

Gregory Harrell: Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music

7 C's of Auditioning

Everyone gets nervous in auditions. Some of us show it, and some of us know how to cover it up. When you walk into a room, your body language can say, "I'm really sorry for the audition you are about to see," or it can say, "This is going to be fun!" Some of the best actors can crumble in the audition room, and an actor with very little skill but lots of confidence can come in and book the job. It's important to learn how to master the beast that is auditioning, and understand what makes an audition stand out.

Here are seven things that are essential to every good audition. If you keep these in mind, you will be grounded in the scene, focused, your nerves will dissolve, and you will stand out from the pack.

Confidence

If you don't believe in yourself, nobody else will. The audition starts the moment you walk into the room, so find a way to be relaxed, and project unshakeable confidence. If you don't have it, fake it. This is all about body language and eye contact, so walk into the room with your head up, shoulders back, with total focus and relaxation. It's the kind of confidence that makes people trust you, and allows them to feel they can put you on set or on stage tomorrow and you will be fine and not waste their time. You are prepared, know your job in the scene, your lines, and believe in the circumstances. Even if you are freaking out inside, you have to "act" like a confident person. (You are an actor, right?)

Character

Don't worry about what *they* are looking for. It's your job to show them your unique interpretation of who this character is. Your character has a point of view in the scene. What is it? Think of three adjectives to describe this person and write these at the top of the script (annoyed, frustrated, in love, etc.). If there is a chair in the room, how do they sit in this chair? What is the character's body language? How do they speak? The clearer you are on the character, the more your nerves dissolve, and you can disappear into this person's world.

Conflict

At the heart of every good scene is conflict, even if it's from within. What is at stake in the scene? What are the characters fighting for? What are the circumstances around this scene? Find out what that is, and put that nervous energy into how your character deals with it. If you are very clear on your conflict and objective, it will dictate the rhythm, inflection, and tone of each line, and avoid the trap of playing the "result."

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Concentration

Take a breath before you begin the scene. Quiet your mind and concentrate on the moment before. This involves total emotional and physical commitment, to the character, to the words, the thoughts, and being totally prepared. It's not enough to just know the lines, you have to *live* them, and understand what's *behind* the lines. If you are worried about what people are thinking, or your next line, then you are not fully in the scene. Find a way to disappear into this world and make the reader the most important person in the room, so there isn't even room for you to be thinking about anything else. You have to be true to the emotions, and personalize them, so that your eyes, voice, and body are reflecting those feelings.

Connection

Eye contact. Look at the reader. Who is that person? How do you feel about them? What is that relationship like? It's important to listen in a very active way, as if you are hearing the words for the first time. It should feel like a real, improvised conversation, not a scene for an acting class. You have to absorb the lines and respond from moment to moment. It starts with the thought that triggers your first line, how you feel at the top of the scene, and where your character is coming from emotionally before he or she even starts speaking. It allows you to jump right into the scene with a strong connection. It should feel like you are the only two people in the room, and that we are witnessing a private conversation.

Clarity

Be clear with your choices. There is always more than one way to say a line. Pick one. This doesn't mean make bold, crazy, irrational choices, it just means make a decision with each line based on what your character wants. Don't be safe, and don't just glide over the important moments. Do the work at home, but then be open to direction and flexible on the room, in case you are given an adjustment.

Charisma

This is what makes good auditions stand out. It's your essence, your personality, your authentic self. It's what you have that nobody else can offer, even when everyone is reading the same exact script. It's the magic that you bring to the lines that make them interesting, unique, and different, with your own spin on it. It's that fire in your eyes, alive and energetic, the thought "behind the eyes"—the art of getting people to want to watch you.

Good luck!