

Important Theater Terminology

The Audition

- **Slate:** a pre-prepared statement that an actor gives to the directors table before their audition. In it, they state their name and the pieces they will perform. Ex: "Hello, my name is Nicholas Smith, and I will be performing a monologue from *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, and I will be singing 'Kiss the Girl'".
- **Cold read:** an audition scenario in which the actors perform scenes which they have not had time to prepare.
- **Warm read:** an audition scenario in which the actors perform scenes which they HAVE had time to prepare.
- **Dance call:** the dance/choreography portion of the audition.
- **Callbacks:** the second part of an audition in which some performers are "called back" to the theater to perform additional scenes, songs, or dances before casting is completed.
- **Monologue:** a speech given by a single actor, usually at an audition.
- **"Moment Before":** an acting term to describe the feelings or thoughts a character has before they begin to speak/sing.
- **Vocal Cut (16 v. 32 bars):** a shortened part of a song that an actor brings to an audition. A 16-bar cut generally takes about 30 seconds, while a 32-bar cut lasts about a minute.
- **Sides:** scenes taken from the script that actors read during callbacks.
- **Resume:** a summary of the actor's training and past experience.
- **Headshot:** a current 8x10 inch picture of the actor.

The Stage and Blocking

If you're having trouble visualizing any of these terms, see [here](#) for a diagram of the stage.

- **Upstage:** the part of the stage farthest from the audience.
- **Downstage:** the part of the stage closest to the audience.
- **Stage Left:** from the actor's perspective, the left side of the stage.
- **Stage Right:** from the actor's perspective, the right side of the stage.
- **Upstaging:** literally, to stand behind another actor during a scene, forcing them to turn upstage in order to speak to the other. It also may refer to an actor taking attention away from the main action of the scene.
- **Cross:** to move from one place on the stage to another.
- **Counter:** the act of moving in the opposite direction of someone crossing in front of you.
- **Wings:** the "offstage" portion of the stage. These traditionally exist on both stage left and stage right, and are where actors wait for their upcoming entrance.
- **Backstage:** an area which is further away from the stage than the wings, and which houses the dressing rooms.
- **Curtain:** the fabric that can be pulled closed downstage, thus hiding the set and/or action behind it.

- **Apron:** the downstage edge of the stage in front of the proscenium arch
- **Proscenium Arch:** a large arched structure on the stage that both frames the action of the scene and hides props and set pieces in the wings ([here](#) is a helpful image).

Acting on the Stage

- **The Fourth Wall:** an imaginary wall separating the world of the actors from the world of the audience. Thus, “breaking the fourth wall” refers to an actor or action which acknowledges that the performers and audience exist in the *same* world.
- **Motivation:** the thing a character wants to do. This can be what they want to achieve in a single moment, or over the course of the entire play.
- **Tactic:** the things a character does to get what they want. Can be physical or verbal.
- **Emotional Recall:** the process of trying to relate emotions the character is feeling to emotions you have felt in the past in order to better understand the character.
- **Active Listening:** when an actor focuses on what is being said to them in real time, and reacts accordingly.
- **Cue:** what happens right before an actor speaks or performs an action.
- **Impulse:** a sudden urge to do something. For the actor, this could be to move on the stage, say their line a certain way, perform an action, etc.
- **Given circumstances:** all the things happening in the character’s world, with an emphasis on things that can help drive the action.
- **Suspension of disbelief:** referring to when the audience disregards their rational thinking to some degree and chooses to believe that the action of the play is *actually* happening.

Music

- **Reading music:** the skill of reading sheet music, or written music on a page. A must-learn for aspiring musicians or musical actors!
- **Bar:** one measure of music.
- **Male Vocal Range:** the range spanning the lowest note and the highest note a male actor can sing. There are three common types of male voices (from low to high): bass, baritone, and tenor.
- **Female Vocal Range:** the range spanning the lowest note and the highest note a female actor can sing. There are three common types of female voices (from low to high): alto, mezzo-soprano, and soprano.
- **Orchestra/band:** the musicians that play for a specific show.
- **Musical Director (MD):** the person in charge of directing and teaching the show’s music to the actors.
- **Choreographer:** the person in charge of devising and teaching the show’s dances.
- **Melody:** the main vocal part of the song.
- **Harmony:** the secondary vocal parts of the song.
- **Accompaniment:** the music that underlies and supports the vocals of the song.

- **Libretto:** a musical book which contains all the songs in the show. It is generally a simplified version written for the actor.
- **Piano-Vocal Score:** another type of musical book, this one is a little more in-depth and contains the written accompaniment. Therefore, it is generally used by the musical director
- **Full Score:** the final type of musical book, and the most in-depth. This one contains ALL the different musical lines for every instrument in the band, and is thus mostly used by the show's conductor (may be the same person as the musical director).

In Performance

- **Call Time:** the time at which the actors must be at the theater before a performance.
- **Costume:** the clothes an actor wears in performance.
- **Make-Up:** foundation, highlights, etc. that actors apply to their faces before performing. Generally, all actors (male and female) are asked to wear make-up.
- **Leading role:** the main characters in a show. These generally have the most lines and singing parts.
- **Supporting role:** other speaking roles that do not have as much action and are not the primary focus of the story.
- **Ensemble:** the chorus of singers and dancers that supports the other members of the cast.
- **Microphone:** an audio device which amplifies the actor's voice. Generally, only leading roles, and some supporting roles and featured soloists are given microphones.
- **Mic Check:** the process before performance in which an actor sings into their microphone to ensure that it is working properly.
- **Vocal Warm-Up:** the vocal exercises actors do before performing to prepare to sing.
- **Fight Call:** a practice run of the fight choreography (if there is any) done prior to performance. This is intended to maximize actor safety.
- **House Open:** the time at which the audience doors open and allow patrons to enter. At this time, actors are usually asked to gather backstage and to leave the stage bare.
- **Curtain:** in this case, the time at which the performance begins.