do in the photo, at that very moment, then you can use it. If there is anything that differs – from a new haircut,

to a tattoo you got done across your forehead - you cannot use that headshot. It would be a good idea to not change your look too often, as keeping your headshots up to date can be really expensive.

Most actors have at least two different shots that they can choose from. You may not want your musical theatre headshot to be the same as your film and commercial headshot. If your budget allows for it, have two different headshots. The simplest choice? One serious and one smiling. Some film actors have “composite cards” which showcase 5-6 different looks/characters they can play. Put this goal on your 5-year plan. It's best to start simply and with photos that don't pigeon-hole you right away. Down the road your agent or manager can discuss this with you. But for actors starting out, 1-2 shots should suffice.

My personal advice would be to shoot for the range around £250-400 / \$300-500 and not go below or higher. This is of course once you can afford that price tag; no need to rush.

### How to give industry professionals your showreel?

Handing a bunch of people USB devices, that you might end up never getting back, is a bad, very expensive, idea that definitely shouldn't be the way you hand in your show reel. Actors usually hand in their show reels at the same time as their resumes and headshots, so it would be a good idea for you to do the same.

The best way to give someone a copy, would be for you to burn it on a disc and hand it in a little plastic case when you hand in your resume and headshot. It may also be a good idea to attach it to your resume, like you did the headshot. And of course, have it on your website. Sometimes you don't have all of your materials with you - but you'll always remember your website address.



## 5.5 Auditioning in London

If you're an aspiring, up-and-coming actor, then chances are that you don't have an agent to help you look for auditions. Having an agent makes finding auditions a heck of a lot easier, but it's not the only way to do it. Thankfully, we live in a time where there's this thing called the internet. It's a wonderful invention that allows us to get information in seconds. Of course you probably know all about it already and have completely ignored that last sentence.

Although it's not the only way to look for auditions, it is because of the internet however, that we actors have been given even more ways of doing so. If you're having trouble finding auditions, then this is the section for you.

### ◆ *Acting School Auditions*

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Often the acting classes, or workshops, you attend will inform their students on roles they can audition for so you will need to keep a good look out for any flyers posted or announcements made in the school you're training at.

Even if you're only there for a week or so, it would be a good idea to ask whoever's teaching you to keep an eye out as well, just in case you do miss something – and if they can inform you about other auditions in the industry as well, then that's great too.

### ◆ *Casting Websites*

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There are many websites on the internet that are there to help aspiring actors and actresses find auditions. Something one should always take into consideration however, is that we live in a time where bad people are always trying to scam unsuspecting, young people online. Therefore

it is your responsibility to be smart when it comes to looking for auditions on the internet.

Thankfully, there are multiple, actor-friendly websites, that have a special page with legitimate auditions. You need to frequently look at these websites for anything that catches your eye. Below are the most known and trusted casting call websites for actors in the UK and US.

### BEST CASTING WEBSITES FOR LONDON BASED ACTORS:

- ◆ <http://www.castingcallpro.com/>
- ◆ <http://www.spotlight.com/>
- ◆ <http://castings.thestage.co.uk/>
- ◆ <https://www.tobeseen.co.uk/>
- ◆ <http://www.talenttalks.co.uk>

Even though casting websites is the best way to find auditions in London, there are a few alternative ways of which not many are aware of.

#### ◆ *Equity*

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The first thing you should do is join the Equity union. While not as powerful as SAG-AFTRA, its US counterpart, nor as essential in getting work for actors, Equity – the British actors’ union – is open to all actors, including students still in drama schools, and the membership is a recognized mark of professionalism.

Apart from reserving your professional stage name for acting in the UK, Equity union can be an important source of support, advice, and information on job-hunting, the law, accommodation, tax, and much more for actors.

In the most basic sense, Equity is a trade union in the UK. It represents not only British actors, but all types of professional performers and creatives in the entertainment industry all across the United Kingdom. It was formed back in 1929 to protect lesser known actors and other artists in the vastly growing show business. The organization has worked steadily ever since, making sure that every artist trying to make a living would be treated equally.

What Equity does is campaign on behalf of British actors and bring all sorts of issues to the UK's government, parliament, and other places of influence. The union also protects your rights as a professional performer when you're looking for, applying for and working with other industry professionals.

When it comes to private sector, Equity is the place you go to about unfair treatment of actors or unreasonable payment structure. They oversee that British actors get paid a reasonable rate and that other rules of fair treatment are followed.

If you want to join, the annual membership for working actors starts at £123 (\$187) if you're earning under £20,000 (\$30,500) a year. There's also a one-off joining fee of £29 (\$44).

For students, annual membership is just £18 (\$27.40) plus a one-off joining fee of the same amount. The annual fee rises in steps to 1% of

income when you earn over £50,000 (\$76,000) annually. Non-British actors must be members of an FIA-affiliated union (SAG-AFTRA is one) in order to apply. For more information, visit their website.

### **Is UK's Equity the same as the famous SAG-AFTRA in the US?**

Yes, and no. Equity is the same in a sense that it's a trade union that includes actors. However, while the description of their job may be similar to that of SAG-AFTRA, what UK Equity has the power to do differs from American actors union(s).

Even though Equity's function touches upon a much broader audience of working performers than America's SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild joint venture with American Federation of Television and Radio Artists as of 2013) who's primary objective is to look out for actors working with cameras, Equity seems slightly less powerful in the showbiz of the United Kingdom.

Equity's principal function is to negotiate minimum pay and conditions for its member actors, and make sure that everybody gets paid or receives the material that was promised to them.

### **How to join Equity?**

Becoming a member of Equity and receiving your Equity card is easy for most aspiring British actors. Compared to SAG-AFTRA in the US, where you need to work harder, longer and pay more to get in, with Equity almost any actor can become a member, which naturally reduces the value of the membership.

As soon as you get into any drama school or even any kind of

performance-related course in the university, you can become a Student Member of the UK Equity union. That's your first step towards becoming a full member should you choose to go with formal acting training.

Once you apply to Equity online and pay the dues (£18.25 for Student Membership), you will receive your membership card, and stay a student member until you graduate drama school. Upon graduation from a drama school, you can (and should) transfer to a Full Membership status.

If you haven't got into any performance-related course in a drama school or university in the UK, then you only need a few performance credits on your resume and you can join too as a Full Member.

### Should drama students join UK Equity?

When you're a student on any acting related course getting your degree, I would say it's worth getting your Equity membership as soon as you can. You want to do this for three reasons:

- ◆ **You can reserve a professional stage name so that nobody else can take it;**
- ◆ **You will start saving up towards your Full Membership cost, which is deductible;**
- ◆ **You can apply for acting jobs while studying and work as a semi-professional actor.**

Many students consider it unnecessary joining UK Equity while they're studying because they're aren't working during their training. As a result, they miss the opportunity to become an older member of the union and reserve their screen/stage name for their future careers.

At £18.25 annual fee for Student Membership, this is less than you spend when going out on a Friday evening, unless you live on a very tight budget. Just keep in mind that Equity's Student Membership does not provide you with all the advantages of Full Membership. However, you don't necessarily need them while you're training.

## ◆ *Spotlight*

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Spotlight.com is not your ordinary UK casting calls website. On the most basic level, it operates in the same way by providing casting call breakdowns for actors to submit to, but its importance is much greater.

First, let's begin by establish what a casting call (or casting breakdowns) is, and how are those related to Spotlight.

### **What are casting calls?**

In the entertainment industry, a casting call is the process of choosing actors (as well as other performers) for the performing arts project. The project can be anything that requires an actor and his skills: stage plays, films, TV shows, voice over jobs and so forth.

Casting itself is normally done by a casting director (CD), a person who was hired by the production to find the best actors to fit their roles. Casting calls or casting breakdowns today will normally refer

to “job ads,” for the lack of a better alternative term, for actors on casting call websites. On a casting call website, actors will create their profiles with resume/acting CV, headshot and a show reel/demo reel.

Occasionally, a casting director may browse a listing of actors on the site and pick someone for their project. However, if an actor is not a household name in the industry, 99% of the times an actor will have to browse those casting calls (“acting job ads”) and apply to those that fit the description best using their profile.

At that point, a casting director will go through all the applications, choose a handful of actors that the CD thinks may fit the role, and bring those into casting room for an audition. This is where the other part of casting starts, so we’ll leave it at that.

In the UK, aspiring actors who are serious about pursuing this career must be members of two websites/organizations: Equity (which we covered above) and Spotlight. Even though this is not required per se, if you’re not a member of these, then you’ll be viewed as an amateur.

Founded as far back as 1927, Spotlight remains the de facto leading provider of UK casting calls and a resource for all performers in the country. The site currently has a huge database of performers and showbiz professionals. When a production is trying to produce a film, commercial, stage play or other projects, the first place they would normally go to seek for professionals is Spotlight. This includes both domestic and international productions.

You’ve seen plenty of American TV shows being cast out and even filmed in the UK. House of Cards, Episodes, and many more. All of these were cast through Spotlight.

## How much does it cost to join Spotlight?

A membership on Spotlight for actors will run £149 annually (paid by debit card). For other payment methods, it's £154 (for card, cheque or other payments).

## What do you get from being a member of Spotlight?

The primary reason to be a member is to get UK casting call breakdowns. That's where you find jobs and become employed.

Other benefits that come with this are: you'll always be viewed as a more professional actor, you'll get job updates, you get discounts on some services, you can connect with others, and if you don't yet have an acting agent then you'll have a slightly easier time booking work.

All of this sounds exciting to actors: becoming a part of a website that will eventually lead to you being cast for huge productions. Not so fast. It does look good on paper, but the reality is different.

There are two things you must consider:

- 1. Can you join Spotlight?**
- 2. What will it actually get you?**

Becoming a member of Spotlight is not that simple. Spotlight has a set of requirements for an actor to be accepted into their database. In order to become accepted and be a member of Spotlight, you must have/be one of two things:

- A. Have at least 1-year of full-time training at an accredited UK drama school;**



## **B. Have four professional acting credits as a featured actor in a professional production.**

This is not that easy for someone who hasn't trained in an accredited drama school or just starting out in the industry. It's not impossible, but it would require some experience and work beforehand. So keep that in mind.

### **Can you book acting jobs on Spotlight?**

Yes and no. The problem with green actors (even with four professional credits and a degree from a London-based drama school), and particularly those who are not represented by well-known talent agencies, is that they are unlikely to get the best UK casting call breakdowns.

When casting TV shows like *House of Cards* that I mentioned above, casting directors (CDs) will usually send out notices to (a) household names, (b) actors represented by top talent agencies, and (c) actors represented by mid-level agencies with a huge amount of credits. In a sense, if you're an actor on Spotlight with a few good credits and a small-time agency representing you, by the time they get to you, the whole thing has already been cast (unless you want to do extra work on the TV show).

That's not to say you cannot book work from Spotlight. There are some smaller productions that will look for "cheaper" actors, productions that cannot get those actors I mentioned above. That's your best chance. But then again, you can usually find these UK casting call breakdowns on regular casting websites.

So should you join Spotlight if you're eligible? Of course, if money is not an obstacle, then definitely join – you have nothing to lose. But if the budget is tight, and then you may be better off trying some smaller UK casting websites first and see if you get lucky there. Once you have a solid resume and bigger agency representing you, give Spotlight another chance.

## ◆ *Your Website*

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Why not put together your own website? Again, if you're not up to the technicalities – although they're not difficult to master – have someone else do it for you. However, another actor has given a great explanation as to why it's not necessary to pay for any website building services and how easy it is to do it yourself.

Having your own acting website allows you even greater design leeway than a social media page. It doesn't have to be complicated; a single page will do, so long as it looks attractive, has your details and headshot(s), and includes links to your social media profiles and other relevant sites.

Using your personal website as a resource, you can always post many different demo reels on the site to demonstrate your skills and potentially get someone interested in you and your skills.

Next, you can also start a blog on your site and include links to it on your social media pages. What should the blog be about? Anything, really. You can write about your acting journey, giving advice to other aspiring actors just like we do here; you can write about movies, plays, TV shows, TV commercials, or anything related to the industry.

Make your website and your acting blog snappy, idiosyncratic, and invite

comments. You can get a dialogue going with participants, and follow up with anyone you think might lead to a valuable connection within the industry. Everything is possible – you just have to play the game right.

## ◆ *Social Networks*

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If you're unable to find acting jobs in London, or you don't have or you cannot get a job permit to work as an actor, social networks are a good way to get started in acting. Or the very least it's another legitimate way to put your name and abilities out there for someone to pick up on them. Social networks aren't the only or even the best way to acting jobs, but they can save you some money while providing a few opportunities to get auditions.

*First*, submitting through social networks is free.

*Second*, you can customise your entry to some degree, rather than follow the templates that many casting sites force on you.

*Third*, you can – and you must – broadcast your entry to everyone you know within the social media page, or even just an e-mail address. That includes adding the links on any application you make to an agency, casting director, or producer.

*Fourth and finally*, compose a neat signature for your e-mails and submissions, with clickable icons to take readers directly to your personal website for extra exposure and to your social media pages. Basically, use social media to promote yourself as if you are a product.

Which sites are most effective? Everyone has a preference, so post your entry to all of them. Having a demo reel completed and a thorough

resume will raise your chances of getting some attention.

Take a lot of time over your entries, ensuring correct grammar, spelling, and a simple, uncluttered, layout. Use short sentences, bullet points, and include links to relevant sites, such as those for any production you've been in, no matter how small your part was.

If you're not good at writing, pay someone to do it for you. A cost-effective way to find a good writer is to post an offer a platform like UpWork. It will get you, literally, dozens of eager bids from all around the world, nearly all willing to do the job quickly.

## ◆ *Community Theatres*

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Don't knock am-dram; it's a thriving medium for anyone wanting to get into acting. Community theatres can be a good way not to only work on your acting jobs but also find some acting jobs in London.

Some renowned professional companies are among those involved, seeing it as a means of spotting new talent in-house. You don't get paid when working at a community theatre, so there are no issues with work permits. It's a great way to meet theatre people – a specific, live, social network.

### **NEED SOME EXAMPLES? HERE ARE A FEW:**

#### ◆ **The Old Vic Community Company**

*A hallowed London company since 1818, with its venue near Waterloo Station, the Old Vic has an active community theatre, open to anyone based in London. You can sign up or simply drop in for a look at their website.*

### ◆ Questors

*Based in Ealing, West London, and described by a leading London newspaper as the city's "most successful amateur theatre", Questors has 1,400 members and two theatres, the 350-seat Playhouse and the 100-seat Studio. It holds an open evening in the theatre bar (free drink included) on most Wednesdays and actors are always welcome.*

### ◆ Network Theatre Company

*Voted one of London's top ten fringe theatres, Network is buried under Waterloo Station, not far from the Old Vic. It may be hard to find, but anyone can become a member for a joining fee of £10 (\$15.20) and a £25 (\$38) annual subscription, entitling you to join a production as an actor.*

*There are many more like these three, from the wonderful to the wacky, and on to the just plain weird. Google "London community theatres" and follow your nose, and in the meantime, here are a few details on these three.*

## ◆ *Acting Classes*

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All types of acting classes and film acting courses are another effective networking opportunity for actors, especially as some drama schools, universities with acting and film programs, and colleges have their own production departments who regularly have something to offer actors.

Here on Acting in London website, many other writers have covered this topic before and provided a lot of helpful pieces on London acting courses and classes, but it's just a selection of the better-known ones.

On top of what has already been mentioned, there are many smaller classes, some affiliated with fringe theatres or drama clubs that can be used for finding more acting jobs in London.

Our drama clubs list of 75 locations, no less, has quite a few suggestions. All the links are included and are up-to-date.

Having started this piece with an awful warning about the fact that actors need to pay for play, I hope that by now your despair has lifted. The acting world is known for its resourcefulness, so apply that attribute to this short overview and you'll be on your way, paid or not.

“It’s all about people. It’s about networking and being nice to people and not burning any bridges. Your book is going to impress, but in the end it is people that are going to hire you.”

– PETER CAPALDI



# 6. ACTING INDUSTRY

You're going to have to network, hard. Looking for connections is like looking for auditions – you'll get nowhere, unless you know exactly where to look. Every actor needs connections, as it's what makes finding parts to try out for so much easier. There are many ways you can find connections, whilst networking at the same time.

As mentioned in the section before, social networks are going to be your number one go-to when it comes to networking and finding connections in London – simply because it can be done without even leaving your house. By getting in touch with other people in the industry via social networks, not only do you have the ability to talk to them, it gives you the opportunity to think about what it is you're going to say before you even type a single word.

## 6.1 Industry Connections

*“It's not what you know, it's who you know”* is a saying that almost everybody has heard before, and while sometimes that's not entirely true, it is better (and a lot easier) to have someone who will help you get higher up on the acting food chain, so to speak.

When someone has a 'connection', it doesn't necessarily mean they know some hot-shot director in America. Connections come in all shapes and forms, from a teacher you got on well with at school, to a person who does theatre lighting. Who knows, you could go to a convenience shop and somebody could work there, who knows somebody, who knows somebody else, who knows Stephen Spielberg's personal chef.

This is why you need to be nice to everybody you meet - not just in the industry, but people in general - although, being a nice person should be a normal thing, because it's not good to be mean.

The more connections you make, the better your chances are of breaking into your desired acting field, so try to make connections wherever you go.



## ◆ *Casting Directors*

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If you know about all the casting agents (casting directors) in your area – taking note of whether they are legitimate casting directors or not - it's going to be a little bit easier to come across auditions. Casting directors, in both theatre and screen acting, are always having open auditions for extras and such, so getting yourself in there will not only give you experience, but give you connections as well. If you keep tabs on casting agents, they will eventually announce something to your liking.

Looking for auditions can be really hard, especially if you're particular about what kind of roles you want. This is why you need to stay focused and keep on going, no matter how difficult it may be. Nobody ever gets anywhere without hard work and determination, so do not ever let not finding the roles you want to try out for, bring you down.

What you need to remember as well is that whilst you want to have certain roles in theatre or screen acting, at the beginning - when you're simply aspiring to be an actor without much credit to your name – you cannot be picky. Do whatever feels right to you, but do not let an opportunity pass simply because the character might not be exactly who you see yourself playing. You may surprise yourself by finding a new talent or type of character you never thought you could play.

## 6.2 Showbiz Scams in London

With so many people desperate to find an edge in London, entertainment business is a fertile ground for scammers and con artists who are amazingly adept at parting actors from their pennies.

Below are a few common scams to watch out for and signs of red flags for actors.

## ◆ *Online Scams*

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This is one of the most common scams that is difficult for new aspiring actors to recognize. Most of casting has moved online these days, which makes it even more difficult for actors to avoid these bad apples.

There are several scam-like websites that ask for a fee from actors to post their headshot and resume, but no one in the industry uses them. If you visit these websites, you'll notice most of the people who post there don't live in the city you're trying to act, i.e. they don't know any better.

Film and television roles are cast based on headshots and resumes submitted through legit casting websites. Commercial casting also uses online systems since they move very fast and care more about looks, and when it comes to newbie actors, they use the same casting websites as film and TV projects do.

On top of that, there are some websites that are half legitimate. Those are not total scams but just a waste of money – they have set up systems for actors to submit themselves for specific projects posted on the site but there's absolutely no return on the investment since casting directors do not use those services.

These “half-legit” casting websites usually include just a few projects on their lists, and the rest of them are poor 1st year student films, and those are scarce as well. Same goes for those background work websites. We've talked about that already – you don't need it.

To avoid these scams, always use only legitimate websites mentioned above.

## ◆ *False Project Scams*

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Never pay to be in a film! If you audition for something and later they tell you that you have the part, but that they've "discovered actors do a better job if they're financially invested in the project," or later say their "financing just fell through, and they need everyone to help pay for the project if it's to be done," walk away!

Even if the production have an office on a studio lot: these offices can be rented by anyone trying to put on a good face. This is a very common scam in London, so watch out because the people who pull it will make you believe they are genuine struggling filmmakers.

Remember that filmmakers and producers of the project are responsible for raising the money, not you, no matter how desperate you want the role. Even if you have been guaranteed that the project will happen and you'll get material out of it for your reel, don't do it unless the project was advertised as a showreel production class or something to that extent.

If the production has falsely advertised something like a directing class or showreel production class as a film project, you can always mark that casting call as "flagged" or message the editors and let them know. We need to work together to eliminate any kind of scams out there.

## ◆ *Manager Scams*

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Another very common way for scammers in the entertainment industry to part actors from their money is pretending to be legitimate managers who have just "discovered you."

In the United States, it is illegal for agents and managers to ask for upfront payments of any kind, and it's strongly regulated. Unfortunately, in the

United Kingdom, the Equity union isn't strong enough nor does the government care as much about their actors to look out for them more.

Nevertheless, remember that the only money managers make off of you should be from work that they get you, or that you got while being represented by them (10 percent for agents, 10 to 20 percent for managers).

A scam of this type you see often is for someone posing as a manager to ask for "submission fees" from new actors. They will claim that they're taking a chance on you, spending their money on materials to submit you, and that you should help cover those costs while they get your career started.

This is wrong, no matter what real work the person may have done in the past. They may also ask you to attend their workshops to see if you're what they are looking for; and those workshops are paid, of course.

### ◆ *Agent Scams*

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This is the exact same model of "scammy" as those trying to pose as legitimate managers. These people will take on the title of a talent agent, and promise you the world since you "have a very marketable look, and they can't believe you aren't working actively yet."

No matter how many stories you've heard or read about actors and models being "discovered" by a talent scout and then becoming a super star, you should ignore most of the offers that sound too good to be true. First, those stories are often made up for PR reasons. Second, it's extremely rare for someone to be "discovered" like this.

The way these scam agents approach this model is by giving you their

number and a promise to sign you. Once you reach out to them, you'll get more details about this "offer," and it will most likely include some type of way for you to pay for something, either through upfront fees or otherwise.

If it's not asking for upfront fees, then they will "recommend" you an acting class, or a workshop, or a headshot photographer whose services you must use, otherwise they will not sign you. This is your cue to leave the office and never come back. Also, report the "agent."

Some of those so-called "talent agencies" that ask you for an upfront fee will actually sign you after you pay or attend the paid workshop, and will represent you. Sort of. However, all they do is submit you using the same casting call services that you yourself could have used sitting at home with your laptop on the table.

## ◆ *Contract Scams*

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Contracts is a very sensitive area, and you must be especially on the lookout for any type of scams when it comes to putting your signature on a piece of paper with text on it.

If you are signing any kind of contract, be sure to have a lawyer look it over before you do, no matter how legitimate the person seems, unless they already successfully represent someone you know well.

Dishonest agents and managers have been known to include ridiculous conditions in actors' contracts, which unsuspecting (or naive) artists sign and agree to. If you're serious about your new agent and manager, and you believe this will turn into a productive relationship, then it's worth the extra few hundreds or so in attorneys' fees to ensure that you don't sign away your life.

No agent or manager should be offended by you asking to take a day or two to look over the contract and consult with a lawyer. Legitimate business people are aware of all the scams, and they are sensitive to that. If the person refuses and says that you have to sign on the spot, it's time to run away from that office.

The more time you spend inside of this cruel industry, the more experience you will gain at recognizing all sorts of scams or people misrepresenting themselves; you will learn how to smell them from far away. Once you're just starting and learning how to become an actor, stay very cautious and make sure your scam radar is functioning well.

## 6.3 Events for Networking

This doesn't mean that you're required to attend the latest Hollywood movie premieres in Covent Garden, dressed way too formally. An event can be anything that involves acting of some sort, for example attending a West End play will get you in the same room as the actors, director, producer, etc., and will give you the chance to subtly ask some of them - politely - what it takes to get up on that stage - thus networking and connecting with other people in the industry.

Obviously it would be a bad idea to interrupt them during the performance, so the best way to approach them would be for you to wait until the end of the play. If you can get backstage (or even attempt it) to talk to the actors who performed, that would be a huge advantage as well - not just because you'll learn what to do to achieve the same success they have, but the knowledge and advice will come from people who know exactly what you're going through.

Many actors love to "give back" and help aspiring actors. If they list their website in their Playbill bio, look them up and reach out. Flattery can open many doors. Just don't turn your flattery into stalking.

If you're not interested in stage acting, and you want to make your presence known in the world of film, then it would be a good idea to go to gatherings such as BFI London Film Festival.

This is a great way to get insight into the world of screen acting, because not only do you get to see the outcome of hard work, you get to be around the people who worked hard to make it. By going up to the writer, or director etc. and asking them about the way they cast for their films, you'll figure out how you should go about doing it yourself - while creating valuable connections at the same time.

By making your presence known at events, no matter how low you are on anybody's acting radar, you'll be able to network with people who can help you out in the industry, and from there gain some very reliable connections to help you get somewhere.

## 6.4 Schmoozing Effectively

You probably already know, in great detail, what this word means - it's basically a fancy way of saying 'sucking up'. Schmoozing, however, is pretty vital towards making connections and getting your name out there. While it's always good to be nice to someone, you need to remember that whoever you're trying to talk to has probably had lots of people try and sweet-talk them before, so you need to be original. The best thing to do when you meet someone who's got a good position in your chosen outlet of acting, is be honest.

Actors lie every day - it is part of the job description, so why should I be honest? Honesty gains trust, trust builds a relationship and relationships mean connection. The best way to approach someone is by going up to them and informing them about the fact that you know who they are and you'd really appreciate it if you could have a moment of their time to ask them some questions. Even if you go up, are honest, and the person you're talking to isn't really interested in what you are telling them, your honesty will always be remembered.

## ◆ *Who's Who?*

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As stated before, anybody can be a connection due to the six degrees of separation in the world. However, when it comes down to it, the connections you really need to make are the ones with people who have some pull in the industry. Therefore, depending on whether you're doing screen or theatre acting, it would be best to "schmooze" up to people who are directors, casting agents, producers and even the actors. If you get yourself in there, you'll have a better time finding auditions and hopefully getting roles.

## ◆ *Start Networking*

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The key is to let go of the ego, and learn to work with and for others. This is how great connections are built and the foundation for a successful acting career is laid. Bite your tongue when it's best to do so, make the right choices as an actor that don't hinder your performance and save the attitude for later. You never know when a burned bridge will prevent you from your big break.

Finally, remember that acting is NOT a race. There's no schedule and no deadline by when you have to "make it". Some actors get slightly luckier with opportunities in the beginning; others will get those same opportunities a little later in their acting careers. You need to focus on yourself and your game plan. Think in terms of milestones, not calendar days, so that you can acquire worthwhile stocks of your progress in the market of show business.

One significant arrangement you can do early on that will help to get you on your feet quicker is as soon as you move to the city, or start pursuing acting wherever you are, arrange as many informational meetings or



interviews as you can.

Basically, talk to everyone you know, people from the industry and not, to find out if they know anyone at any level of entertainment business. If they do, and based on who they are, ask for an introduction.

Once you have your list of contacts within London, always keep it close. When the time comes and you have a great project on your hands that you want to promote, or you wrote a screenplay with yourself as a lead, call those people up and invite them for coffee or lunch (your treat!), or ask if you can come by their office to talk to them, or find any other way to connect. I've done this two times so far. One time I got a "I'm sorry, I'm busy," but the other connection resulted in more work. So far, it's a 50% success rate for me. Networking works, so remember to schmooze with people.

## ◆ *Using Connections*

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Once you get a hold of people, discuss any possibilities of bringing yourself out there with the help of your own project and your contacts. Do not be shy. Making connections is very common in the entertainment industry, and you'd be surprised how many people are open to meetings if your project sounds at least somewhat intriguing and if you're paying for lunch.

You can also schedule these types of meetings with people from the industry even if you don't have anything going at the moment. However, you have to be sure that these people will be open to new connections, especially with newbie actors. If they are, then you're in luck; your goal at this stage is to pick their brains, and to make it known you're out here and eager to work hard.

These people can be anyone from an up-and-coming director or producer

to sound technician, screenwriter and even fellow actors. You never know when they might inform you of an important audition or recommend you to somebody.

Furthermore, these “informational interviews” can give you invaluable insight on how others have progressed in their show business careers via the choices they made, whom they talked to, where they worked, and can help you sharpen your focus on becoming a consistently working actor.

You think these people will not waste their time with you? Wrong. Some people won't, that's true. But a lot of them will. Industry folk love to talk about what they do and how much they know about show business. They will appreciate that you have shown an interest in what they do versus simply asking for a job.

Of course, everybody knows what's going on. They do know you're looking for projects, and if they like you, they'll offer to help you whenever they can. Contrary to popular belief, and from my personal experience, people in the entertainment industry like to be known as someone who can help their bosses (current and prospective) and colleagues.

For instance, if someone has been asked to fill a guest part in a TV show, your timing might be perfect. If you don't get the part, then at the very least you'll walk away with some good conversation and insight, and perhaps two or three other contacts to follow up on. And you'd be well-advised to send a thank-you note to anyone who gives you their time.

This is how show business works, and if you want to get anywhere as an actor as fast as possible, connections and networking should be one of your first priorities.

Now, let's talk some good news, and that is if you are related to Steven

Spielberg or Julia Roberts, you're pretty much set on the connections front. You can probably use blog to... I'd tell you what you could use it for if it was in a paperback form. But even then, for the vast majority of us who are not so well connected in Hollywood, the news still isn't too bleak. Getting connected in the film industry is ultimately a matter of clever planning, persistence and hard work.

Thankfully, this "work" can be extremely fun if you're a social being, because it means going out to tons of parties and pubs and otherwise getting to know as many talented and ambitious people as possible, living the real life of an actor.

The opportunities in famous entertainment capitals of the world such as London for this sort of socializing, especially for the younger set (who can more easily stay out until 3 a.m. on a weeknight and still function at their day jobs), are legion. The more people you meet and befriend, the better your chances of making those crucial connections for your acting career.

Eventually, some of the underlings you know now are going to make it over the wall in five or ten years. You might even meet some people who are already well connected. Show business is, after all, a community divided by only about two degrees of separation, as you'll soon find out. Actors who have done the groundwork, and made genuine connections, will have people by their side that will walk to the front door and open it for them.

## ◆ *Effective Networking*

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You should also be networking at any other industry jobs you can get, whether or not the job is in your chosen field. Naturally, it would help if your survival job is somehow related to the industry, more or less. For example, maybe you're a bartender at a well-known pub or restaurant in London Center, or Downtown LA.

On top of that, keep a list of every person you work with at each of show business related jobs. For example, in production jobs, staff lists are generally made available to everyone involved, which is an invaluable resource, and less writing for you.

Keep those lists of people close by. Put notes next to the names of people you work with directly to remind you who they are. Director, producer, actor, screenwriter, any kind of designer or assistant... Keep these lists at home. And make sure the people you work with remember you positively by doing an amazing job, above and beyond the call.

Another nice touch, particularly if you're doing occasional acting gigs all over the city, is to send thank-you notes to your directors, producers, casting directors, agents or whoever might have gotten you that gig. This will put your name in their heads one last time in a favorable light, and they might just remember you at the very crucial moment of deciding whom to cast in their new big budget production.

And like your mother always told you, it's just plain polite.

In fact, as soon as you move to the city where you plan to pursue acting career, you should consider everything you do as an opportunity to network. You never know where a potential contact or audition lead will come from.

Many actors I know got plenty of auditions from parties they attended. One of them got a big part in a major production you might have heard about that was filmed, called "Anna Karenina" with Keira Knightley.

The world is a crazy quilt of networking opportunities. However, if you decide to spend your honeymoon rubbing elbows instead of other parts, please make sure your significant other is on board with the idea. I don't

want to be responsible for contributing to the already too-short life span of the typical marriage these days.

All this may seem very cynical and shallow: get to know people just because they might know someone important, or be able to help you out some day to get an important role. But that's not what I'm saying, even though this is partially true.

What I am really telling you here is that for various reasons, this is an industry built on relationships, not on grades or test scores or billable hours. Not necessarily even on results. Insiders want to work with actors they trust and are comfortable with. Be one of those actors.

Plus, this is a harsh, unforgiving business. No one can make it through the toil and torment alone. Friends, particularly those who understand what it takes to be an actor and can empathize with the problems and issues pertaining to this career path, are critical to survival.

And remember: a huge part of making friends and new connections is helping them out whenever you can. It's not just about what you need; it's also about what they need. In fact, it's mostly about what they need, and the rest just comes as a byproduct of your genuine desire to help people.

The bottom line is that networking is the second most important thing you can do for your acting career, right after consistently working on your acting craft.

Knowing people in show business is what makes or breaks your career, and if you start from the right foot by gleaning wisdom of those who have been down the path before, you might just make it to the other side of the wall, and do it early.

## ◆ *Staying Connected*

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Whenever you make a connection, keep in touch. Don't just collect business cards and store them in your drawer. Also, make sure you have your own business cards to hand out with your acting headshot and acting resume / CV on there.

Every job and every person can lead to a potential audition. It's hard work, but didn't I say it will be? It's totally worth it though. Another tip I have is to keep Excel spreadsheets of personal contacts and big players in the business. Alternatively, I now use my phone more often for that, and also back everything up in my laptop.

Make sure you keep track of when you contact industry people and what your next steps should be. Smartphones are the best for this type of thing. Keep track of all birthdays, important show credits, alma maters, family members' names, where and when you met, and anything that will help you differentiate them from the (hopefully) hundreds of other people in your phone.

You should try to update this information as soon as you get someone's business card or meet them at a party (just not in front of them!), so you don't forget later on. This seems like daunting work, but it's a big part of an actor's job, and a very important one too, if you really want that major part audition.

If you are particularly bold, you can try making connections with people who are already established or becoming established in the film industry. But don't just start calling people or approaching them at showcases, workshops or classes. Wait until you are ready, you have the acting chops and you have a clear game plan for your career.

You can also try waiting till you have at least some credit and training under your belt, which you can accomplish within the first few months of launching your acting career. This has been covered many times over already.

Then, before you do approach someone, know as much as you can about the person. At the very least, check them out on Google and IMDb. If possible, find and see their work and ask peers who may have worked with them about their experiences, interests, and the like. This type of research has potential to pay off greatly.

Finally, when you do contact anyone in this category, tell them you're looking for advice and ask if they'd be willing to meet you (face time is better than phone time if you can get it).

If you are extremely lucky and they are willing to give you some of their time, be focused and selective with your questions; don't waste their time or yours by asking them which restaurants are good (we have an article on this if you're truly curious) or where you should live (we have some advice on that too!)

Focus on the other person. Ask them substantive questions about their creative process or what work and people in the business they admire. And be ready to answer the same questions, intelligently.

Here's the golden rule of networking for actors: NEVER ask them to give you a job, to read your script or to do anything else for you, ever. Your goal is to have a genuine conversation and to learn about the person. That's all it is. Just ask them about their experiences and listen. You'll be surprised how much you can learn.

If you're lucky and they like you, and you don't forget to send them a thank-you note afterwards, you might get a call one day from them or someone they recommended you to, and be offered an audition.

This is how proper networking is done. It's an accumulation of contacts, regular catching up and genuine interest in the other person. Results do not come right away, but when they do, they're usually worth the effort and the time.

### ◆ *Networking as Introvert*

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If you're not much of a schmoozer or a party person, and prefer more structured activities to make connections, you still have a number of great options.

A variety of professional organizations and the events they sponsor are good places to network, as are acting classes, showcases and workshops, volunteer opportunities, and the broader industry organizations for all types of film and theatre people.

Non-entertainment organizations, such as alumni associations, sports groups (yoga, football, running, etc.), environmental and political organizations, gaming groups, twelve-step programs and religious organizations can also be a fertile ground for making unique connections to boost your acting career.

If you're really adventurous, try extreme sports – nothing creates a lasting bond like a near-death experience.

### ◆ *Being Positive*

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Whatever you do, don't make enemies as an actor. In this business, there's really no such thing as a person who doesn't matter. Not for long, anyway. That assistant you're snapping at today might be the high-powered agent you want tomorrow. Moreover, the industry is so fluid that executives



often find themselves reporting to (or at least forced to work civilly with) former subordinates when they change jobs. This rule applies even when you work at jobs outside of the industry.

The bottom line here is to be nice to everyone at all times. Plus, like your mother always said, being nice is just the right thing to do. You never know who is going to be someone someday. Better to have a neutral relationship or no relationship than enmity.

This goes for your romantic life, too, if you're getting involved with partners from your career path. No matter how much you loathe your boyfriend or girlfriend for cheating on you, make it an amicable split. That vile, untrustworthy, freakish jerk might someday be running a studio, or at least an agency. They can also screw you over in many other different ways, especially if they have some important connections.

As you should already know, acting career is a marathon, not a sprint, so you have to look into the future. While living only in the present is great, cool and romantic – it doesn't really work this way.

If you snap at someone today, tomorrow they might fire you from that big budget gig you worked so hard to get. Keep this in mind and stay focused on your ultimate goal. Let go of the ego and try to keep all the bridges intact.

Some may argue that this "networking approach" feels fake, insincere and there's no art to it. And you're right. But are you trying to get into Hollywood for art? If your goal is less ambitious, and you only want to act, then your local community theater can serve that purpose very well and you won't have to do any of this. However, if you crave success, fame and big projects, then this is what you have to do. This is what everybody else has been doing.

Finally, art is subjective. You'll never get ten people to agree what the best films are. So there can't be an objective "good" when it comes to taste. But you can get people to agree on what is professional, so never fail in that respect.

Here are some specifics on how to be a professional actor: proper spelling, logic, respect, empathy, reliability and consistency. There's no "art" in there and there's no pretentiousness. Also, remember that "art" gimmicks are super-high risk. They might work, but they are much more likely to flag you as a pathetic amateur.

When you start out as an actor, it's helpful to view the entertainment industry like an art community. If you want to act in obscure, odd, ultra-low budget art house films that will never be seen by anybody, that's your prerogative.

To me, that's like a sculptor who makes five-inch sculptures with his own clay and hides them in his basement. There's nothing wrong with that, but if you want to make a thirty-foot sculpture, you'd better find a benefactor. You have to give the investors what they want. And an actor's professionalism goes a long way.

## 6.5 Working as an Actor

Working as an actor is like being a substitute teacher – you spend more time looking for work than you do actually working. When you think of world-renowned actors and actresses, the first thing that comes to mind is probably fame and glamour, but often that's not the case.

Don't get me wrong, there are lots of famous actors who book roles easily due to their popularity, but there are also a lot of actors who struggle to find more work – even after they've broken into the industry. Having acting as your profession can be one of the

hardest jobs to do, simply due to the lack of consistent income. However, working as an actor, and having it go well for you, will be one of the most satisfying feelings in the world once you get the ball rolling.

Working as an actor in London is not easy no matter how fun it is, despite the multiple outlets for drama they have in this city. So do focus on the business side of acting to promote yourself quicker and build your own brand. Let people know and keep them updated on who you are and where you are.

### ◆ *Keep Studying*

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First of all, you need to familiarize yourself with the industry by reading a lot. Know the ins and outs of this business, how it works and what people are involved in it. Reading books about the acting business, marketing, talent agents and so forth will give you confidence and understanding of where you want to be, and how you're going to get there.

Once you know the intricacies of this business in London, you'll find it much easier to develop your own specific plan of action instead of relying on general advice.

Reading a lot will benefit any actor's craft as well. Read books on acting technique to understand the theory behind truthful acting. Don't forget to read the most essential plays as well. However, don't rely solely on books, because you cannot learn acting from that alone. You'll need to take acting classes or even apply to a drama school anyway.

When you're trying to find the most efficient ways on becoming a working actor, self-education is priceless. And in addition to learning about the craft and business, reading a lot will improve your creativity and expand your imagination.

## ◆ *Your Special Skills*

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Being a good actor should always be your main priority. But that doesn't mean you can't learn any "accessory" skills that will help you book more acting jobs. Many actors completely ignore this part, and therefore take themselves out of running for easy gigs that they could've gotten if they had some one particular skill.

It's always helpful to be able to do something that a director can use in the production. If you already can play musical instruments and do more unique stuff, such as riding a unicycle – perfect! Hone those skills, put them on the resume and see how this can help you with gaining that acting experience.

But don't stop there. Do learn new things and spend enough time to actually master the technique to an adequate level where you can at least fake it to look like a professional, rather than simply "know how it's done."

What should you be learning? Anything, really. Juggling, accents, languages, musical instruments, sports, martial arts, magic and whatnot. Try some of the unusual things and put those on your resume, particularly if you already do them.

Special skills aren't the focal point of your resume (which is why they're usually at the very bottom), but who knows – one day one of those skills may win you a significant role in a big production.

## ◆ *You're a Brand*

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When you have no acting experience, it's unlikely you will have too much of your time taken up with filming projects day in and day out. Therefore, you'll probably have a little bit of extra time on your hands which you can use wisely to boost your acting career.

My suggestion would be to start working on your marketing and branding yourself. It's not going to do much for you now, but if you start early, once you have that acting experience, you'll be ahead of many other actors who are just catching up with their actor marketing goals.

So what can you do to start building a brand around yourself? There are several things, and all are very easy to do and learn, particularly because it's all based online.

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ◆ *Build your own personal acting website (or you can pay someone to do it for you, but it's not worth it).*
- ◆ *Create social media profiles: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and whatever else is out there.*
- ◆ *Become active on your website and with your social media. Share things and communicate with others.*
- ◆ *Make connections online with other actors, directors, producers, screenwriters and industry people.*

On top of doing all of this online, you can also start networking a little. Even if you haven't moved to London yet and live in a small town with very little film or theater action, there's probably other aspiring actors, directors, producers out there doing the same thing. Find them, connect with them and maybe start working on something together.

If you try hard, you can also find professionals in the field who are already working. Getting to know these people is harder, particularly when you're still trying to figure out how to become an actor with no experience, but if you can get their attention, try to utilize those contacts, or save them for later.

## ◆ *Accept Rejection*

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Rejection is a part of this business. A big part, actually. Many budding artists do not expect this turn of events once they decide they want to be actors, singers, dancers, or other type of performers in this very competitive market. Unfortunately, that's the reality of show business – everybody gets rejected.

Unlike in other walks of life, you have to accept that Rejection (with capital “R”) is completely normal. It's not personal and there's no reason you should ever take it to heart. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're a bad actor or that you've done something wrong.

Imagine that you're casting a project. You only have one part, and 100 actors come to audition for that part. 50 of them were good. Can you hire all 50? No, you cannot. You have to pick one, and it's a tough decision to make as a casting director. Nobody wants you to fail, but due to the nature of this business, you'll get betting rejected a lot.

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**“For every successful actor or actress, there are countless numbers who don’t make it. The name of the game is rejection. You go to an audition and you’re told you’re too tall or you’re too Irish or your nose is not quite right. You’re rejected for your education, you’re rejected for this or that and it’s really tough.”** – LIAM NEESON

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The point is that you should deliberately put yourself in a position to be rejected as soon as you can. Learn to fail. Get comfortable with rejection. Trust me, if there’s one “ability” actors need to have, it’s this one. It’s not easy, but it will save you tons of internal battles and keep you on the right path.

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**“Actors search for rejection. If they don’t get it they reject themselves.”**

– CHARLIE CHAPLIN

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At this point, don't go out there to win. Go out there to FAIL. Do your best, experiment, play and enjoy the process. As an actor, you cannot try to avoid failure, ever.

## ◆ *Be Patient*

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If you seriously dedicate yourself to finding any type of experience, marketing yourself, building your site and network, and getting comfortable with rejection, this will probably take you a year or two. Yes, it's a long time, but remember that becoming an actor isn't a sprint; it's a marathon. Enjoy the process, and look far into the future.

The important part is to always keep in your head that you finally have or soon will have a strong grasp of how the show business works, what acting industry is all about, and that you're absolutely serious that you love doing this. You'll feel like you're building a foundation, developing acting-related habits and getting reading for a major step.

So be patient. It's very important, because you will not – and I repeat, you will NOT – see any results in the beginning. It's also going to be a lot of investment in terms of time, hard work and even money with no reward for a while.

But stick with it, and with time, you'll see how gradually the results from the work you've done before will start dripping down, and you'll go “ooooh, I get it now!”



## 6.6 Getting an Agent

As soon as you become a professional actor, it would be a really good idea to get an agent, simply because he or she will help you find more roles in the long run. It can be rather hard to get an agent, and it may take a while, but a good agent is worth it in the end.

If an agent is willing to take you on, please make sure that you read the contract thoroughly and don't be scared to suggest changes if you are not happy. Once you sign it, the contract is binding, and you don't want them taking too much of your hard earned pennies!

Once you have launched the pursuit of your acting career in London and started digging into the nits and grits of the acting business, you will know that finding an agent and getting that agent to sign you is not easy, not by any stretch of imagination.

Many budding actors find themselves puzzled by this catch-22 situation: "I need an agent to book jobs, but I can't get any acting jobs without an agent." While it may seem this way in the beginning, it's not necessary so and your situation isn't as bad as you may think.

It's common to call casting directors as the gates to the sweet side of the acting business and to your big break, and acting agents are known as the gate keepers – they are the ones who will get you into the room with casting directors and make your career flourish in the acting business.

It's true – having the gatekeepers of the show business (talent agents) to sign you will be tricky. This doesn't only apply to some of the best acting agents in London that represent actors such as Colin Firth or Judi Dench. Even smaller boutique agencies are ware of newbie actors, mostly because there's so many of them around.

With so many actors and the acting career being as competitive as it is, how do you break through? How to get an agent to sign you and start booking bigger and better acting gigs? There's a way, but it requires smart planning, hard work and consistency. So

let's take a look what you can do right now to improve your chances and learn how to get an agent sign you as soon as possible.

I have years of experience in this industry, both in London and Los Angeles. Below, I'll give you some tips on how to get an agent and how to continue growing your own acting business with yourself as the best product on the market, which you are. Right?

## ◆ *Expectations*

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Just finding an acting agent alone can become difficult, let alone knowing how to get an agent to sign you. Contrary to what you may think, they don't hang around pubs, looking to give out their business cards to good looking 20-year olds. Those times are long gone (if they ever were here in the first place).

Today, acting business is very competitive. Talent agencies that specialize in actors get too many inquiries from actors to represent them every single day. If you look around, "How to get an agent" is arguably the most commonly asked question.

Most of these requests are made by amateur thespians who just started pursuing acting and have no acting resume, no acting credits, no acting training and no good actor headshot. Often, these are the actor wannabes that believe an actor's career is the easiest job in the world, and all you have to do is to know how to get an agent, then you'll be rich and famous. Not true.

If you have some common sense in you, if you have genuine interest in the craft, and if you legitimately enjoy the process, then you have a much a higher chance of signing with an agent. Why? Because it all takes time. Successful actors are consistent actors.

## ◆ *Improving Chances*

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There are a few tricks that all actors wanting to know how to get an agent to sign them can use to slightly improve their chances:

- ◆ **Find local talent agencies**
- ◆ **Reach out to current clientele**
- ◆ **Get references and recommendation**
- ◆ **Target specific acting agents**
- ◆ **Follow-up**

These five points can significantly improve your chances of a successful meeting with a talent agent. Let's go through each one so I can better explain this to you.

### **Find local, smaller talent agencies**

Actors who are living in metropolitan cities like London will have an easier time finding acting agents in the area. London has tons of them, and we've even made a list of top 10 best agencies. However, most of these are all very high profile places and if you're just starting out, it's not worth wasting your time on these.

Assuming you're living in London by now, I would suggest you to target local boutique agencies. These are smaller places that have an interest in young performers who are talented but haven't made a name for themselves yet.

If you're not in any of the big cities, you can still find at least a few talent agencies in your area. Most cities have them, you just need to

really look. Google is best for this.

Alternatively, I would highly suggest to move to a city like London as soon as you can. This will truly help your career, and you'll be able to find more ways on how to get an agent to sign you. The key message is this: look for agencies in your hometown first, and make sure that you target smaller places instead of reaching too far.

### Reach out to current clientele for recommendations

This is usually an easy thing to do, but most actors are too lazy to go through the process because it's time consuming. Some may be even embarrassed, or feel like they are intruding. These may be valid reasons for someone in a corporate world, but if you're a struggling actor, you have to leave those feelings behind.

Most talent agencies have websites with a page where they list actors that are currently signed with them. For example, here's AP's page with actors. You can see actors' names, what they do and how they look. This is extremely helpful.

Now, what you do is look up those actors by their names on social media: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and other platforms. Usually, it's pretty easy to find them.

Get in touch with these actors, but don't be intrusive. Be friendly, and make a genuine connection. This is the foundation of great networking skills. Once you contacted them and had a chat, ask about the agency they are signed with, how they did it and how can you do that too. Majority of people usually love giving advice on how to get an agent as long as you're polite.

Finally, to push things even further, you may even ask for a recommendation. Normally, someone who you don't know well will not do that, but occasionally you can get lucky. Why not give it a shot? All you have to do is to ask them if it's okay if you drop their name when you'll reach out to agencies. They don't have to do anything.

Some will say yes, some will say no. Others won't respond. Take it for what it is, and move on. Alternatively, you can improve your chances of getting that recommendation if you take those people out to lunch, or something along those lines. Maybe find a way to be helpful to them. For example, if you're a graphic designer, maybe you can offer to design something for that actor? The key message here is this: connect with currently signed actors, try to be helpful to them and ask them to either recommend you to the agency, or to simply drop their name when you're trying to get signed.

### Target specific acting agents

This is yet another crucial point in your quest to find a way on how to get an agent to sign you, so don't forget about it. When you're finally ready to reach out to the agency and ask for representation or a meeting, never address the agency. Target specific agents within that agency, and use their names in the letter that you send.

The way to do this is very easy, yet I see so many actors not doing this because they are simply lazy. Don't let the laziness ruin your chances of getting signed by a decent talent agency – spend those extra 10 minutes to carefully craft your letter.

So how do you do this? Simply visit the agency's website and find a page where all of their acting agents are listed. Pick either the

top one, or whichever you feel you may connect with best, and go for that person. DO NOT email or mail multiple agents within the agency; this will look unprofessional.

For example, here's Conway van Gelder Grant agency's page with their currently working talent agents. You can see agents' names and emails, and even a phone number. Pick whoever you want to target, and address your letter to that specific person.

Remember to write a nice looking cover letter to your agency, be brief and straight to the point. Avoid the common cover letter mistakes to make yourself look as professional as you can. The key message is this: mailing specific people within the talent agency will guarantee a better response chance, and make you look more professional.

## Follow-up

The final step in this process of reaching out for those who want to know how to get an agent is following up with your submissions. Here's a little secret from my days of working at the agency as well as from talking to many talent agents: 99% of actors never follow-up. Isn't that crazy?

A follow-up is exactly what it sounds like. By now, you have sent out letters or emails to specific agents with a nicely structured cover letter, explaining them why they need to represent you, and hopefully you also got a recommendation. After about 2-3 weeks of no response from the agency, it's time to follow-up.

Craft another – even shorter – email, and send it out to the same person. It can be something as simple as “I just wanted to check in and see if you had a minute to take a look at my submission?” That's

it. Your goal is to ensure that your email didn't get lost or forgotten about. This is another crucial step on how to get an agent to sign you, so do it.

Worried that you may disturb someone? Then maybe this career choice isn't for you. You must get over that fear, because the acting business is based on how proactive you are as an actor. The key message is this: do not forget and do not be shy to follow-up your previous submission with a short reminder to increase your chances of response, and possibly getting a meeting with an agent.

## ◆ *Connecting with Agents*

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Above, we talked how important being proactive is in the acting business. If you want to know how to get an agent to sign you and have a higher chance of success, you need to spend time planning and researching. By this point, you should have a list of talent agencies and specific acting agents to reach out to.

When you have that special list in place, prepare well before you rush into emailing them. The way to prepare for this talent agents outreach campaign is to make up a checklist based on what is advised below. Try to think outside of the box and come up with additional ideas that haven't been mentioned here, too.

When you're ready, here's what you will need in short:

- ◆ **Professional acting headshots (B&W + Color, theatrical and commercial)**
- ◆ **Professional and well-structured acting resume/CV**
- ◆ **Some good credits on that CV (see acting resume tips)**

- ◆ **Training - drama school or acting classes**
- ◆ **Equity membership**
- ◆ **Spotlight membership**
- ◆ **Acting showreel/demo reel**
- ◆ **Your own website (strongly recommended)**
- ◆ **Audition speeches prepared (they may ask for it)**

That's essentially it. Someone who's been in the acting business for at least a year will have most of things on the list. If you're completely new, it would be better for you to spend the first 6 months trying to cross things off that list (if you're in drama school, do all of this then).

Avoid reaching out to most famous talent agents if you don't have at least a somewhat strong acting resume and a really great headshot. It just means you're not ready to go out and audition professionally yet. Don't ruin that first impression, and save it for later. The right time will come.

Your Spotlight profile has to be completed well, with your headshots, showreel, credits and training clearly outline. If you're not at this stage yet where you can create a Spotlight profile, don't worry about it and move on.

Your website, if you have one, should also contain your acting CV/resume, showreel and contacts all clearly displayed, preferably on the first (landing) page. Just to stress this one more time: make sure you've got some acting training and credits under your belt.



By now you should have plenty of monologues and dialogues learned that you could use as your audition speeches. Equity membership is also essential, since that establishes you as someone who is serious about this career choice.

### Start the mailing campaign

When all is prepared and ready, you can start your mailing campaign. You can do it by either sending emails or actual mail, or both. The choice is yours. However, the industry is gradually moving towards keeping everything digital, but some agencies are too slow to adapt.

Actors who choose to send their submissions by the regular post, make sure you print out plenty of headshots 10 x 8" size, acting CV/resume copies and cover letters. All of this has to be on a A4 sized paper.

Don't forget: Staple your headshot to a resume. This makes it very easy for an agent to open your submission, take a look at the headshot and then turn it around to see your credits and training on the resume. Also, this ensures that your resume never gets separated from the headshot, which is crucial.

Your cover letter should be very brief. Quickly recap what you've done up to this point, where is your next production or when your next film/TV show is airing, and what exactly you want to get out of the potential meeting with your agent. I repeat - be very brief.

Send these three pieces (headshot, resume, and cover letter) in one regular envelope and then all you can do is pray, if you wish. I would advise to forget about it for the next 2-3 weeks and focus on your acting career. Then, if no responses came in, follow-up and forget about it again.

**IMPORTANT NOTE.** *I've seen some actors advising to put a note on your letters and ask agents to return a headshot to you, if possible. Do NOT do this, ever. You will immediately be seen as an amateur, and it's unlikely that the agent will be impressed with that. If you're that poor that you can't afford to give out a headshot, then you're not yet ready for an acting agent to sign you yet.*

When you're trying to find ways on how to get an agent to sign you and do this effectively, you must present yourself as a professional. This is an acting business after all.

Not only that, but leaving your headshot that was hopefully stapled to your acting resume increases the chance of that agent stumbling upon it sometime in the future, and maybe giving you call 2-3 months later. As a struggling actor, you need to take every chance you can, no matter how small.

## ◆ *Meeting Agents*

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At this point, you've probably done the hardest work: you did the research, you email specific agents, you delivered them the goods and you got a response from the agency to come in for a meeting. Honestly, this really was the hardest part of how to get an agent to sign you, until the actual meeting.

After you've been invited to meet with an acting agent from one of the talent agencies you've submitted to, you know you'll have to prepare. We've previously written about meeting with talent agents, but I'll recap this succinctly for you to understand how to get an agent to sign you during this meeting.

You'll probably be a nervous wreck the day before and during the meeting. It's normal. The only thing you need to make sure is that you're prepared for your agency meeting and you know what you're doing.

These meetings are all very similar and very different both at the same time. It's difficult to predict how long it will take, or how the agent will behave around you, because it all depends on the person.

Here are the questions we'll address below:

- ◆ **How to dress for an agency meeting?**
- ◆ **How to talk during an agency meeting?**
- ◆ **How to behave during an agency meeting?**

Now let's go through these in more details so that you know how to improve your chances and how to get an agent to sign you thanks to a successful meeting.

### **How to dress for an agency meeting?**

This is a simple one. Dress smart casual. There are many ways you can screw up your meeting with an agent, but dressing improperly cannot be one of them. You have to be better than that.

Don't look too formal, no tuxedos with ties/bow-ties or evening dresses. A nice looking suit is fine, but there's no need for a tie for men or business wear for women. The point is this: do not look sloppy.

You're an actor, so you don't have to look like you're applying for a

corporate gig, but you also don't want to look like you sleep at the back hallway of Selfridges. Put some thought into your dress code, just not too much. Make sure your hygiene is on point.

### How to talk during an agency meeting?

During the meeting, the agent knows you're nervous, so they will usually begin first. Usually, the meeting will take anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes.

The agent will ask you questions about your career, what you've done so far, what your plans are and what do you expect from this relationship in case they sign you and start representing you. Spend some time a day before thinking about these questions so that you are not caught off-guard.

Then it's your turn, so make sure to ask good and appropriate questions, those that honestly interest you and things that you should know about this agent and/or agency.

You may or may not be asked to perform a short monologue for the agent. Regardless, always have at least a few pieces memorized and prepared. One modern, one classical, and one comedy monologues are usually the best type of arsenal an actor can have. Even though it's rare, but you also may be asked to do a cold reading.

To wrap things up at the end of the meeting, the acting agent will allow you to ask questions. Do not refrain from this, and make sure that you do have questions to ask. This shows your professionalism and that you understand how the business works.

Understand that it's not a job interview; it's you who's hiring them.

Ask them what sort of area they are specializing in, if it's acting business only or not, what sort of clientele they represent, and their point of view on your current situation and your plans.

Ask honestly what you're curious about. If you don't have anything on your mind (maybe because you're nervous), here are some sample questions to ask:

- ◆ **How many clients do you represent?**
- ◆ **What type do you see me as?**
- ◆ **How many other actors you have that are my type?**
- ◆ **What type do you see me as?**
- ◆ **Are you okay with me submitting to castings by myself?**
- ◆ **Do you have any recommendations for classes or photographers?**

This shows that you're not a desperate actor who's willing to do anything just to find a way on how to get an agent to sign them. The key is to get into a mindset that you don't desperately need an agent (which is true, actually) and go in there thinking that way.

### ◆ *Successful Meeting*

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How should you behave during an agency meeting? Here's a pro tip first: Do not extend to shake an agent's hand unless offered. This is one of their biggest pet peeves, mostly because they see a lot of people every day, and shaking everyone's hand means a lot of germs.

Other than that, the way you behave during an agency meeting is the way you behave as a normal human being. Simply be yourself. Do not try to fake anything, or pretend to be whom you're not. Be honest with your answers, keep them concise and try not to babble. Again, acting agents are busy and knowing how to get an agent to sign you means avoiding taking too much of their time.

It's very possible that an acting agent who invited you for a meeting already liked you, and you may get an offer after just 15 minutes of talking. Congratulations!

Now, if you've done everything as advised and you end up getting an offer to sign with that agency during the meeting, keep it together and ask for the copy of the contract to take with you, because you need to think about it. I know what you think: "Will that not hinder my chances of getting signed?"

No, it won't. This isn't a movie where everything has to be urgent and under pressure. Agents understand that you want to take some time to think about this, because it's an important decision that also involves some legal paperwork. Even though you may want to know how to get an agent to sign you right away, there are two reasons for not signing with them on the spot.

◆ **#1. Reason number one**

*If you've done a bigger mailing campaign and reached out to other talent agencies, then you want to get a response from other acting agents before committing to this one. Unless, of course, this is the only talent agency you got a meeting with or the only one you want to sign up with, or it's the absolute best choice of all.*

## ◆ #2. Reason number two

*It's always a good idea to get a lawyer/solicitor to look through your contract, or if you have a manager, have them take a look at it. You don't want to get sucked into one of those scams or be stuck with an agent that doesn't get you acting jobs for 5 years or give them more than you have to.*

When you get the offer, ask the agent if it's okay to take some time to think about it and how much time you have. Usually, just 48 hours is enough to take care of this, and 9 times out of 10 you'll still end up signing with that agent if that is a legitimate agency. Agents know that so they will rarely have any objections.

## ◆ *Avoid Agent Scams*

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There are a lot of scam artists out there who understand that actors really want to know how to get an agent to sign them, and these young and inexperienced thespians are the main prey of scam artists. You must be aware of all that if you don't want to get sucked into a scheme that will put you in debt.

The biggest agent related scam out there is "pretend agents" who establish a legitimately looking office and will even have a website with some talent on there. What they do is sign whoever they can get into the office, and they charge them cash for being signed.

That is not how a legitimate agency operates. No talent agent will ever charge you ANY fees for being signed, period. There are no ifs or maybes. The minute you are asked to pay some upfront fees before signing with an agency is the minute you stand up, thank them for a meeting and leave to never come back.

*Just to repeat this one more time: no legitimate agency charges any upfront fees for signing actors, ever.*

The same goes for anything related to your acting career: headshots, retouching, resume, workshops, classes, demo reels, and any other service. Whenever you hear an “agent” tell you that you have to take “this class” or go to “this photographer” in order to be represented, know that something is fishy. Run away.

The acting business is full of these scams, sadly. It’s even possible that there’s more of them than legitimate agencies.

Now, don’t confuse recommendations with obligatory classes. Occasionally, an agent may recommend you a specific acting teacher or a great photographer, if you need one. These recommendations are coming from their years of experience in the field, so you can take them but you don’t have to.

## ◆ *After Getting an Agent*

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After By now, you’ve have your meeting and probably signed with your first acting agent. Happy days! But the process isn’t over yet, and you need to work more in order to ensure a productive acting career that’s ahead of you.

Now I’ll talk about one of the major mistakes a lot of actors in London, Los Angeles and New York City – all over the acting business anywhere in the world – I’ve often seen make.

The biggest mistake is letting go of the momentum of your hard work the minute you sign with an agent, thinking that from now on, it’s the agency that will do all the work. Not so.



Figuring out a way how to get an agent to sign you and actually getting that contract is a major step in your acting career, and it will most likely help you in the long run. However, it may not have any impact at all in the first 6-12 months after signing. Your big break is still as far away as it was before you put down a signature on that contract.

Actors need to keep this in mind: signing with an agent doesn't solve all of your "problems." It's just a small stepping stone, but you must continue to work hard and push forward.

### **So what changes after you get an agent?**

After you get an acting agent to represent you, the only thing that changes in your life is that you have to put their number in your phone contact list and onto your resume as your representation. You also have to pay them 10% from every paid gig you booked.

Remember that as soon as you start working with your new talent agent and auditioning regularly, you should not be putting down your personal contacts onto your resume at all. Everything has to go through your agent.

From this point on, that's their job and that's what they are there for in this acting business: to negotiate for you. Put their contact details instead anywhere that you used to put yours. That's about the only thing that has changed in your career after you signed.

After your initial dopamine release and happiness levels wear off after figuring out how to get an agent to sign you, it's time to land back to Earth and continue the struggle as an actor that you were before you went into that room to meet with your future agent.

## What do you do after you sign?

Honestly, this shouldn't even be a question. What you do after signing with an agent is exactly what you did before – struggle.

Continue searching for acting jobs, doing student films and indie projects, looking for commercials opportunities, and applying for bigger auditions. Always discuss with your agent beforehand what projects can you and should you do as they need to be aware of your schedule at all times.

Your acting business career becomes a two-man team, and you're tackling this cruel entertainment industry from both sides. So you do get some help from your agent, and this do get a little easier when you have an experience professional in your corner, but it doesn't mean that you can sit back and wait to become a movie star.

What you do is finding smaller projects through casting websites that are available to you while your acting agent is going into the dark depths of the acting business to fish for bigger things. But again, do not stop looking for work on your own just because you have an agent. Many actors do, and they often get dropped by the same agent.

## ◆ *Communication with Agents*

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Communication is key in this business. Just as your networking skills, it's important to stay in touch with people who are in charge of your career or who can help you advance it. We've previously written about maintaining relationships with your agents, but let me quickly recap this for you.

Always let your acting agent know your availability in advance, and

update them if anything changes. Because now they are representing you, they have to know about you as much as you know about yourself.

If you recently been in an accident and you now have a dark eye, they have to know about it. If you're growing a beard, they have to know about it. If you cut your long beautiful hair short for some reason they have to know about it. Same goes for your survival jobs aside from acting.

Speaking of which - avoid drastic changes to your looks unless advised by an agent. As an actor, you want to maintain consistency in the way you look so that if you come in for an audition, a casting director must see the same person they saw on the headshot.

Don't forget to stay in touch with your agent. You might be working together for 5, 10 or maybe even 20 years, so begin developing this relationship. Talk on the phone rather than over emails, unless they are uncomfortable with that.

Be on top of this if your agent isn't, but that doesn't mean phoning in every day asking what they are up to. It's also absolutely fine to develop a friendly relationship, also known as a friendship, with your acting agent and hang out together if you're both comfortable with it.

Many actors have asked me if that would be unprofessional, but in the acting business, there's really nothing unprofessional about it since now you're a team. Wouldn't you hang out with your basketball or soccer club team mates?

Once a month or once every two months the two of you can meet for lunch to discuss your progress and upcoming opportunities. This will only help your personal and professional relationship.

## ◆ *Agent's Pay*

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Every actor wanting to know how to get an agent will also want to know how much they're going to have to pay them after signing that contract. You shouldn't feel uncomfortable about these types of questions, since this is your money and you need to keep a good track of it.

As mentioned above, in the United Kingdom, your acting agent will usually get from 10% to 20% of your pay. The standard is 10% and rarely does anybody asks for more, but some do go slightly above. In the US, every talent agent receives 10% which is a number set by SAG-AFTRA, and it cannot be altered. This percentage will be in your contract, so make sure you check this before signing anything.

Is 20% worth it? Personally, I would say that it isn't. Even the biggest agencies charge 10%, so if a smaller one takes a 20% cut, you may want to look elsewhere, but this is up to you. It's not a scam by any means.

### **Your agent gets a cut from everything you do**

This is where a lot of actors get confused and go into panic mode when they notice that their agent takes a cut from something they didn't expect.

Keep in mind that it doesn't matter if you got an acting job on your own. The rule is that your agent still gets the same 10-20% from that acting gig, and this is usually mentioned in the contract.

The reason being is that your acting agent negotiates for you and deals with all the bureaucracy that you as an artist do not want to deal with. Even if you get an acting job by yourself, you can send all future paperwork and negotiations to your agent and only show up for filming.

Every query about the project you're working on goes through your agent first as well, which saves you the trouble of constantly being on the phone or trying to email people all the time. This is your agent's job, and it's a difficult one, so that's what they are getting paid for it. Don't complain.

On the other hand, if your new acting agent is never getting you any acting jobs and for the whole year you've been finding work on your own, it might be worth reconsidering your business together and probably leaving that particular acting agency.

### How do actors get paid?

How you will be getting paid depends on your employer who gives you the acting job. Sometimes they will pay directly to you, and sometimes to your agent. The standard in the acting business when you already have your feet wet is that only the agent gets paid, then they deduct their fee and pay the rest to you.

If you got paid personally, you must send what you owe to your talent agent. That's how this acting business works. Never try to hide any paychecks, because you never know when your agent may find out and sue you. This happens every day in this business.

## 6.7 Top 10 Talent Agencies in London

Unprofessional or completely new talent agencies and unqualified agents are abundant in cities like London. They thrive on clueless actors who believe that simply signing with any agency is the doorway to success. That's a false assumption, and many new aspiring actors end up with a bad contract in the end.

## ◆ *Powerhouse Agencies*

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It's true that signing with an agent is not an easy job, especially if your aim is one of these big agencies in London. However, that should not discourage from working hard towards your goal. If you follow the above tips on getting work, branding yourself and effectively marketing to acquire a powerful agent, given a right amount of luck, you may just succeed and sign with one of these well-known places.

Below you'll find six agencies (1-6) based in London that are the leaders of talent management and essentially powerhouses of the entertainment industry in the UK. If you manage to sign with one of these places, your career will likely experience a huge spike. On top of that, we also included four smaller boutique agencies (7-10) where you may have a better chance since they're hungry for undiscovered talent.

### **1. William Morris Endeavor**

The William Morris Agency, more correctly named William Morris Endeavor (WME), is familiar to every American actor, and that's one of the main reasons we've put it on this list. WME's London office is one of only two they have outside of the US, with the other one located in Australia. London is obviously an important location for the William Morris group, not just a brass plate.

Renowned US actors on WME's roster who've also worked in the UK include William Hurt, Jessica Lange, and John Malkovich. Some of these actors are represented by one of the group's American agents, but their London office is the "bridge" into the LA-based talent powerhouse that is William Morris.

Due to the nature of entertainment business in the UK, WME's London

office leans mostly towards TV, music, and literature, and is probably not the first choice for of rising names seeking representation in theatre or films. Nevertheless, it remains one of the biggest agencies in London that can get you places if you're lucky enough to become a part of this group.

## 2. Conway van Gelder Grant

This is a popular London talent agency founded in 1968 that projects a much more welcoming presence when compared to WME's website. It focuses exclusively on actors and is a favorite of many with experienced players, whether for films, theatre, radio, or TV.

The good news is that also compared to WME, Conway van Gelder Grant agency, despite its size, welcomes applications from any ambitious young actors with the right portfolio. In that regard, it's noteworthy that its page on casting website CastingCallPro.com features some relatively unknown faces.

Established actors on the agency's 400-strong roster are almost exclusively British, which is a good sign for our London-based thespians. However, if you've moved to London from the US – who knows? – it may indicate there's room for a suitably-qualified American for portfolio's variety. Better-known clients include Claire Bloom, Helena Bonham-Carter, Benedict Cumberbatch, and David Harewood.

## 3. The Artists Partnership

AP is a leading UK talent agency for many types of performers. The former Ken McCreddie Associates was rebranded under this new title nearly two years ago, mainly to reflect changes made since being acquired by the Marcus Evans Group about five years previously.

The Artists Partnership is a very popular and highly-regarded specialist group that are focused on players in film and theatre. The agency also represents a lot of voiceover artists, screenwriters, and playwrights, and they have a strong literary practice.

Like Conway van Gelder agency, TAP's primarily a British talent agency, but their clients include several actors that are well-known to Americans and who consistently work in the USA: Joseph Fiennes, Idris Elba, and Helen Mirren. On top of that, this strong acting agency also represents a number of US actors, notably, Harvey Keitel and Kim Cattrall.

#### 4. United Agents

A pretty much comprehensive agency, United Agents covers almost every element in entertainment creativity: actors, directors, voiceover artists, production crews, authors and screenwriters, composers and many more. Although their London office is the talent agency's sole location, United Agents are known for an ability to place talent virtually anywhere in mainland Europe.

The extensive client roster includes several international luminaries, many of whom work regularly on US-based productions and whom you probably know well: Ewan McGregor, Tom Hardy, and several Americans, such as Julianne Moore and Liza Minnelli.

It appears that United Agents also have a niche in crossover talent, such as supermodel Cara Delevigne, now starting to make her mark in films. If you're a multi-talented creative type with a strong resume but with not enough credits in one particular niche, this fourth one of the best acting agencies in London could be a good point to start.



## 5. Artists Rights Group

This is one of the newer faces among the rest of the list agencies; however, they are no less powerful in terms of the doors their agents can open for you. As the name suggests, this rather exclusive outfit prides itself on scrutinizing the small print of contracts diligently on behalf of clients.

Founded in 2001 by agent Sue Latimer and now owned by the US-headquartered Avalon Management Group, it has a reputation for working closely with actors in the development of their long-term careers, remaining loyal to them even in slump years. This is what we've heard around town and Internet, but how true this is remains to be confirmed further.

Artists Rights Group's famous clients seem to be mainly the popular men, such as Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Everett, and Liam Neeson, and there aren't that many of them, too. This perhaps is due to agency's reputation for exclusivity and strong focus on single clients.

## 6. Hamilton Hodell

The last one of the leaders on the powerhouses list, Hamilton Hodell is also considered a pretty exclusive place for actors privileged enough to be a part of. This agency, known in the industry and often referred to as 'HH', focuses on actors for film and TV, voiceover artists, actors for commercials and theatre.

The agency also represents a small coterie of casting directors, which is something you see more rarely among the top tier talent agencies. However, this can potentially be a huge perk for the agency and its creatives, as representing casting directors means an edge in placing its acting clients. The firm also has a particularly strong reputation

among casting agents in the US.

HH has a substantial list of clients, including several leading names whom you will definitely know: Robert Carlyle, Emma Thompson, and David Oyelowo. Hamilton Hodell also represents a few noted American actors, including Anjelica Huston.

## ◆ *Boutique Agencies*

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There is a wide array of talent agencies in the city of London that are considered to be smaller outfits. They generally have a better name for looking after their clients more personally, but may offer less comprehensive access to acting opportunities and will normally have weaker connections.

Nonetheless, it's definitely worthwhile for actors to try and improve their chances of getting signed with one of these places. So here's a quick survey of four boutique talent agencies that focus exclusively on actors and, therefore, should serve you particularly well and that should also be easier to sign with if you're not yet a name in London's show business scene.

### **7. Hatton McEwan Penford**

The Not actually that small, this London talent agency has been around for over a quarter-century and claims close working relationships with several leading US counterparts.

Their website is reasonably informative and well laid-out resource, with details of actors represented and a useful page on how to apply for representation. There are no contact details for individual talent agents, but there are outline biographies for each, a helpful feature not found among the leaders in my list.

## 8. The BWH Agency

This Bradford Willoughby Hutton, known as BWH, was founded in 2004 and, like Hatton McEwan, prides itself on good American connections. Its relatively small client roster specifically includes a number of young actors.

The agency's website is lively with details of its clients and agent bios, but not their contact information. Applications are made through a dedicated e-mail address.

## 9. Bloomfields Welch Management

Founded by Emma Bloomfield in 2004, this rather exclusive outfit has an interesting sideline: it places US actors in British film and theatre productions. However, these clients tend to be 'names', such as Lucy Liu and Luke Perry. Nonetheless, for an American actor coming to London, it shows the agency's heart is in the right place.

BWM's site is not a very informative resource, with no agent names, nor a list of clients. It seems inclined to put off any but the determined applicant for representation, even if there is a 'promise' that each will be carefully considered. You can only apply via the 'info@' e-mail address given.

## 10. The Narrow Road Company

AP This rather hip-sounding agency is unique among all listed here in that it has two UK offices: one in London and one in Manchester. It has a long history, having been founded in London in 1986 by a few former actors. In terms of agent numbers, it's the largest on my list of smaller best acting agencies in London, but that's because it also represents writers and virtually every discipline in production.

Theirs is also yet another lively site, but more focused on self-promotion than on helpful information. There's only a small selection of client names, but there is a list of the individual agents, albeit, without bios or contact details. There are brief instructions on how to apply for representation by e-mail or post (snail-mail).

### ◆ *Agents Lone Wolves*

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If none of the places from the above list is currently a possible option for you, don't get discouraged. In such a world-class center for acting as London, there are any number of single-agent operators. One of those London talent agencies are probably better suited if you are a fresh face with only limited experience.

However, remember to do your research first so as not to fall victim to all types of acting business scams. If you are tempted to try a lone wolf agency, do plenty of homework first: ask around, especially on the industry's buy-side (casting directors, production companies, etc) and if the agent has a Facebook, Twitter, or other social media presence, follow them for a while and see how they feel to you.

## 6.8 How to Audition

The truth is, the more roles you audition for, the better your chances are of actually booking one. This is why you really need to audition for as many roles as you can, to make yourself feel more reassured and positive.

What if you audition for a few and get offered two parts? Congratulations! Choose the role that will get you closer to your goal and what will challenge you the most. Go with the better known theater company and with a director you've always wanted to work with, but be cordial when turning down the other role, and make sure you tell them that it's because you got cast in something else. You want to be seen as highly marketable and in demand!

## ◆ *Pleasing Casting Directors*

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If In the acting business – the world where a lot of industry people can become your key to either success or failure – casting directors can sometimes be intimidating. When an actor walks into the audition room, they unconsciously start thinking of how to make a casting director happy.

You would think that just coming in there and blowing them away with your magical performance would do the trick – and often that is the case – but other times, just a minor detail will become the deciding factor for the actor. So here are some tips for you to please a CD and hopefully nail that audition.

### **1. Never ever be late**

Make sure to never be late for your audition. Showing up right on time is late already – be there at least half an hour in advance (you have lines to go through and create the imaginary world for yourself!)

### **2. No more apologies, for anything**

Committing yourself to whatever you want to perform is showing your courage, so stay with it and do not apologize for whatever mistake you might have made. It only takes everybody's time and shows that you're insecure and not confident.

### **3. You're there to perform**

You've been invited to the audition – not forced to get there – as a guest. Come, do your job and enjoy yourself. If you're obviously uncomfortable with what you're doing, casting directors will be too.

#### **4. Own the room**

As soon as you enter, you must shine with self-confidence. Show the casting people that you're there for a reason, that you know what you're doing and that you will graciously accept the part because you're the only one right for it.

#### **5. Do your homework before coming in**

If you get anything in advance or you have your own monologue, lines, speech that you will have to perform during the audition – prepare a day in advance. Whatever method of preparation you're using, be ready to unleash it.

#### **6. Make no excuses for anything**

Just as you shouldn't apologize, you also should not make any excuses. Whatever happened, happened – move on, and do better next time. Learn from your mistakes.

#### **7. Ask only valuable questions**

Don't waste casting people's time making small talk and chit-chatting. Casting directors have been in that room – or will be – for a whole day; they do not have any desire to engage in meaningless conversations. However, if you really need to ask a question, never be afraid to do so. Be brief.

#### **8. Focus on your partner**

Whenever you have a partner in the scene reading with you, give them the credit. Don't write them off to focus just on your own performance. Listen! Observe! Make your partner the focal point of the reading and your performance will improve as a result.

## 9. Always know what the text is about

You always have to know what's happening in the scene, what your character is going through and what is going on around you. If any important to you/your character details are unclear, and you believe that it might hinder your performance, do not hesitate to ask a question.

## 10. No miming and props

It's pretty straightforward: casting directors hate that.

## 11. Know your lines

It depends on the way you prefer to audition. Some people learn everything, others – partially. The best way is to always know what is happening in the scene and vaguely know your lines. You can and should keep sides in front of you, but don't hide your face in there either (check cold reading tips below on how to hold the sides).

## 12. Learn how to move appropriately

Don't go touching casting directors, or any furniture around. Being still isn't a bad way to audition, you just have to learn how to engage your audience while performing this way.

## 13. Never take anything personally

It's all just business, and everybody in that room – including yourself – are there to work. You might be the greatest actor in the world, but sometimes you just don't fit the part. Understand that casting directors have nothing against actors. They want you to succeed.

## 14. Make great choices and bring your personality

Half of the performance is about what is written in the character description, and the other half is all you. In order to walk out of that audition satisfied, you need to make some very specific, bold and interesting choices that can come from you and you only. Stand out and show your unique side, something that no other actor can replicate.

## 15. Most importantly, be a creative actor

Show them that you are a professional performer. You know how to fill their needs and you know how to be professional about it. If your creativity is of the utmost importance to you, casting directors will see it and evaluate it accordingly.

Always remember that casting directors want actors to succeed just as much, if not more, as actors themselves do. They do not enjoy sitting in that audition room for long hours and not finding someone to fill the part.

Whenever you enter through that door, and you obviously fit the part, casting directors' souls lit up and they start cheering for you. They hope you will deliver the best piece of work you can, and they will be there for you in case any appropriate help and guidance is required. Just be professional about it.

### ◆ *Cold Readings*

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Cold reading (or cold read, or sight reading) is a practice of performers reading the material when there's little to no time given for preparation before the audition. When doing a cold read, you're provided with sides (small part from the script) and you read them aloud with almost no or very little practice, character breakdown or analysis of the script.



There are certain acting classes designed specifically to teach actors techniques on how to be good at cold reading. Are these cold reading classes really necessary? I would say no. Cold reading is about two things only: confidence and the ability to pick up lines quickly. Both of these skills you can learn by yourself at home.

There's no secret weapon that will allow you to suddenly become good at doing a cold read audition, and the only way to get better is to do more of them. However, there are a few things that can help actors improve their cold reading skills, and I'll list those below.

### WHEN DO YOU REALLY NEED GOOD COLD READING SKILLS?

There is a small number of instances when being good at cold readings can save your bum and win you that audition. Here are the examples of such cases:

- ◆ **1. Casting director's workshops** – *they want to see you be good at cold reads in case the CD calls you in on a moment's notice.*
- ◆ **2. Unexpected auditions** – *When you come in to audition for a role but they decided they want you for a different part you didn't prepare for.*
- ◆ **3. Unprepared productions** – *A lot of student and some low-budget indie film auditions like to do that, mainly because they're not well organized.*
- ◆ **4. Last minute rewrites** – *You arrive at your audition and receive completely different sides from what you have initially expected.*
- ◆ **5. Missing students/cast members** – *when working on a scene either in class or in rehearsals, you may need to fill in for somebody.*

These five cases alone explain why cold reading acting classes usually make quite a bit of money, but again, you don't really have to take those classes because all of this stems from one place. It's definitely worth mastering the "technique" of doing a perfect cold read as you never know when it might not only keep you from an embarrassing read, but also get you the part. Here are the tips on how to be good at cold readings.

### How to be good at cold readings?

Show them that you are a professional performer. You know how to fill their needs and you know how to be professional about it. If your creativity is of the utmost importance to you, casting directors will see it and evaluate it accordingly.

#### HERE'S HOW TO DO THIS:

- #1:** *Do not start by trying to memorize your lines right away. Cold reading is often stressful for a lot of actors due to uncertainty and haste, but you must try to avoid focusing on memorization alone. Let me repeat that again – do NOT focus on memorization of lines alone. First, calm down and focus.*
  
- #2:** *Read closely through the whole thing. And I mean the WHOLE thing, without trying to "act out" anything. Just read the sides fully. They're rarely long, so it should be a quick read. Then take another few moments to go through the sides again and understand what the scene is about and where your character is coming from (the usual stuff).*
  
- #3:** *Break down the script as much as you can. Now it's time to do some script analysis and character breakdown. Again, do not rush and try to keep your focus. Even though there won't be too much time to do a thorough job, here are a few questions that you need to ask yourself and be aware of when analyzing your sides:*

- ◆ What happened the moment before the scene?
- ◆ What is your relationship to the other character?
- ◆ What is the point of this scene in the script?
- ◆ What is the environment you are in?
- ◆ What is at stake in the scene?
- ◆ What does your character’s “want” in this scene?
- ◆ Other important facts from the script that instantly come to you.

**#4:** *Concentrate on listening. When your time is finally up and you go into the room to begin your scene, avoid trying to remember your lines. Do not focus on the fact that you may have forgotten them. You’ve already done whatever you could, and there’s nothing else you can do. Instead, bring your full concentration onto your partner and really listen.*

That’s all you need to know about how to do a cold read properly. Now here are some additional tips to make you feel more confident during the process.

When you’re doing the cold read audition, always use your thumb, or however you hold your sides, to keep track of where your dialogue is. You will definitely forget the lines if you have more than a few (which is why you shouldn’t worry about it), so try to help yourself to quickly find where you left off.

If you have multiple pages of the script, use an index finger under the page you’re currently reading from so that you’re ready to switch the page when you’re done with the current one. Also, do not drop the sides. Keep your sides horizontally in front of you at the waist/chest level. You need to be able to look up the line as quickly as you can.

## The golden rule of cold reading

This rule is a MUST if you want for your cold read audition to succeed, so make sure to follow it:

*When a reader is addressing you, or is reading his/her lines at you, you must always keep your eyes on them. You may lower your eyes and look at your sides only when it's your turn to talk.*

Period. This is very important. When it's the reader's turn to feed you the dialogue, keep your focus on them. You're listening intently, remember? And yes, that does mean you'll have to spare a few moments to look up your next line (if you don't know it) AFTER the reader is finished. That's fine. As long as you listen and react, that's your key to a successful cold read.

## How to practice cold reading at home?

There are two good ways that actors can practice their cold reading skills (or sight reading skills, whichever one you prefer) when there's no partner available to them. This can be done at home, and I recommend that you do practice this now and again until you've done plenty of cold reads to the point where you're very comfortable and confident.

### ◆ A. Read out loud a lot

*This one is my favorite and the easiest one to include in your daily routine. It accomplishes part of the practice and is necessary not just for cold reads, but auditioning in general. Whenever you relax with a book (and you do read, right?) just try reading it out loud, at least for 30 minutes.*

## ◆ B. Record yourself

*Same thing – only instead of a book, try newspapers and magazines with longer and more complicated sentences. Usually, business magazines work great for this sort of thing (and do read the advertisements in there as well). So grab that magazine, and follow the steps below:*

- 1. Prepare your DSLR camera/smartphone on your tripod for self-taping;**
- 2. Grab that text you have prepared (but didn't learn in advance);**
- 3. Hold the sides in one hand high enough to see the material without moving your head;**
- 4. Avoid holding the script too high (face hidden) or too low (need to look down);**
- 5. Look at the script, “take it in” and remember the words that you instantly picked up;**
- 6. Look up into the lens and say the words you have picked up;**
- 7. Again: look at the script, grab a few words, look up at the camera, say them;**
- 8. Repeat, repeat, repeat;**
- 9. Watch the video and revise. See what you did wrong and fix it.**

The point is to learn how to take in all the script and grab the necessary words as quickly as you can. The more you practice, the more words you'll be able to grab in the same amount of time. It's not easy at first, but you get used to it eventually. Practicing with a partner would be a good idea too.

## ◆ *Confidence in Auditions*

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Self-consciousness is the death of a good actor. Confidence is how you succeed in the audition room. Having complete confidence at auditions means not second guessing your choices, not judging your character or yourself. Being self-confident in the audition room will result in you hitting a mental roadblock that will hinder your performance.

Most of the time, casting directors can instantly see how confident the actor is or going to be, even before you slate. This means that as soon as you walk into the room, you have to own it because this will determine the character choices you're about to make. You need to get back that self-trust of your performance that you had yesterday when practicing at home, and if you don't then you're risking of not being fully present in the moment, which is a vital part of acting.

During auditions, being nervous is not the same as being uncertain. Everybody's nervous, it's normal; but not everybody distrust the choices they are about to make.

The more experience an actor has, the easier auditioning process gets. However, you don't have to go through all those years of poor auditions and self-conscious choices; you can avoid them by learning how to have more confidence at auditions, performances, on the set, during an interview, and so forth. Begin at the beginning, and do not reinforce your fear of failure — stop it at its roots!

What you do have to be when you walk into that room and see a bunch of people in front of you is Excited, Ready and Confident. The choices you've prepared for your character should give you goosebumps because of how strongly you wish to share your performance with others. That feeling is confidence in yourself, and you cannot go there without it.

### How can you be more confident in auditions?

First of all, always remember that you have accomplished something just by sitting in that hallway. You've beaten hundreds or maybe thousands of other participants that were submitted for the part, but casting directors picked you because you had something to offer. They liked you, they want to see you, and most importantly — they really want to cast you. All you have to do now is show up, which you've done, and demonstrate that their choice was indeed correct, which you're about to do.

#### ◆ 1. Make sure that you prepare for your part

*You may or may not have already gone through acting training, whether it was in one of the drama schools or acting classes, but you do know the questions you have to ask yourself to grasp the character. You already have your methods of how to prepare, how to learn your lines and how to deliver.*

#### ◆ 2. Do not focus on the end result of booking the job

*If you ask a lot of other actors, you'll learn that a lot of them booked the part when they didn't really care for it or they didn't believe that they could get it. It's just human psychology; they didn't want it, and in turn they were more confident in the choices they made, they were less nervous and stressed about the auditioning process.*

◆ **3. Push out all your negative thoughts**

*Your focus should be on the integrity of your work; there's no need to be in your head. Improvisation classes are great for learning to get out of it and so is regular meditation, but if you haven't tried any of these methods yet, then the best thing you can do is tell yourself that you are going to deal with all the negativity in your head in 30 minutes, right after the audition. Put it on pause, and pay attention to what is more important right now.*

◆ **4. Finally, do not label your unsuccessful auditions as failures, because they are not failures**

*Look at them as an experience and a performance. You're in this thing to act, and that's what you are doing regardless of the place you're doing it at. As soon as you leave the room, start looking forward to your next audition and the choices you're going to make then. Try to be happy about what you did, and if you made mistakes — learn from them, don't grieve. This experience will make you a better actor.*

Having confidence at auditions is about knowing your lines and getting out of your head. Experience and knowledge teaches you that, and with every single audition you will be getting more confident, you will learn how to do better in front of those people, but most importantly, it will teach you how to have fun.

Never allow doubt, self-consciousness and self-judgment to prevent you from giving a great performance. Forget about everybody in the room; just act, as that's why you've been put there and that is what they want to see.



Casting directors are looking at hundreds and sometimes thousands of actors a day. They don't want to do that, but they have to. Remember, they want you to succeed just as much as you do; they're not your enemies, therefore, you don't have to feel uncomfortable, nervous, scared, self-conscious and uncertain around them. Show what you have, because they want to see you at what you do best – perform.

### ◆ *Self-taped Auditions*

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Today's technology is allowing actors the convenience of self-taped auditions. More and more casting directors are having actors send in their own recorded auditions to be seen for the part without having to come in and audition in person.

Occasionally, this may be in addition to a more traditional way of auditioning which helps to filter out a good chunk of candidates, and this saves time for both actors and casting directors. On top of saving time, there are other great benefits to self-taped auditions: actors don't have to travel, which saves money on gas, and of course it gives the actor much more control over their audition process itself.

However, if you're an actor who is used to a more traditional way of auditioning in a casting room, you may find self-taping your audition a little daunting, especially due to lack of feedback. It does get easier and more comfortable the more you self-tape your auditions, and it won't be long before you'll be an expert at it, producing high quality auditions via self-tapes. But for now, here are some tips.

## ◆ 1. Improve the quality of recordings

*The first thing you should remember with self-taped auditions is that the casting director and the team will not expect to see film quality that resembles a high budget Hollywood movie. CDs fully appreciate that you are doing it yourself with your own equipment. However, do try and make your self-tape as professional as you can.*

*As long as the quality of your self-tape is decent enough where they can see you and your expressions, casting directors will be more interested in your audition rather than criticizing your production skills. Just make sure that you can be seen and that you can be heard: these are the things that matter when auditioning. Alternatively, you can always spend a little extra and use self-tape audition services for actors that are becoming very common these days.*

## ◆ 2. Think about the lighting

*Obviously, the light where you are taking your self-taped audition won't be of professional quality, but it is somewhat important. Lighting can make or break your look and the casting director has to be able to see you clearly. There are a few easy things you can do to ensure a good light for these self-tapes.*

*To begin with, choose a room that's well-lit and always make sure that there are no light sources behind you. Don't stand in front of a window when you are self-taping your audition, as being in front of a light will make you appear dark and the casting director will find it hard to see you.*

*Always do a test run first and then play it back. If you see that you are dark in the pictures then find another area where the light may be better for filming. It is a matter of trial and error but it has to be spot on, otherwise you won't*

*be seen properly and that could potentially get your self-tape “thrown into a bin” even if your acting is good.*

### ◆ 3. Choose your background carefully

*An ideal background is usually a blank one. Doors have always been a popular background, but if that’s not an option for you, just try and find a background where not much is going on (no patterns, no shapes, and nothing to distract the CD from you and your face) and with the least amount of things behind you. The less distractions there are in the background the better.*

*The easiest way you can do this is to grab a single-color blanket, or sheets, and throw them on the wall behind you. Pick colors that favor your face and make you stand out. Grey often works well. And, if you can spend a little extra, you can grab a green screen backdrop or something like that on Amazon; they’re usually cheap.*

### ◆ 4. Clothing choice

*You really want to be wearing a solid color. Clothing that’s free from very bright and busy patterns works best for self-taped auditions. Keep your clothing as simple as you can and try to avoid too many accessories or jewelry.*

*Another thing that needs to be mentioned is that the camera does tend to add extra weight to your body. So ideally you don’t want to be wearing clothes that aren’t too tight or clothes that appear too big on you. Wear what you’re comfortable with and just try and be yourself. Simplicity will work best here, unless you’re aiming at specific character choice.*

## ◆ 5. Apply make-up

*This isn't essential, but it's worth considering. The camera can make people looked a little washed out so make-up will work really well to prevent this. After you apply the make-up, check how you look after each application to see what looks best for you when you're on camera. Just keep it to a minimal and do only the most essential things.*

## ◆ 6. Auditions like you normally would

*If you already have auditioning instructions for your self-tape, then you know what you have to say or do specifically. But if there are no specified instructions then just carry on how you would for a regular audition.*

*Remember to slate first. You should state your name, and then go on to say the name of the character you are auditioning for. Your slate should be friendly and it should also show you are confident at your audition; do not be robotic. This is your first chance to show that you are a professional and that you have a personality.*

*First impressions can be ruined by appearing too monotone, and a little personality goes a long way not only for self-taped auditions but in the acting business in general. It's vague to say "don't be boring," but most of us usually know what that means.*

## ◆ 7. Stop filming when the time is right

*This is easier said than done, but you have to know when enough is enough and when it's time to press that stop button for good. It is very easy to film one take and then watch it, then decide something isn't right and carry out another take and watch it and then decide something else is wrong. Doing this*

*over and over can end up driving you crazy and even though you definitely should try plenty of takes to get that best shot, remember that you do have to stop at some point.*

*The best advice here would be this: after you “warmed up” to your camera (1-2 takes), try doing a single-take best shot just a couple of times and consider it done. Try and approach it the way you traditionally would, as if you were auditioning in front of the casting director in person. Give the very best performance you can give on the first “real” take.*

#### ◆ 8. Follow the submission instructions correctly

*At this point, you’ve successfully completed your self-tape audition and you’re happy with it. Now it’s time to send it in. Make sure you follow instructions on how to send in your self-taped audition correctly and check over and over again that you have done all that needs doing.*

*Do you have to upload your audition onto a website? Or are you meant to send it via email? Are they asking for your resume and headshots alongside the self-tape? Are they asking for your clothing size or other measurements?*

*Always make sure you are providing the casting director with your correct email address and phone number for when they get back in touch with you. Try to keep this organized and professional, and deliver your self-tape on time.*

## 6.9 Never Stop Learning

Nobody ever stops learning, no matter how old they are, or what they do for a living. The world changes every single day, and with it so does information, which is why you need to continue to learn all the new things that get released as time goes on. For example, you could be a stage actor, when suddenly a new method of physical theatre is released.

You can't ignore it, so you'll have to continue to learn. Every actor continues to learn, no matter how famous they are – especially if there's a certain role that they need to have lessons for in order to fully portray the character to the best of their ability. Keep learning, as the more you know, the better off you'll be.

### ◆ *Knowing Success*

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Some people can be really greedy when it comes to success, with nothing ever being good enough. One thing you need to get into your head is that fame is not success. Fame may be a by-product of your success, but you should never measure how successful you are based on how many people recognize your face.

Success is being able to do what you love and get acknowledged for it – not by random strangers on the street, but by people who appreciate the effort you've put into being the best performer you can be. Different people feel success differently, which is a bit of a tongue twister, but the meaning reigns true – your success may not be somebody else's idea of success, but that doesn't make it any less important. You will only ever be successful if you stop caring so much about success.

**“To succeed in business, to reach the top, an individual must know all it is possible to know about that business.”**

– J. PAUL GETTY

# **7. ACTOR'S MARKETING**



BRANDING

You need to build a brand around yourself. The term ‘building a brand’ is often something that involves a product being marketed by a group of people in fancy suits. When it comes to branding yourself, as crude as it seems, the concept is pretty similar - you are the product and your image is the brand that surrounds you. Of course, there are differences between you and an actual inanimate product, for one, you’re not being sold - that would be illegal.

There are many similarities though, for example before a product is even released there are many things the creators need to take into consideration - such as the target market, the look, as well as the quality of what they’re putting out there. The same can be said about an actor, as well. A product, much like an actor, will also take some time to gain popularity after being released, and at the end of the day will only do so if they’ve fully thought out what their aim is.

This is why before you try and market yourself, you need to decide on what you’re trying to market.

## 7.1 Marketing Yourself

Saying you need to market yourself really makes it sound as if you’re being sold like the new iPhone that just came out – don’t worry, you’re worth a lot more than that though, it was just a phrase. There are many ways to market yourself in the industry, some of them being rather simple.

### ◆ *Brand Image*

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Deciding on an image can be hard for an actor, as the decision can lead to you being boxed into one specific stereotype. If you want to have an edgy, rough-around-the-edges image, it’s highly probable that you’re going to be placed into that category of roles. This is why you need to think long and hard before making the final decision on who you want to be perceived as.

Once you’ve decided on your image, or the brand that surrounds you, it’s



time to decide on how to market yourself. It's like that moment before a product is ready to be placed on the shelves, where the marketing team decides how they're going to promote it. Promoting yourself, however, is rather different and doesn't involve cheesy TV advertisements with really catchy theme tunes.

### **TODAY, THE BEST WAY TO CREATE A BRAND AROUND YOURSELF IS A STEP BY STEP PROCESS:**

- 1. Build your own website (there's a step by step guide for you here)**
- 2. Become active on social media**
- 3. Start making connections online**
- 4. Create a clear type around yourself**
- 5. Network in real life with the right purpose**

Let's take a closer look at some of these.

### ◆ *Social Networks*

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In this day and age, social networking is clearly a very good way to go if you want to get somewhere in the industry. You hear stories every day of people becoming stars simply by posting videos on the internet. If you're more into stage acting in London, then posting videos hoping for fame is probably not for you, however having different social networks is never a bad thing, and will help you stay connected.

By having different social networks, you have the ability to promote yourself... for free and however you want to. It will also give you the ability

to keep tabs on other big people on these websites and try to market yourself to them in the hopes of gaining connections.

## ◆ *Facebook*

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If you don't know about this website, then you've probably been living under a rock your whole life - or without Wi-Fi, which is basically the same thing. Facebook is the biggest way to not only stay in touch with people, but put yourself out there. It's really easy (not to mention free) to create a Facebook page for other people to like and support you on.

It's understandable if you're skeptical, as who'd want to like a page of an up-and-coming actor with not much credit to their name right? Well, it doesn't matter if you haven't done much in your acting career - having it will be like having a digital business card that lets people know about you, as well as giving them the ability to get in touch with you. You need to put some time and effort into creating a professional looking Facebook page that markets you well, for people to look at when researching you.

Don't, I repeat, DON'T use your social media platform as an opportunity to complain about your career, director, or fellow actors. That's a sure way to end your acting career before it even begins. Stay positive. Promote yourself and your successes, no matter how small. Congratulate and support your peers. It will all come back to you, I promise.

## ◆ *Twitter*

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When this social network first came out people thought it wasn't going to be very big. A couple of years later and almost everybody's on there, mentally converting the sentences in their heads into ones of 140 characters. This website is filled with people in the acting industry, which will be hugely beneficial to you, as it gives you the opportunity to reach out to them and try to market your skills.

## ◆ *Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram*

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Post photos of rehearsals, your cool makeup, backstage shenanigans, you in costume -- anything you can think of that will illustrate yourself as a successful working actor. It's all about what image you choose to portray. Herald your success with frequent updates.

## 7.2 Personal Actor's Website

As the internet continues to change the entertainment industry, more actors are starting to utilize all the opportunities the online world has to offer. Even Hollywood's A-listers are working hard on maintaining their personal actor's websites and growing social media following. But do actors who are just starting their acting career need a website?

Anyone who's been trying to become a working actor in any of the larger cities such as London knows that the secret to getting more auditions is networking. Casting directors that know you are more likely to bring you in rather than simply call you from a casting submission.

This is called presence. The more time you spend in a city, the more people you meet, the more connections you make – the more memorable you become. This eventually leads to more phone calls or emails, invites to auditioning for parts and hopefully booking those parts.

## ◆ *Why Websites?*

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Online world is like a city, and you need to be hanging around there, making connections just like you would in a real world.

If you want to optimize your web presence so that when someone enters your name in Google they are able to get all the necessary information about you without having to spend a long time researching, you need a platform for that.

The best platform is the one that you can control – your website. Results from establishing that web presence through your own platform will eventually translate into the real world: more connections, more people that are aware of you, more phone calls, more auditions, more jobs. Not only that, but building online presence isn't as difficult as it is in the real world.

In a big city, networking is one of the best ways to make people around that place aware of you. However, it's by no means an easy job. Thankfully, online world is much easier, because you can do this with the comfort of planting your butt on the chair in front of a computer.

What is web presence made out of? Anything where you can put your name in: your website, blog, social media profiles, reviews, comments, photos and videos. Everything with you and/or your name out there can contribute more or less to your overall web presence, raising your rank, so to speak.

The more stuff you have out there, the more present you are online. Ultimately, everything does (or should) stem from your personal website which is the foundation of your web presence.

Why? Because you're in control of it. You can put out there anything and everything you want people to consume. You'll be in charge of how your audience and anybody else sees you.

## ◆ *Online Audience*

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Nowadays, your online audience is one of the key factors to book a job. If you go through casting websites searching for potential auditions, often you'll notice casting directors mentioning web presence and social media following. The bigger your audience, the better chance you have of booking a job (even if someone was better at their audition than you).

Why? Because if you get the part, then your audience may become an additional set of eyes and support for the project. You come in with your own army of followers to whom you can promote this film or web series you're working on, regularly. They will be the ones who will come and see it.

Remember Kevin Kelly's theory of 1,000 true fans? Yes, it especially applies to actors. This is extremely important in 2016. It's never too late to start or continue building your web presence and expanding your online audience.

Building and utilizing your own acting website is the best way to present your followers with what you want them to see. It's going to become your actor's online business card, sort of. Plus, it's really not that difficult to make a website.

Why isn't it difficult? Because of all the available tools. There are people out there charging a pretty penny for creating a site, but in my opinion, it's not really worth it.

Honestly, creating your own acting website focused on your acting career doesn't have to take longer than half a day, even if you're completely new to this. With today's content management platforms like WordPress, or services like SquareSpace, it's never been easier.

## ◆ *Website for Marketing?*

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I've talked to many casting directors, agents and other industry people. Nobody ever disagrees with this: as an actor, you are the product and you are in the sales team to sell yourself. It's the reality of the entertainment business.

Many actors shy away from this, thinking that it diminishes their "artistic"

presence, but it's simply not true. Acting has been over-romanticized, but as someone who's just starting, there's almost no chance for you to become a working actor if you will not work on marketing and promoting yourself.

When you're a young actor with little experience and fame, marketing and networking is just as important as being good at your craft. That's the nature of this business. Accept it, and move on. Your website is of course one of the best tools for marketing yourself.

The site can be as big or as small as you want it to be. After a few years of researching, testing and trying different methods and websites, I found a sweet spot that works for me and for many other actors whom I helped to build their sites, or fixed their existing ones.

much, if not more, as actors themselves do. They do not enjoy sitting in that audition room for long hours and not finding someone to fill the part.

Whenever you enter through that door, and you obviously fit the part, casting directors' souls lit up and they start cheering for you. They hope you will deliver the best piece of work you can, and they will be there for you in case any appropriate help and guidance is required. Just be professional about it.

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SHOW PEOPLE?

### ◆ Your headshots

*put up old and/or new ones, and have as many as you want on there!*

- ◆ **Your showreel**  
*make sure you have several, including your comedic and dramatic scenes;*
- ◆ **Personality**  
*many love seeing/reading non-acting related things to get an idea of who you are;*
- ◆ **Special skills**  
*mention or show everything you can do – singing, dancing, magic, acrobatics and whatnot;;*
- ◆ **Landing page**  
*the first page with photos, videos and info someone sees when they visit your site;*
- ◆ **Your news**  
*what have you been doing and what are you about to do – show that you're a working actor;*
- ◆ **Personal blog**  
*this can increase your presence immensely, and I'll talk about how in the future.*

All of these things and more can and should be on your website, and you'll be able to control it all by yourself, unlike with social media. This helps with creating an impression, as well as building people's perception of who you are both as a person, as an actor and as an artist.

## 7.3 Your Type

Knowing your type as an actor is absolutely essential. It will set you up for the right parts and increase your booking-to-audition ratio. There are a lot of acting jobs out there, and as an actor trying to book as much work as possible, you need to spend your time efficiently instead of wasting it on the parts you simply do not fit.

### ◆ *Typecasting Yourself*

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When Actors are virtually entrepreneurs, running their own business in this industry. One of the very first rules of entrepreneurship is to find your audience. The success of the business will depend on entrepreneur's ability to find a circle of consumers interested in the product.

The very similar strategy can and should be applied by actors marketing themselves in the entertainment business. It's an acting business after all. Actors are products and our audience are the consumers. Only with smart marketing choices can you build a solid following, fast.

For decades, actors have been fighting typecasting, and rightfully so: nobody wants to do the same thing for the rest of their lives. That's one of the reasons many of you decide to become actors: it's the variety of jobs and things you get to do on a regular basis.

However, it's one thing to go against typecasting when you're an established name within the industry, and a whole different story when you're trying to get your feet wet in this huge showbiz pool. When you're just starting out as an actor, in fact you DO want to get typecasted and be known for certain things in the film industry.



## WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR ACTOR TYPE:

- ◆ *You can market yourself more effectively, because you know who's going to be interested;*
- ◆ *You will know how to shoot and sell your headshots;*
- ◆ *You can present yourself more accurately during online submissions;*
- ◆ *You will know exactly what parts to go for and raise your chance of booking them;*
- ◆ *You will not waste your and others' time by auditioning for something you aren't fit for.*

### ◆ *How to Know Your Type*

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OKnowing your brand as an actor in the beginning of your acting career will not only get you cast more often, but it will also help you in fighting typecasting later in your career (something that almost every working actor has to go through).

## SO HOW DO YOU FIGURE OUT YOUR OWN TYPE AS AN ACTOR?

### 1. Start with your looks

*Understand how to look at your physical appearance objectively and learn everything about yourself; be aware of it. Can you honestly pull off a leading man's or leading woman's role, or would you suit better a part of his/her geeky friend?*

*Judging from the side, do you see yourself a lot in comedy skits or in serious drama? I know you can do both, but for now, you need to pick. Think about any minor detail and what makes you stand out, what makes you that type of a character.*

## 2. What's your acting age range?

*This should probably go with figuring out your looks and exterior, but I just want to stress how important this part is. In this industry obsessed with looks and age, knowing what you appear like is vital.*

*First of all, remember that you are as old as you look. If you're 30, but you can pull off a teenager – good for you! In the acting business, that is how old you are; it's not about your legal age. So learn how old you look and go for parts that are asking for that particular playing age.*

## 3. Your personal traits

*That's your character, charisma, personality, emotions, individuality, temper and anything else that makes you, you. As we have previously talked in Tips for a Successful Audition, it is very important for actors to be themselves and bring their own personality.*

**Learn what kind of a person are you:**

- ◆ *Are you funny and witty?*
- ◆ *Are you quirky and awkward?*
- ◆ *Are you very serious and straight?*
- ◆ *Are you shy, silent, neurotic, energetic?*

The list goes on and on. Write your own and start working at it.

These three aspects mentioned above are major factors in determining your actor type. That's what the industry cares most about. But figuring out the answers to those questions is a thousand dollar question; it's not easy for most of us.

One of the common tips I've heard repeated a few times before was going to the airport to start asking people who they think you are or how old do they think you are. It's an interesting advice, and it can definitely work. Unfortunately, not everybody is going to be comfortable with this approach; plus, this makes it very easy to come in contact with security on location.

It's always easier to start figuring your actor type in the beginning of your career, when you're still fresh. Here are a few more ways to do that.

### **Improv**

Improvisation classes will teach you how to be in the moment and play off of what you have, and it always results in a lot of attention to your looks and personality. You'll quickly start noticing patterns.

### **Workshops**

Acting workshops is another option: playing a vast amount of characters in a short period of time means finding something that you'll be perfect for. The best acting classes for this sort of thing would be any with camera in the room: audition classes, commercial classes or scene study classes where a camera is utilized.

Camera never lies, and your acting coach will usually cast you in a part that fits your type. On top of that, some acting teachers start off their new students by introducing them to the class and then asking the group – before anybody got a chance to meet you properly – on what they think your actor type is and what parts you can play. That's very useful.

### Finally, just ask

Inquire your friends, relatives and fellow thespians and see what they say. Make a list of questions and go ask anybody you know, including your co-workers, class mates and even acting teachers. Most of these people, however, might be biased, so be aware of that. Try going to various gatherings and parties and talking to strangers you've never met. Ask them the same kind of questions. Request objectivity and accept whatever you get with a smile.

Also, get into a habit of asking this question regularly, particularly when you meet new people. It's not a big deal, since the question can be quick and simple: "By the way, what parts do you see me playing?" or "How old do you think I am?"

One thing to remember is that whatever answer you get from people around you, and even your own assessment from when you're in your most "honest" mood, might not be the answer you were looking for. Be aware that what you want isn't always what you get. Your actor type could be the complete opposite of what you really are in person, or what you have initially expected it to be. Get enough answers to draw a more concrete conclusion, and embrace your type – whatever it is.

# **8. ADDITIONAL TIPS AND ADVICE**

**impossible**



## Don't let the fear control you.

If you go into an audition thinking *“well, what's the point, I'm not going to get the role”* then of course you're not going to get it. Sure, going into an audition not expecting anything, but still giving it your best shot, is a good idea because you don't psych yourself out too much.

Going into an audition fearing the worst, and letting it affect your whole audition, however, is not good at all. It's okay to be scared - as there's probably a lot riding on what this role could get you - but don't pull out of the race before the buzzer signals for you to go.

### ◆ *Rejection*

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*“You didn't get the part”* - probably the worst sentence in the world to an actor. That doesn't mean that you're not good enough, it just means you're not the one for that specific role. Do not ever let one rejection, or even multiple for that matter, ever sway the way you feel about acting. If you love it, then you are meant to do it, no matter what anyone else says. Don't let it bring you down, let it lift you up and make you reach for the next opportunity.

### ◆ *Keep Pushing*

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You think it's hard to find auditions? **It is.** You think it's even harder to land a role? **You're right.** Should that determine whether you continue acting? **No way.** You knew it would be a hard profession, so you're not allowed to give up on it - especially after all the time and effort you've put into training. Keep going, no matter how hard it is, no matter how much you want to give up and go work for your grandparents - just keep on going.

## ◆ *Stay Grounded and Humble*

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The worst thing an actor can be is arrogant, especially towards aspiring actors. If you make it in the acting industry, you should remember the struggle you had to go through to get there, and let that make you humble and grateful.

Don't ever let your head – or ego – get bigger than the amount of money you spent getting to London. People, producing films, or plays do not want to employ actors who think they're better than anyone else working on the same production, so don't let yourself become that as you will find yourself booking less and less roles.

## 8.1 Alternatives to London

First of all, the rumors are true: the big three cities – London, Los Angeles and New York City - has the largest chunk of opportunities for aspiring actors. Here's how they are broken down:

- ◆ **Los Angeles** – *most film and TV jobs in the world*
- ◆ **New York City** – *capital of stage plays*
- ◆ **London** – *UK's center for film, TV and stage plays*

However, that doesn't mean that all the projects are done there, and there are many locations with tons of casting done, filming productions and stage plays performed. So if you are an aspiring actor who is just taking off the ground and you cannot yet move to London, it's possible that the pool of opportunities in your location hasn't dried out yet.

## ◆ *Smaller Markets*

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Actors living in smaller town markets should take advantage of that. You can get more experience, more training and knowledge. Saving money is also easier in a smaller town than it is in an expensive city like London, Los Angeles or New York City.

Not only are those three cities extremely expensive, but the pressure that newcomers receive during the first year of staying there can sometimes make them jump in a car and drive back to where they came from without looking over their shoulder even once.

To put it simply, if you're from one of the major cities, then good for you. But if you're from a smaller market, don't stress and use everything that is currently available to you. Do not rush, do not panic, do not think that you're losing on opportunities.

The upside of taking first acting career steps in a smaller town is that there's less competition. Acting is a marathon, not a sprint, therefore building your momentum is what matters the most if you want to sustain your career long-term. Once you've taken the advantage of everything your location has to offer, then it may be time to start thinking about the move.

You can either take your chances or move to one of the big three cities, or take a safer bet and see what other great acting cities have on offer for you. Either choice has its pros and cons, so it's all up to you.

I will leave the big three acting cities out of this and focus on smaller markets within the United States, United Kingdom and Ireland (for now).



## ◆ *Manchester*

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Since BBC's headquarters moved there a few years ago, Manchester has been having some quality television work opportunities. Aside from that, Manchester is a top place for North England's productions and a lot of casting for films, TV shows and reality TV are taking place there.

This huge city also has a great theatre scene for aspiring stage actors as well as some good acting and dialect coaches, and acting schools. There is an occasional job in Liverpool which isn't that far from Manchester either.

- ◆ **Manchester Palace Theatre**
- ◆ **Manchester Library Theatre**

## ◆ *Glasgow*

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Scotland's biggest city can provide some television work opportunities for local actors. Small independent film productions are often casting and filming in Glasgow which is another good news if you're currently staying there.

Some good acting coaches are still teaching in Glasgow, and theatre supplies steady work not only to veterans but to fresh faces, too.

- ◆ **Pavilion Theatre**
- ◆ **Theatre Royal Glasgow**

## ◆ *Edinburgh*

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While not big on screen work, Edinburgh has an amazing comedy scene. Their theatres also attract a lot of outside visitors which means productions are being staged often and require actors.

Most importantly, once a year the city of Edinburgh stages The Fringe Festival, which is one of the best opportunities for good and serious actors to show off their skills and break into the industry.

- ◆ **The Fringe**
- ◆ **Traverse Theatre**

## ◆ *Birmingham*

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Another England's Northern city and while not as big on opportunities as Manchester, Birmingham does have some solid training and good theatres.

Actors there can occasionally find television work, plenty of student films and due to its popularity as a big UK city, filming productions take their work there on a regular basis. Whether the actors are being cast in the city of Birmingham or not depends on the production.

- ◆ **New Alexandra Theatre**
- ◆ **Birmingham Repertory Theatre**

## ◆ *Dublin*

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We have many great and known actors from Ireland that continue working in the US. Most of them have started acting in Dublin, so if you're from Republic of Ireland, then its capital is definitely best location for an acting career.

It has a little bit of everything: films, TV and theatre. Filming is done in and around the town, and casting is usually done in Dublin itself.

- ◆ **Gaiety Theatre**
- ◆ **Abbey Theatre**

## ◆ *Chicago*

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A magical theatre city that is second best on staged productions in US, right after New York City. If you're currently based over there or anywhere around, consider yourself lucky as this could easily be one of the best locations for an acting career in the US, and in the world.

If you're passionate about theater work, don't rush into moving to NYC — chances are that you might end up staying in Chicago for the rest of your life without ever running out of work. In addition to that, plenty of filming is also being done there.

- ◆ **Chicago Theater**
- ◆ **Broadway in Chicago**

## ◆ *San Francisco*

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One of the greatest America's cities will not disappoint actors in the amount of opportunities it offers. Complete in both stage and film work, San Francisco also provides great acting coaches, acting classes and has a drama school listed on our top 20 best acting schools in the world.

San Francisco could easily be the third best place to be working for a US stage actor due to the amount of theatres it has, artistic people living there and a constant demand for new productions. The city, however, could be a very expensive place to live.

- ◆ **Golden Gate Theater**

- ◆ **Castro Theater**

## ◆ *Seattle*

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While not as big as any of the major cities or the ones above, Seattle will surprise any visitor by the vast amount of theatres they have.

Stage actors will always have a place to find work in Seattle. The only issue for people moving there might be the rain – it never stops.

- ◆ **ACT Theater**

- ◆ **Seattle Repertory Theatre**

## ◆ *South Florida*

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The cities that are in the vicinity of South Florida easily offer over 30 different theatres, which means plenty of work for stage actors. Half of these include union theaters.

Some filming and television work is done on occasion, however, whether the casting is done in South Florida or in one of the Big Three depends on the production. There is also a lot of commercial work concentrated in Miami, both filming and casting.

- ◆ **Coconut Grove Playhouse**
- ◆ **Actors Playhouse**

## ◆ *Atlanta*

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The state of Georgia, and specifically Atlanta, have been receiving a huge amount of television work lately. Most of the casting of pilots is still being done in Los Angeles, but since the cost of filming in Atlanta is significantly lower, some productions are moving their casting offices over there and will soon start casting from Atlanta.

There are rumors spreading around that a few years from now, Atlanta might become the next Hollywood, so if you're anywhere near, consider it to be the best location for an acting career in your case.

- ◆ **Alliance Theater Company**
- ◆ **National Black Arts Festival**

## ◆ *Twin Cities*

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Both Minneapolis and St. Paul have a good amount of theatre work as well as acting training. The center of Minnesota also has a few decent acting coaches, and they often organize various events for actors and those in love with the artistic scene.

If you're from the Twin Cities, don't be in a hurry to move – take the time to explore the opportunities over there.

- ◆ **Twin Cities Actor Expo**

- ◆ **Castro Theater**

To conclude once again, your first priority may be to have some achievement in your own country/city before moving to London or any other big acting city. Get a name in a small market first before checking into one of the major places, but definitely do move eventually.

# CONCLUSION

DREAM BIG

SET GOALS

TAKE ACTION

If you've read this entire book and then realized that acting profession is actually not for you, then that's okay - at least you've gained some great insight into how it all works. But if you've read it and felt inflated with knowledge and now find yourself excited to begin your journey or continue it, then you've definitely chosen the right profession for your future.

As mentioned about a hundred times in this book, acting is hard. Acting, however, is also satisfying, liberating and a totally wonderful life journey that will completely change your perspective on human nature and how we view the world. Before you know it, you'll be feeling an overwhelming sense of pride for the craft of acting.

To any and all aspiring actors reading this book and dreaming of moving to London or any other major acting place to pursue dream careers, my advice is to just do it. No, this is not a Nike ad, this is a small piece of advice from one aspiring actor to another - **take that step and get yourself out there, or you will forever regret not doing it.** There's no other way to know. And if not now, when?

*Thank you for reading this book, and break legs!*  
*Dean Cassady, Paul Valentino, Tom London and Acting in London team*

Find more free advice on  
**ActingInLondon.co.uk** (LONDON)  
and  
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\* Let us know what you thought of the book, what we've missed, what parts you thought weren't extensive enough and what else should we include in the upcoming new edition.

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