

Lights! Camera! Audition!

Getting your best self into a video file

BY HARPER LEE AND KEVIN GEORGE

AN AUDITION VIDEO can allow you to apply to a variety of schools without going broke traveling to each of them. A well-made video will communicate that you are talented and college-ready as well as professional, organized, and tech savvy. And you don't need thousands of dollars of equipment or years of experience editing footage to make a good impression. Here you'll find some helpful tips and suggestions for filming your college audition using just a smartphone or two (iPhone, Samsung Galaxy), a friend, basic software, and inexpensive or free apps.

Pre-production

Before you begin, familiarize yourself with the video audition requirements of the school or schools you are submitting to. Each school has its own set of guidelines. Make sure you adhere to them.

Getting the shot

No vertical video! All HD video is shot in 16:9. Cell phones also shoot in this aspect ratio. Flip your smartphone so that you're shooting horizontally. It looks more professional and polished.

Set your phone on a tripod. Don't have one? No problem! You can make one out of five large binder clips.

When you're positioning the camera, do not point it toward a window or other light source. Schools want to see your face, movement, expression—not a silhouette. Light should be on you and not on your camera lens.

JIM TALKINGTON



Recording an audition video with a smartphone mounted on the Kevin George Industries Bind-o-Pod (patent pending).

Be aware of your space. Is grandma's bright orange couch circa 1974 really the right backdrop for your Lady Macbeth monologue? Avoid visually loud, cluttered, and unappealing spaces. You're the star. Not the wallpaper.

Audio

When you've found a space that's suitable, take two minutes and just listen to it. What do you hear: the washing machine upstairs? Does the HVAC system kick on every half hour? Is your little brother watching cartoons in the next room? There's nothing more frustrating than being right in the middle of a great scene and having it ruined by ambient noise. You can't completely soundproof the room you're working in, but you can minimize extra noise. Turn down the volume on Bugs Bunny, ask your family to hold off on the laundry and not fiddle with the AC while you're shooting.

Consider recording audio separately on a second phone. Ask a friend to help you. For the best possible sound, have your friend hold

the second phone just outside the camera frame as you perform. Slate your recording so you can match the two in editing. A handclap works best.

Take 2, 3, 4, ?

Consider doing multiple takes. In one, concentrate on getting the best possible video and in another, focus on getting the best possible audio.

Also consider getting a variety of shots. Wide shots show your entire body whereas tighter shots display something you want the viewer to focus on—your face, your tapping feet, your eyes, etc. Note: Remember to closely adhere to the video audition guidelines of each school. Some schools might only want to see one shot instead of multiples.

The cutting room floor

Don't over-edit. You're not making a full-length feature film with car chases and a green screen. You're making a short, simple audition video meant to feature you and your theatre skills. Don't add cheesy sound effects or unnecessary explosions.

And remember...

Look like yourself. Keep your hair and make-up natural and your outfit tidy and neutral. Black is a good choice for clothing unless you're standing in front of a black background.

Use PowerPoint to create a slide that includes your name, contact information, and what you're applying for. Drop the slide into the editing timeline at the beginning and at the end of your video.

There's an app for that

Take advantage of the wealth of inexpensive or free, user-friendly tools out there designed to help you create polished video.

Editing software:

- iMovie for Mac and Windows

Movie Maker: iMovie comes pre-loaded on most Macs in the iLife suite. Movie Maker is preloaded on many PC's. Both are easy and intuitive editing platforms for the novice film editor.

• Avidemux: This open source software does simple editing and

takes up very little space on a hard drive.

- YouTube editor: Also open source, this software can make basic edits to just the opening and closing of a video. It does not have to be downloaded.

Audio apps:

- Voice Memos: This built-in iPhone app optimizes the phone's built-in mic and gets cleaner audio. But users have very little control over a finished recording.

- Audio Memos: You can get this iPhone app for \$1 in the app store. The normalizing feature allows you to

capture audio at a constant, average volume and can be toggled on and off without changing the original file. You can also add compression to prevent clipping or distortion.

- Voice Recorder: This built-in app for Android is similar to Apple's Voice Memos. It is a free, stripped-down app that captures cleaner sound than the built-in mic circuit.

- Smart Voice Recorder: Free in the Google Play store, this app allows more advanced users to calibrate and test their mic and to skip or remove unwanted silences in an audio clip. ▼