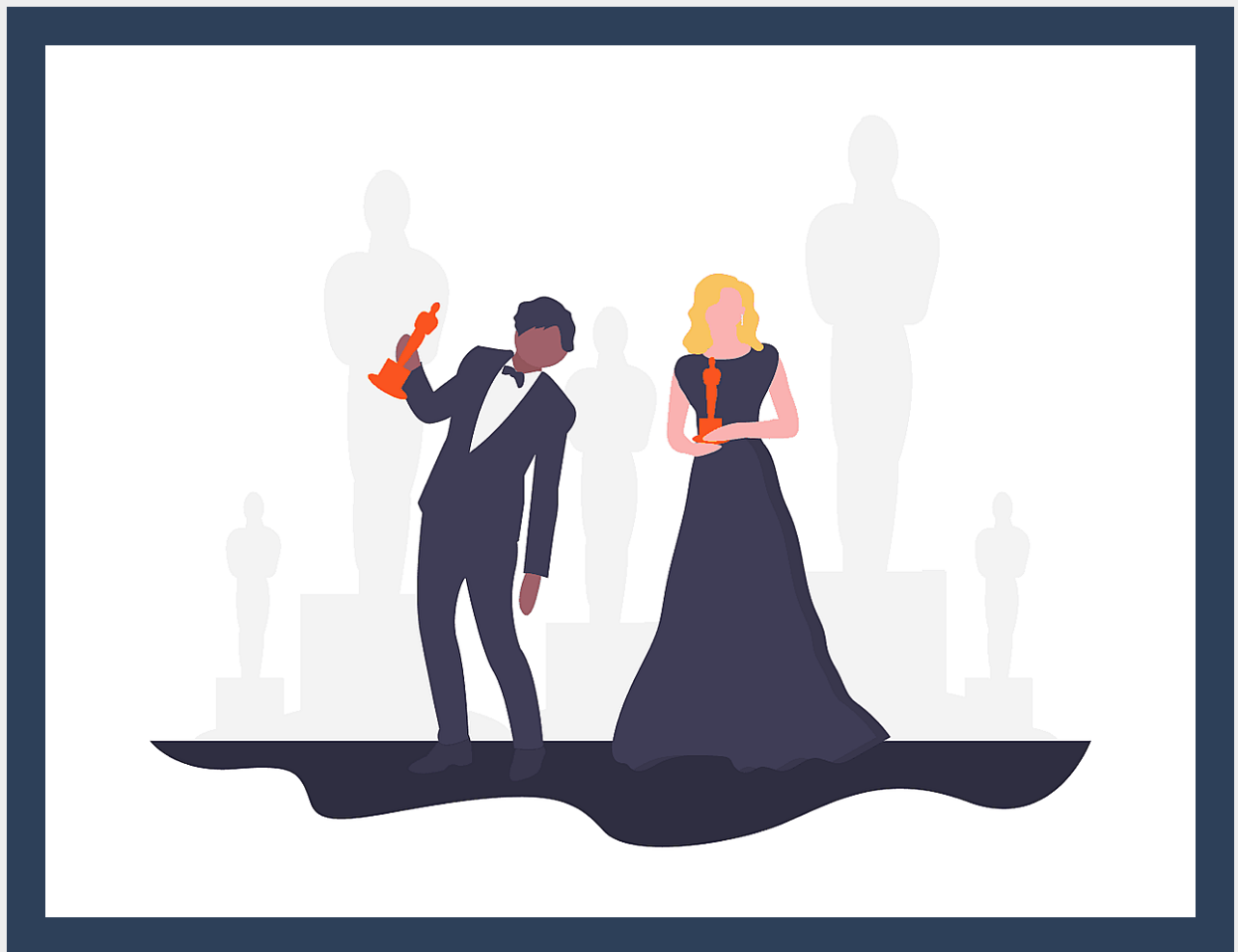


# Working.Actor

## Everything You Need to Launch Your Acting Career



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"Vision without action is  
just a dream, action  
without vision just  
passes the time, and  
vision with action can  
change the world."

**Joel A. Barker**

# Introduction

Congratulations! You are on your way to putting yourself into the top 10% of all professional actors. Seriously.

Most actors flail around for years, sometimes decades without taking the specific steps outlined in this book.

## The Goodies

We spent months creating the ultimate guide to everything you need to build the foundation for your acting career.

### **You're on your way to:**

- ✓ Establishing a winning mindset
- ✓ Setting career goals that will guide and support you
- ✓ Solidifying your type
- ✓ Taking epic headshots
- ✓ Having an *incredible* demo reel
- ✓ Crafting a professional social media presence
- ✓ Building your actor website
- ✓ So. Much. More...

There's a lot here. So just take it one step at a time.

We know what it feels like to have a passion for acting, but not know where to start or what steps to actually take.

We wrote the guide we wish we would have had over ten years ago.

So stress no more. We gotchu boo.

Your partners in success,

Ben & Gedaly

# About the Authors

## Ben Whitehair

- ✓ Working actor: multiple guest star and recurring TV credits, star of feature films, worked with multiple Oscar-winners ([IMDb](#))
- ✓ Professional business/mindset coach
- ✓ Chief Operating Officer of entertainment's premier social media management company
- ✓ Executive Vice President of SAG-AFTRA
- ✓ Co-Founder LA Actors Tweetup
- ✓ Co-created and taught graduate class at UCLA on social media and the business of showbiz
- ✓ Champion sheep and dairy cow showman #TrueStory



## Gedaly Guberek

- ✓ Actor, director, and screenwriter
- ✓ Content producer for major brands
- ✓ Certified mindset coach
- ✓ Digital marketing strategist for startups & multi-million dollar companies
- ✓ Founding member & former communications director of Coeurage Theatre Company
- ✓ Launched a New York Times best seller (didn't write it)
- ✓ Ran multiple successful crowdfunding campaigns
- ✓ [Sings opera while juggling](#)

"Goals on the road to  
achievement cannot be  
achieved without  
discipline and  
consistency."

**Denzel Washington**

# Fundamentals



Every kung fu master practices stances.

Every golf champion is consistently honing her swing.

The master of every craft is always working on the fundamentals.  
Acting is no exception.

In order to have a successful career, you must lay a strong  
foundation to build upon.

Imagine being dropped off in the wilderness with no map and no  
compass. That's what it's like to begin an acting career without  
direction or tools.

You might spend lots of time hiking through the wilderness, but  
you could be going in circles or headed in the wrong direction.

Mastering your mindset and choosing a direction for your career  
are critical steps to take before you ever set foot in a casting  
office.

Beyond that, a healthy mindset will be THE key to allowing you to  
stick with this career path long enough to achieve the results you  
desire.

Read the Mindset section, and revisit it often. It will likely take  
time to integrate these into your life.

Then set some Career Goals! Create clarity for yourself so that  
your journey actually takes you in the direction you want to go.

# Mindset

The truth is, you can have all the knowledge and hustle all day long, but if you don't have your mindset right and aren't living by your values, you're unlikely to succeed. And even if you do succeed without a healthy mindset, you'll be miserable. We don't want that.

In fact, we're both certified transformational leadership facilitators. Seriously. We've each spent *thousands* of hours coaching and supporting people into living their best lives and being their best selves.



From all that work, here are our *Principles of Success*.

## **Your Dreams are Possible, and You Have Everything it Takes**

We know your dreams are possible. Know how? Because other people have done it.

There are thousands of people making a living as an actor, telling stories for a living, shifting the culture through their work.

That's proof that it's possible.

Furthermore, if you're breathing then you have everything it takes to make your dreams a reality. It may take longer than you expect, more effort than you'd hoped, or repeatedly reinventing yourself, but it is possible.

Be a good person. Work really hard. Repeat over time.

Your dreams are possible and we're here to help you turn them into reality.

## **Choose Joy. Follow Your Fucking Bliss.**

Look, life is **too fucking short** not to do what you love. If you didn't believe that you wouldn't be here.

So remember that. Especially on the days when it feels hard. When you're not where you think you "should" be. When you've been on 20 auditions in a row and haven't booked any of them.

Happiness really is a choice (science also indicates that gratitude and meditation make that choice easier...so do tacos). Choose it. Daily.

## **Take Care of Your Health: Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, and Physical**

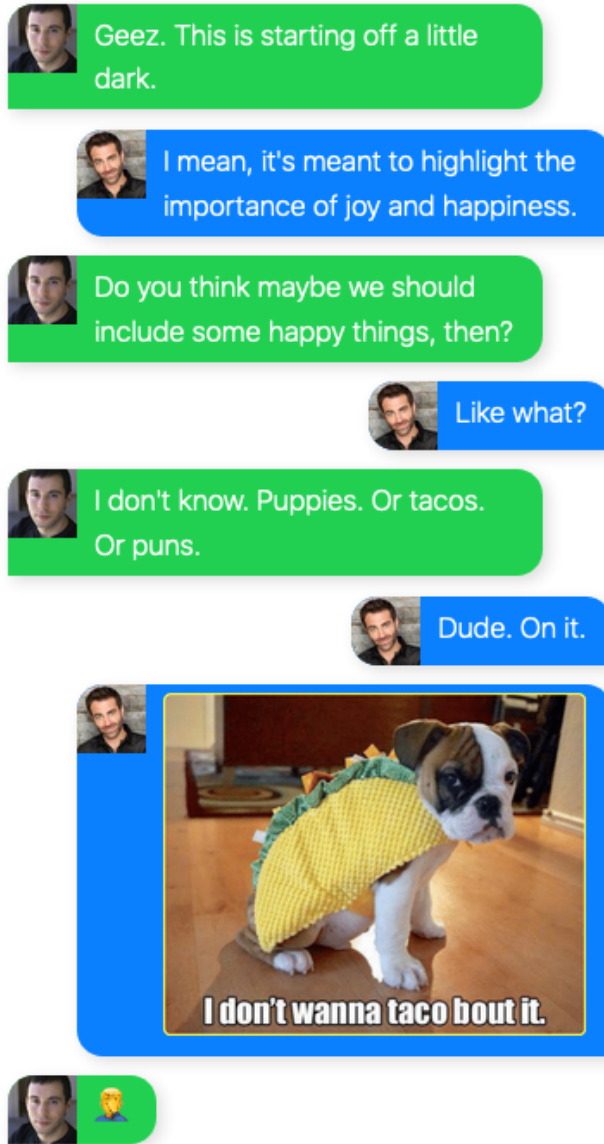
In an effort to make life longer, take care of yourself.

Nothing is worth sacrificing your health. And we never know when some random disease might take any one of us, so do everything you can do reduce the odds of that.

On that note, please get health insurance. The #1 reason Americans declare bankruptcy are because of medical emergencies.

No acting job, no imaginary day on set is worth long-term sickness or mental anguish.





## Be A Good Person (a.k.a. Don't be a Dick)

It's possible to be a horrible human being and still book work or make money. But why? Why follow that path? In our experience it's way less likely to work, and you'll have a lot less joy along the way.

Practice kindness.



# Always Add Value

It's so easy to get sucked into what we want, what we can get, or what others can give us.

Whether you believe in karma or not, even on a practical level who are the people in your life you're most likely to do a favor for? The friend who's always asking to bum \$5 and never helping when you need it? Or the friend who buys you a taco just because. Mmm. Tacos.

**☑ Pro Tip: Focusing on adding value takes all the yuckiness out of networking. Next time you go to a [networking event](#), practice on adding value to others, rather than needing to get anything.**

Be interested in the person standing in front of you. Not in what they could do for your career.

**Instead of thinking what you can get, focus on what you can GIVE.**

## All Boats Rise with the Tide

It's been our repeated experience that when the people around us succeed, so do we. Heck, it's the reason we launched this site together.

There's a reason you see the same directors and actors working together—and often they've been doing so for a long, long time.

They're good people. They support each other. They all succeed together.

## Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

All business, but especially acting, is based on relationships. Hell, relationship is the foundation of any good acting scene.

Stick around long enough, and that random gal from acting class ten years ago will be producing a movie you're perfect for. The DP from that student film? Now they're making their own TV series. Your friend from high school? Now an assistant at CAA.

We're not saying to make relationships to get something. (Seriously, did you even read the sections above?) We're saying that relationships matter, and it's very much worth your time, energy, and money to develop good ones.

## "If It's to be, It's Up to Me." The Power of Personal Responsibility

Our lives transformed when we started to live each day as if we are 100% responsible for everything. (Note: this is very different from things being your *fault*...especially tragic, horrible things that many of you have experienced.)

What we've discovered is that choosing to believe that we are the authors of our life is the most powerful come-from. It's also just a happier way to live. Blaming other people or circumstances is exhausting and depressing.

Remember, no one forced you to choose this life. The Universe doesn't owe you anything for choosing to be an actor. It's a gift! Embrace it.

No one—no agent, no manager, no significant other—is going to take your career more seriously than you. So grab the bull by the horns and take charge of your own destiny.

The days of sitting by the phone with a headshot and resume waiting for your agent to call are no more.

# It's Called Show Business—Not Show Art—for a Reason

If you create. If you connect. If you express—you're an artist. No one can ever take that away from you.

However, if you want to get paid for that, then you're now also a business person.

We hate to break it to you, but your college probably failed you. If you want to make a *living* as an actor, then it's a business and you must embrace that.

You are now a CEO of your acting business! How exciting.

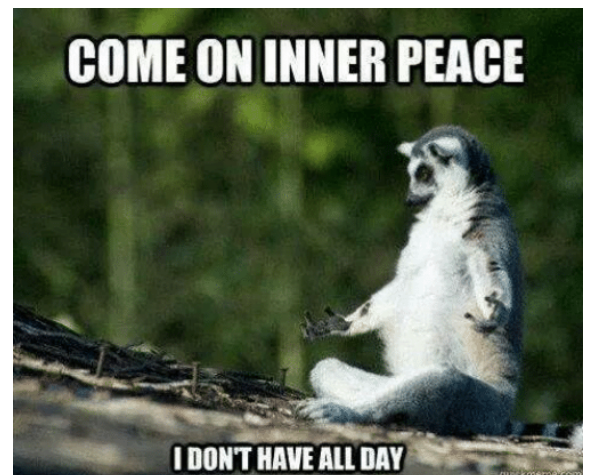
The people who are going to hire you definitely think of this as a business. Did you know that the average episode of a high-end cable or streaming drama television show is \$5 million - \$7 million an hour? Even a half-hour single-camera cable show costs \$1.5 million to more than \$3 million ([source](#)).

That's a lot of money! And it's just one episode.

Our goal is to help you embrace the business side of show biz, and find ways to remain creative and excited throughout.

## Long-Term Patience, Short-Term Hustle

Turns out the brain overestimates what's possible in a short period of time (*I can totally get these 14 things done before dinner*), but underestimates what can be accomplished over a long-period of time.



It's imperative to keep the big picture in mind. It may take decades to create the kind of career you dreamed of as a kid, so step back to appreciate and plan for a multi-decades career.

At the same time, effort pays off. Take small actions every day. The more intelligent effort you put in, the more rewards you will reap.

It's perhaps easier said than done, but embrace the idea that it may be decades before you accomplish your ultimate goals—but it could also happen tomorrow. Be comfortable with the possibility that you may not book a Series Regular until you're 70... but it could also happen tomorrow.

# There's No Such Thing as Your "Big Break"

Unfortunately, the myth of a "big break" is perpetuated in the media. But the vast majority of working actors got there the same way other successful people created their careers—effort over time.

The thing is, even if you book some big role, that won't lead to a *sustainable* career without even more hard work.

Los Angeles is full of people who had a "big break" that never turned into anything else. So keep that in mind when you do book your first Series Regular—that's the time to kick in the afterburners, not sit on your laurels.

## Enjoy the Journey

You see, all the [Goal Setting](#) you do really is great. But it's what your daily life looks like on the way to those goals that matters.

Here's the trap:

when you finally get what you want but it doesn't make you feel any better and just ruins your life more



**Actor:** Once I get to LA then I'll be happy.

*6 months later*

**Us:** Now you're in LA, congrats! You must be happy.

**Actor:** No, it's so hard. Once I get an agent then I'll be happy.

*6 months later*

**Us:** You got an agent! You must be so happy!

**Actor:** Nyah, I'm not booking. Once I book a co-star then I'll be happy.

*9 months later*

**Us:** omg, you just booked your first co-star. That's freaking amazing!

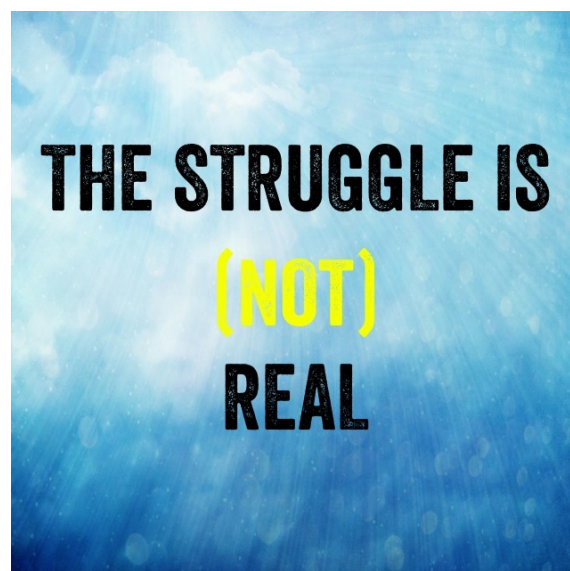
**Actor:** Yeah, I guess. But my friend just booked a guest star. Once I book a guest star then I'll be happy...

And it goes on and on! There's always more. That's part of the gift of this profession. So embrace the journey.

## There's No Extra Credit for the Struggle

Do yourself a favor. Never say you're a "starving artist" again. There are no bonus points if your daily life sucks while you're pursuing an acting career.

Do you really think Meryl Streep struggles every day? No? Well, then does that make her less of an artist?



This idea that you need to suffer for your art is totally bogus.

Life throws enough challenges your way without adding your own. You're allowed to thrive, making excellent money, and live a wonderful life and still be an incredible best artist.

## Comparison is the Thief of Joy

It's sooooo easy to compare ourselves to other people. A friend who just got an agent, someone in your acting class who booked a role you auditioned for, someone else on TV.

First of all, you have NO idea what that person's life is like. It could be miserable, you don't know.

**Pro Tip:** The next time one of your friends books something, instead of feeling jealous, remind yourself that their success is proof that it's possible

Second, we are generally comparing someone else's highlight reel to our behind-the-scenes. Someone's life on social media may appear extravagant, but they could be broke and going through a divorce.

Come back to your goals, your values, your commitments. Focus on your art. Keep going.

Everyone's journey has a different timeline, and when you look back on it there's a very good chance you'll be delighted yours played out the way it did.

☒ **Be sure to check out our [recommended books](#) section for some of our favorite books on mindset.**

# Career Goals

This section is designed to support you in establishing your vision and setting goals, so you can navigate Working.Actor in the best way for *your* career.

Use these goals as you make your way through the content, and if you want more info on goal setting or to hear how others have gone about this process head over to the [community!](#)



*Cat: Where are you going? Alice: Which way should I go? Cat: That depends on where you are going. Alice: I don't know. Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.*

**Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland**

## One Size Does Not Fit All

The world of acting and entertainment is a vast ocean of career options and paths. There is no one right way, no obvious path, and definitely not one approach that works for everyone.

Instead of trying to find the one true path, focus on the one that works for you. And while we're incredibly super super really extremely smart, we're not psychic. So you'll have to do some deep thinking here.

## What Do You Want?

There are over a million accountants in the US. And while the companies they work for may be vastly different, the general day-to-day tasks of an accountant are generally the same.

With acting, however, you can be doing any number of different activities with different requirements that require different skill sets. Thankfully, nearly none of them require use of a spreadsheet.

Acting can include being a spokesperson in commercials, looking like a normal person as a background actor, playing any number of types of people (or zombies) in TV shows, bringing ad copy to life in voiceover, creating movement for a video game character using performance capture, fantastical storytelling in a theatre, interviewing celebrities on a red carpet, or whatever it is that people do in porn.

There. Are. So. Many. Options.



## What Do You Want? (cont.)

Not only are there gazillions of options for WHAT to do, but HOW you do it has just as much variety.

Do you want to do it full time? Is it a hobby? Is it a part-time pursuit while you make the rest of your money as a screenwriter/baker/hypnotherapist/web designer?

There are more options than there are stars in the sky. And you don't need to be an accountant to know that's a really big number.

If you're overwhelmed right now, that's ok. If it were easy, more people would be doing it. Fortunately, lots of options also means lots of opportunities.



## Goals FTW

Why set a goal? You might be thinking, **"I just want to be a working actor."**

**Great, but...that goal is BS.** Also, it's not really a goal. Here's why...

If you earn \$1/year that's technically makes you a working actor.

Is your goal to earn any money whatsoever from acting? Or is your goal to earn enough money to pay all your bills? That's another story entirely.

First of all, how much money do you *actually* need to not have any other work (don't forget that agents take 10%, managers take 10-15%, [taxes matter](#), you might need a publicist, etc.)?

Now you have an income goal.

And what if you attained that income goal by doing industrial commercials and not film or television work? Would you still be happy?

Again, there is no right or wrong answer here. But it's imperative to identify what is actually important to *you*.

# Start with Vision

Lots of people may have a vague idea of where they'd like to be, their idyllic life. But there's no planning behind it. No plan or strategy. These people don't have a goal, my friends. They have a wish.

There is no genie in a bottle that will deliver these results. None that we know of, anyway. (Side note: If you *do* find a genie, PLEASE let us know. We have a few billion dollars worth of wishes that we'd like granted. And, uh, world peace.)

**In order to set effective goals, start by creating a vision for your life.**

## Begin by imagining where you'd like to be in 5-10 years.

Assume everything goes better than expected...

- What sorts of projects will you be working on?
- What will your work days look like?
- What will your days between gigs look like?
- What sort of relationships are you creating?
- Who are you working with?
- Where do you live?
- Do you travel?
- Are you working hard or hardly working?

As those questions suggest, your vision can be less tangible than your goals. It's the big picture, the kinds of things you'd put on your vision board.

## Feelings Matter

Most importantly, how does your life FEEL? Do you experience excitement? Ease? What emotions do your life and career give you?

**The emotional aspects of your vision are what you should focus on.**

As an artist, this should come as good news.

Your path may twist and turn over time. The actions you take and the jobs you get can change over time. You might want to go into VO and find that Performance Capture becomes your main source of work. That's ok, it happens. So don't be attached to WHAT the career path is. Just focus on how the career path FEELS, and you will find the right path for you.



**☑ Spend 15 minutes journaling, doodling, or mind-mapping about 5-10 years in the future. Identify the feelings and emotional core of being successful.**

## Pick Your Goal

Now that you're connected to your vision, you'll want to work backward and set your short-term goals. Where are you committed to being 3 months from now?

Then, what are the tasks in the coming months, weeks, and days that are most likely to move you towards that 3-month goal?

## It's All About the Journey

Some of you reading this are feeling stoked to dive in. You love setting goals and are already a results-oriented person.

Others of you are reading this and dreading what's next. You don't want to limit yourself, or feel like "going with the flow" is much more your style.

Either way, we recommend getting connected to where you want to go, the life you want, and what's important to you.

These goals are meant to guide, support, and assist you as you move forward.

But ultimately, what matters is that you're enjoying the journey along the way. Every day won't always be rainbows and unicorns, but this career is effing magical, and if you're not experiencing that regularly it's time to shift. (Maybe one of your goals is to take yourself on an [artist date](#) at least once/week.)

Julia Cameron coined the phrase "Artist Date" which she describes as: "a once-weekly, festive, solo expedition to explore something that interests you. The Artist Date need not be overtly 'artistic' – think mischief more than mastery. Artist Dates fire up the imagination. They spark whimsy. They encourage play. Since art is about the play of ideas, they feed our creative work by replenishing our inner well of images and inspiration. When choosing an Artist Date, it is good to ask yourself, 'what sounds fun?' – and then allow yourself to try it."

The journey really is the destination.

We guarantee that no external result can bring you sustained happiness. Practice joy now, and it will be all the more amplified as you progress.

**☑ Spend 15 minutes journaling, doodling, or mind-mapping about 5-10 years in the future. Identify the feelings and emotional core of being successful.**

## How do I Actually DO All of This?

Working.Actor is designed to help you create the career (and life) of your dreams. It all starts with having the proper [Mindset](#). From there, each section has specific next steps to move you towards accomplishing your goals.

Our [community](#) is also a great place to discuss how to maximize your productivity.



## CHAPTER 2

# Branding

Branding. A dirty word to many actors.

Let's deconstruct and demystify what branding actually is and why it's important...

*REALLY* important.



# Branding: You Dirty Word, You

In short, branding is simply a tool to support you in more effectively spending your time and money to [book work](#). Understanding how "the industry" sees you allows you to hone your [marketing materials](#) and focus on your targets—which of the 450 shows on television you're going to focus on booking.

Even *if* you could play a role on all 450 shows (spoiler alert: you can't), it's impossible to effectively target each and every one of them.

## The #1 Branding Myth

When actors hear the word "branding" they often think of a specific job—like a nurse, soldier, or veterinary acupuncturist. Okay, maybe not that last one.

**Branding is about essence, not a job title.**

Your branding—how casting directors and producers see you—is much more about your energy, your essence, than it is the professions you might play.

Think about it this way—in a war movie with 20 different actors each playing soldiers, each soldier has their own unique branding. Their individual essence.

Their brand isn't "soldier," it's confident leader, bumbling idiot, strong woman in a man's world, whatever.

And, if you pay close attention, you will notice that almost every actor tends to play characters with a similar essence—even in different genres or type of project.

## Comedy vs. Drama

Your essence can live in *many* worlds.

**It's a misconception that your type limits you to either comedy or drama.**

For example, let's say your essence—and how you generally get cast—is as a confident, intelligent, upscale, fast-talking, leader. That kind of character could be on MODERN FAMILY, GREY'S ANATOMY, *or* NCIS.

Understanding and communicating your essence helps you book *more* roles, not less.

And in the [Targeting](#) section, we'll cover how to use this information to target the specific roles in a project you're best for.

# Being "Typecast"

"But guys, I'm an *actor*. I can play anything! I once played a geriatric Russian mobster in college! I DON'T WANT TO BE TYPECAST!"

Okay, first of all. Stop yelling. It's going to be okay, we'll get through this together. Second, guess what: If you're getting typecast, **YOU'RE GETTING CAST!** (You're right. We shouldn't have yelled either. We're sorry.)

Wouldn't you rather be on set getting paid to act than sitting on your couch complaining that no one gets your brilliance?! (If not, check out the [Mindset](#) section.)

**The truth is, specific branding will actually help you book more, not limit you.**

It's a paradox, but the more specific your marketing materials are, the more jobs you can book.

Casting directors have a lot of actors to choose from. If you're 80% perfect for 5 different roles, you won't book it. If you're 100% right for one role, your chances are much greater.

## Why Branding Matters

Try this. Who do these breakdowns describe?

**[CHARACTER 1]** Male. Late 40's. A land baron who tries to reconnect with his two daughters after his wife is seriously injured in a boating accident.

**[CHARACTER 2]** Male. Middle-aged. Veteran astronaut helming his last flight before retirement with an engineer when disaster strikes and they are stranded in space. As fear turns to panic, they realize that the only way home may be to venture further into space.

**[CHARACTER 3]** Male. 40's. Ex-con who wants to score the biggest heist in history.

Could be *hundreds* of people, right? Now imagine **George Clooney** as each of those roles. A lot more specific, and now you have a *much* clearer picture of those movies.

It's the difference between pitching "*some dude* reconnects with his family, struggles in space, or leads a heist" and "*George Clooney* reconnects with his family, struggles in space, or leads a heist."

Similarly, imagine those roles are now played by **Christian Bale, Russell Crowe, Jon Hamm, or Idris Elba**. Changes how you think about the movie, doesn't it?

Our brains latch on to specifics, and it actually *broadens* how we can think about something.

## The key to marketing is specificity.

Understanding your branding (also known as self-awareness) will become the basis of specific, effective [Headshots](#) and [Demo Reels](#). Which, in turn, will serve as core ingredients in [booking work](#).

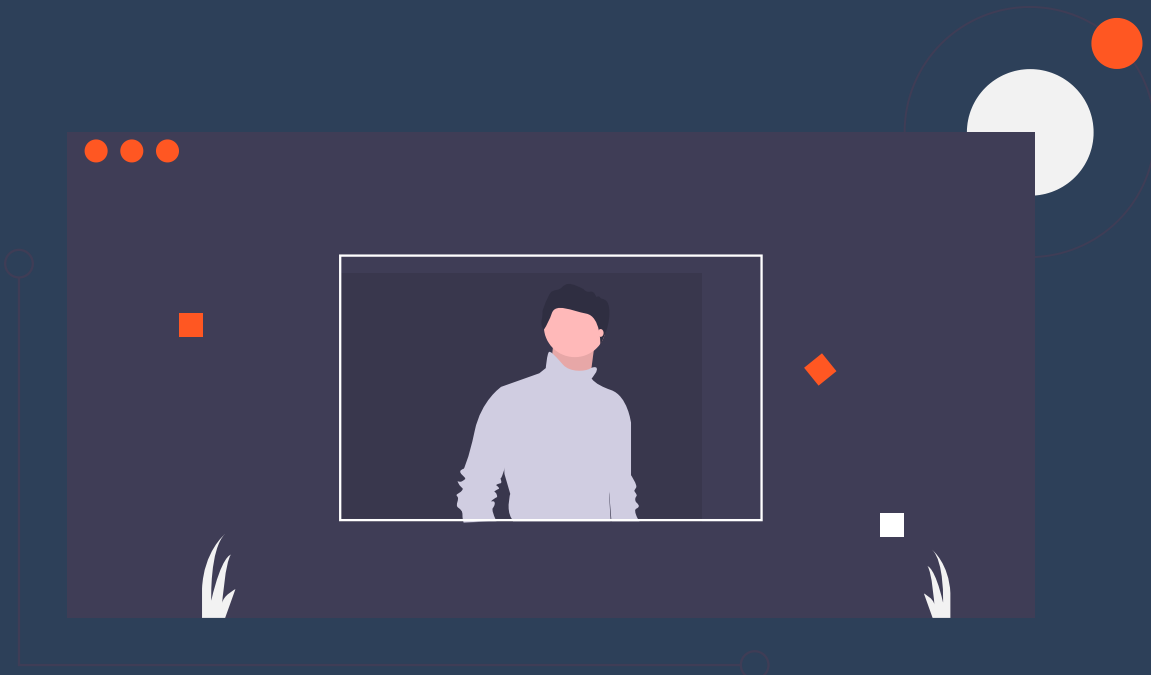
### **Okay, You Win. It Matters. What's Next?**

Next, let us help you [define your type](#). From there, you can choose what projects to [target](#) and begin researching who works on them so you can create relationships and ultimately [book work](#).



## CHAPTER 3

# Marketing Materials



These are the essential items we use to promote ourselves as actors, and so people can find and hire us.

They really are the foundation of the business side of showbiz.

Further, every casting director, producer, and director is going to judge—fairly or not—what level of actor you are based on how professional your materials are.

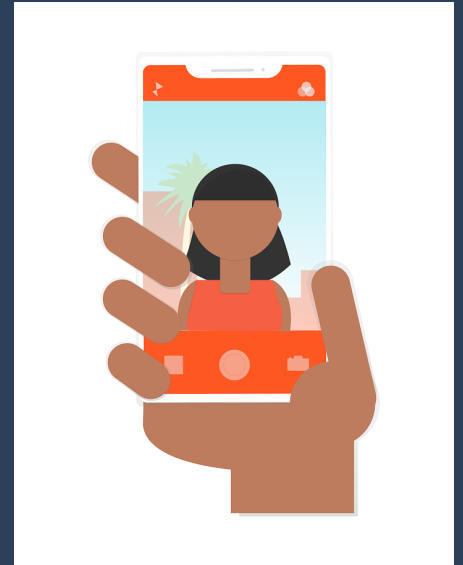
So, what should we do about our marketing materials? Make them as gooder as they can be!

You might be the best actor on the planet, but if your headshot is poorly lit and looks like a high school senior portrait, no one will take you seriously.

# Headshots

Actor headshots are perhaps the most fundamental element of our marketing arsenal. They're often the very first impression a casting director has of us, and the difference between getting an audition or not.

We're not going to sugar coat it, taking excellent headshots can be extremely difficult. But our process is going to save you immense amounts of time, energy, and money.



## How to Think About Headshots

Unless a casting director already knows you really well—that is, you're on the shortlist of actors they think of even if you *don't* get submitted—then an excellent headshot is crucial.

Once you've auditioned for and seen a casting director in-person, say, half a dozen or more times, your headshots matter less and less because casting already knows who you are. They've experienced your essence and what [types of characters](#) you might be right for.

But until that point, your headshot better be epic.

## What Makes a Great Headshot

The end goal is that a headshot captures not just what you physically look like, but your essence. A great headshot is on brand (you went through the [Branding](#) content, right?), and stands out in a sea of thumbnails.

Remember, casting directors are often going through *thousands* of headshots in a few short minutes, so yours must capture their attention in an instant.

**Casting directors often say "you need to look like your headshot!" You might think, well of course I look like my headshot, it's a shot of my head! What they mean is that your essence, your energy, your uniqueness is captured in the photo as well.**

Remember, each individual CD or agent will have their own opinion about what makes a great headshot, and they may even disagree with each other about that. We recommend listening to the feedback about your headshots in a holistic and cumulative way. If only one person says they don't like a particular shot that's one thing, but if you get that feedback repeatedly you best pay attention.



# Headshots are an Investment

We discuss cost more in depth below, but because headshots are such an important part of booking work and getting reps, we urge you to think about it as a serious investment.

More than anything, this means spending significant preparation time up front so that you get excellent headshots and don't need new ones six months later. Needing multiple shoots is what gets *really* expensive.

Similarly, since so much work goes into taking headshots, we recommend doing your best to get everything you need in that one shoot. It almost always saves money down the road if you spend a little extra up front to get *all* the looks you need and the wardrobe that effectively communicates your brand.

## Theatrical vs. Commercial Headshots

Back in the day, theatrical shots were all super serious and commercial shots always had a big toothy smile.

Nowadays, though, these lines have blurred.

You don't need a giant, cheesy smile for commercial headshots. The main difference is that because commercials are selling something, almost always there is a lighter-hearted energy to them. So your commercial headshots should have a lighter energy.

**The same headshots you would take for a more light-hearted sitcom will also work for your commercial headshots.**

Now, your commercial agent may want you to have some sort of specific shot—like the [Best Buy blue polo look](#)—but generally you will be able to use the same look in a headshot session for both commercials and comedy.

## Do I need new headshots?

If you survey every casting director and agent in town, you will likely be told you should take new headshots every 6 months to 5 years. Not very helpful, huh?

Well here are the reasons you might need new headshots:

- **You don't have any headshots whatsoever**
  - This is a pretty obvious one.
- **Your headshots aren't specific**
  - We think this is the #1 hardest part of taking headshots, and why it is SO important to do the prep work listed below.

- **Your reps ask you for them**

- In general, you want to give your reps whatever they say they need to get you in the door
- Be warned, though, that your lack of auditions might also be because your agent doesn't have the clout or relationships to get you in the room—which they will rarely admit. Headshots are the easiest thing for a rep to blame if you're not getting appointments.
- As a counterpoint, sometimes your reps are hustling like crazy, you're building relationships, and it *is* your headshots. See if you can get the opinion of a legit casting director or stop by the [Community](#) for guidance.

- **Your headshots stopped working**

- Similar to the above point, sometimes your auditions drop off even when everything else has stayed the same. This *might* mean it's time for new shots, but be sure to look at the overall picture of your career. New headshots are rarely the silver bullet that solve everything and suddenly get you a bajillion appointments.

- **You're missing a type**

- Sometimes you'll realize that there's a type of character you could and should be going out for, but you don't have a headshot to submit on those roles. This might be a time to do a 1- or 2-look headshot session to fill in those gaps.
- Again, do the prep outlined below to avoid this situation as much as possible.

- **Your headshots no longer represent your type**

- Let's say you've aged (and it shows), changed your hair drastically, or got swole and now play body-builder types...time to get new shots.

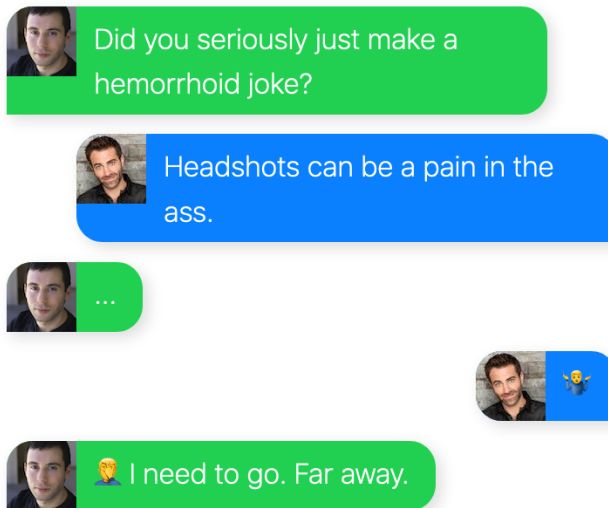
**⚠ Black and white headshots have gone the way of the dodo. It's all color now.**

# The Headshot Process

Ok, so you need new headshots. We cannot stress enough the importance of preparation, which will ensure you get stellar shots and save you the money and headache of needing to shoot again and again.

In broad strokes, you're going to start by figuring out what looks you need, select (and possibly purchase) wardrobe for those looks, choose a photographer, and book the shoot.

## Preparation-Headshot)



This may be the most important section on this page. Great headshots are a result of **preparation**. Fair warning, this takes a lot of effort, but you're going to be spending *hundreds* of dollars and this is the way to get your money's worth.

The goal here is to end up with headshots that are *specific*, which will ultimately lead to you getting work. Let's do it.

### How to Prepare

- **Number of Looks**

- As mentioned before, lean on the side of more looks than fewer. It will save you money in the long run.
- A "full" headshot session is generally 4-5 looks which should probably be enough, though you might even do 6 or 7 if you're doing *all* headshots for theatrical *and* commercial
- Of note: We've often done separate headshot sessions for our theatrical looks and our commercial shots, mostly because different photographers sometimes specialize in one or the other (see our [Photographers](#) page for a list of photographers)
- This most often happens if, say, we sign with a new commercial agent and they want new headshots for their purposes. Then it might make sense to do a shoot focused on commercial looks

## Number of Looks (cont.)

- To get a baseline, review the character breakdowns you created in the [Defining Your Type](#) section. You'll likely want a headshot for each of these character types. For very specific commercial shots, you can write character breakdowns based on the specific *brands* you're right for. We promise you're not right for EVERY brand. Think you're great for car ads? WHICH kind of car? Actors in BMW commercials are rarely the same types as actors in Ford pickup truck commercials.
- Now, compare that list with the top 5 TV shows you're [Targeting](#)
- You want to be sure that you're going to have a look you can use to submit on each of the shows
- Now, some of those may crossover. You would probably use the same shot to submit to CRIMINAL MINDS and HAWAII 5-0, for example.

**The definition of a "look" may vary slightly between photographers, but generally it means a significant wardrobe, hair, or location change. Simply taking off a jacket and getting some additional shots without it is rarely considered a separate look.**

### • Branding/Wardrobe

- It's so easy to end up with bland headshots if all you do is grab a few t-shirts or blouses of different colors. You want to be SPECIFIC, and you only have from the shoulders up to communicate your type and essence
- This means layers, jewelry, etc.
- Does all this sound overwhelming? Enlist support!
- Perhaps you have a friend who's a wardrobe expert or fashionista. Remember, though, this isn't about looking great on a red carpet, it's about having the perfect headshot
- It's also not always about looking "good," but about being on brand. If you're taking a shot for a broken-down victim type, you're not going to want the perfectly pressed shirt and lots of makeup
- We could not more strongly recommend hiring [Buckley Sampson](#) to support you in choosing your wardrobe for headshots. She's crazy affordable, and will ensure that you end up with wardrobe that specifically works for *headshots*. If you're in LA she'll even go shopping with you!

**Having unspecific clothing options often means you need to shoot headshots again, which is expensive af.**

- **Headshot Prep Sheet**

- We're big fans of putting all of this preparation together into a document. Take pictures of the outfits you're going to wear, find headshots you're looking to emulate, list what shows each look will be good for, and include the character breakdown you wrote
- You can share this sheet with the photographer so they know exactly what you're going for

- **Night/Day Before the Shoot**

- Get enough rest ?
  - You've done so much work, don't ruin it by showing up to your shoot without any energy and bags under your eyes because you didn't get enough rest
- No alcohol!
  - For at least 48 hours before your shoot, no booze! It dehydrates you and we want you looking your best
- Drink lots of water
  - Now's the time to get hydrated and ensure your skin looks muy bueno
- Get outfits in order
  - You don't want to be scrambling to be on time the morning of—get all those outfits you picked out packed and ready to go
  - Bonus: Put them in your car! You'll be happy you did when you're going to the shoot

**It can be really helpful to do a practice shoot with a friend weeks before your actual session. Ask someone who has a DSLR camera and practice taking some shots to see what angles work best for you, if your wardrobe choices work, practice feeling comfortable while looking into the camera, etc.**

## **Picking a Photographer**

If you have an agent or manager, ask them for a list of the photographers they recommend. Reps will almost always have one.

**⚠ Agents should NOT get a kickback from photographers.**

Generally, agents will have a list of preferred photographers and may request you shoot with a specific photographer. Nothing wrong with that at all, and often because they send lots of people you might get a discount because you were referred by your agent.

But if something feels fishy and you suspect your reps are getting a kickback, beware.

So how do you pick a photographer?! Here are some things to consider when picking one:

- **Their Work/Portfolio**

- Are their photos exceptional? Do they pop? Show personality?
- Does the photographer shoot people with similar branding to you? Does a photographer clearly focus on young and beautiful people? Super character types? Find someone who matches your branding
- Have they shot people with your skin tone?
  - If every headshot on a photographer's website is of honkies like us and you're black, then you might at the very least reach out to the photographer to see some examples of shots they've done of other people with similar skin tone to yours. You want to ensure they understand how to properly light and shoot photos that capture your skin tone
- Do they shoot with natural light, studio light, or a combination?
  - This is often a personal preference. For the record, Ben prefers at least some natural light, but his eyes are especially sensitive so a combination (rather than being completely outside) works best for him

- **Comfort Level**

- You want to be as comfortable as possible during the shoot, so do you get a sense that you'll get along with the photographer? Do your personalities jive? Some actors know they're more comfortable with a particular gender, so take that into account.

**Feel free to ask for a 5-min phone consult with the photographer to get a sense of their personality before shooting with them.**

## **The Cost**

- You probably don't have unlimited funds, so you want to be mindful of your budget. Know that the more looks you do, the more expensive the shoot. But don't be fooled, it's WAY more expensive to need to take additional shots later rather than getting everything you need in one go.
- A "full" headshot session is generally 4-5 looks
- If you can't afford quality headshots right now, it likely makes more sense to save up for a couple more months and shoot with a professional

- Some additional costs to be mindful of:
  - **Hair & Makeup**
    - If you have a very unique hairstyle or skin tone, for example, you may want to dig a little deeper to ensure the hair & makeup artist (a.k.a. HMU) has experience with that
    - Typically a HMU will cost anywhere from \$75 - \$150 depending on how many looks you're doing. They are also often more expensive for women
    - We generally recommend using a HMU as it will reduce the need for retouching, and it can be very useful to have an extra set of eyes looking out for stray hairs and wrinkled clothing during the shoot
  - Mandatory **Retouching** by Photographer
    - Some photographers (not many) will not let you retouch the photos with anyone else. We're not a fan of this practice
    - Access to **Full-Resolution Photos**
      - Do they give you access to the full-resolution image download once the shoot is done? They should.
  - **Availability**
    - Some of the more popular photographers get booked up months in advance, and for whatever reason you may need them sooner.
    - If you found the perfect photographer, though, don't let waiting a few weeks keep you from using them. Remember, this career is a marathon not a sprint.

 **We have compiled a [list of headshot photographers](#) for you to begin your research.**

You will also notice that different photographers have different styles. Be mindful of your specific [Branding](#) and aim to find a photographer who has an overall aesthetic that matches your brand.

## The Actual Shoot

The day has finally come! Time to shoot your new headshots.

Because you've done so much preparation (go you!) this should be the fun part. Your job now is to relax, have fun, and bring your best self.

Be sure to take care of your physical needs—have a healthy breakfast, get your coffee, whatever.

We also recommend bringing a music playlist that inspires you. You can always ask the photographer ahead of time if they have a way to play music. Many will.

**⚠ Just because your friends and family think a headshot is great, doesn't mean it is. Often they're responding to the way you look your best, when in reality you might need something very different for the types of characters that headshot needs to portray.**

#### Step 4: Make Final Selects

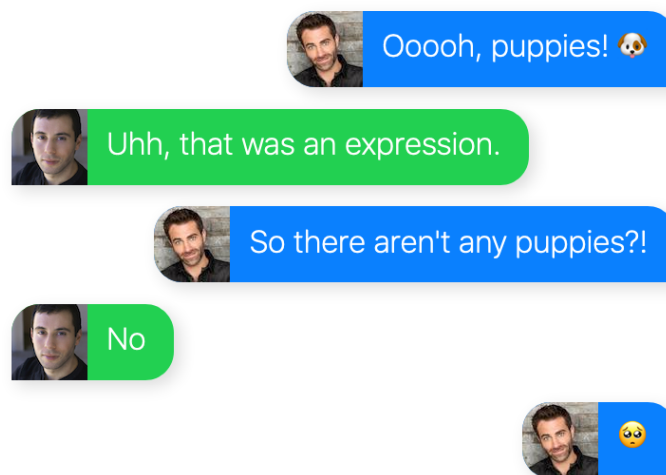
With the 30 - 60 options all laid out. You can start narrowing down any looks that don't pop, don't fit the character type, or aren't as captivating.

We often find that it's easier to narrow down 1 or 2 of your looks to a shot that best captures the essence of that look.

Once that happens, you can start narrowing the other looks based on the photos you already know you want to have. As in the example above, stay away from photos that look nearly identical just with different wardrobe.

You'll end up with somewhere between 3 and 7 or so final photos that show the variety of your range that we determined in your character breakdowns.

Congrats! Let's get these puppies online.



#### Printing Headshots

Can you even believe it? Time to print these suckers.

You really only need to print one main headshot, or perhaps 1 more serious shot and another that's more comedic/commercial.

**⚠ You do not need to get hard copy headshots of each and every final headshot you chose.**



## Size Matters

Headshots are ALWAYS 8x10. Not 8.5x11. Any printer who regularly does headshots will know this, but if you go to Kinko's they may not.

Also, please don't go to Kinko's to print your headshots.

## Setup for Printing

Most printers will charge something like \$25 per headshot to add a border and your name. If you want to save that money you can do it yourself in Pages, Photoshop, or the like.

## Where to Print Headshots in LA

Ben has been going to [Pixels](#) for years and really appreciates their customer service and exceptionally high quality. Gedaly has used and likes [NoHo Print](#). [Argentum](#) is also well known and highly regarded in town. You can't go wrong with any of them.

## How Many

Increasingly our world is digital and hard copy headshots are less and less necessary. And the commercial world is almost 100% digital—I don't know the last time a commercial casting asked for a printed headshot. That said, many casting directors still want them and you'll use them for [Acting Classes](#) and [Workshops](#).

Depending on how often you're auditioning, you probably don't need more than 50, and likely can get away with 20-25 at a time.

☒ **Always keep a headshot/resume in your car, just in case. ? (And check out our [Car Kit](#) page for what else you should keep in there.)**

## Uploading Headshots

It's time! Let's get your headshots up on all the [Self-Submission](#) sites. Unfortunately, this is yet another expense, but a necessary one that is worth forking over the dough for.

## Cropping

Note that when you upload your headshots, you have an opportunity to crop the photos a bit as needed. Remember that these are going to be viewed as thumbnails, so depending on the framing of the original headshot, you might want to zoom in a bit so the photo is focused on your face. That way it will pop as much as possible when CD's are scrolling through a sea of thumbnails.

You'll want your photo to be a medium or medium-closeup shot. Something roughly about this framing or even a little closer in towards the face:



## Where to Upload

### **Actor's Access**

You get two free headshots on your Actor's Access profile. Each additional shot is \$10/upload.

If you have multiple representatives linked to your Actor's Access account, be sure to add the new headshots to each of their profiles so they have access to it. You can always double check this by going to "Manage Photos" and then clicking on the different, gray tabs just above your photos.

### **LA Casting/Casting Networks**

For reference, these are essentially the same site. Agents in LA use "LA Casting," and outside of Los Angeles it's "Casting Networks." If you do have agents in multiple cities, unfortunately you will need separate profiles on each site. More on this in the [Self-Submission](#) section.

**☑ If you're outside of LA (meaning you're using Casting Networks) there is an "unlimited photos" option under "Account" for a fee. This may very likely be far less expensive than uploading photos individually. This option is not available on LA Casting.**

This site only allows file sizes 4MB or smaller, so you may need to slightly reduce the overall file size in order to upload them. Be sure when doing so that you're simply making the overall image smaller, *not* downgrading the resolution.

**Be sure to upload all your photos at the same time on LA Casting**, as the first photo is \$25, but each additional photo is "only" \$15 if you upload at the same time.

Note: You can upload a retouched version of an *existing* photo at no charge. Contact their support to assist with that.

## **Casting Frontier**

Thankfully CF doesn't charge for each individual photo. Their "Premium" membership comes with 5 headshots on your profile at any given time, and "Premium Plus" allows unlimited headshots.

## **IMDb**

Ideally, IMDb photos will just consist of red carpet photos, pictures of you on set, etc. "Publicity" type photos. However, as you're building that up it would be wise to have a headshot or two on your IMDb profile. No need to put all of them there, however.

There is no charge to upload photos to IMDb so long as you have an active IMDb Pro subscription.

## **iActor**

If you're a SAG-AFTRA member, update the headshots on your iActor profile.

## **Your Website**

Don't forget to update the headshot(s) on your [Website!](#)

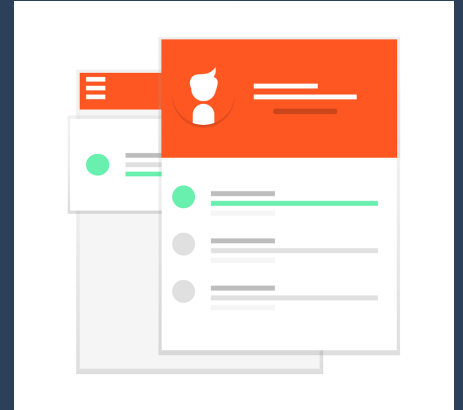
# Resume

Ahhhh, the actor resume. And you studied the arts so you wouldn't have to have a resume. Oops.

The goal of a resume is ultimately to establish your credibility in a variety of ways, *at a glance*.

In an audition the casting director is likely to look at your resume for *maybe* 10 seconds, probably less.

But that's ok! If you make your resume easy to read while highlighting your most impressive credits or attributes that will be all they need. (We make this VERY easy for you at the end of this section.)



## Does my resume need to be in chronological order?

NOOOOOO!!!! It absolutely does not.

We repeat. Your resume does *not* need to be in chronological order.

Put your most *impressive* credits in each section first.

**⚠ Do NOT list your credits in chronological order.**

**Pro tip:** Your resume also needs to fit on one page. None of this 2-page resume nonsense. Remember, it's going to be stapled to the back of your headshot.

## What should be on my actor resume?

There's a very standard format for a professional actor resume. Be sure to include the following:

- **Name**
  - Please tell us you would have included this even if we didn't remind you...
- **Union Status** (if applicable)
  - For non-union actors, you do not need to list "non-union." That will be assumed if there's no mention of union eligibility. If you are eligible for SAG-AFTRA you can put "SAG-AFTRA-eligible" or "SAG-AFTRAe"
  - If you're a member of SAG-AFTRA simply put "SAG-AFTRA" or include the logo
- **Rep Info**
  - Include the logo, name, and phone # of your manager and agent—whichever you have
  - For your commercial resume include your manager (if you have one) and your commercial agent.
  - For your theatrical resume, you don't need to include the info for your commercial agent

- **Credits**

- You will include the best film, television, new media, and theatre credits. See below.

- **Education/Training**

- This section will include the acting and other relevant classes you've taken, as well as a line for any college or graduate programs you completed. See below.

- **Special Skills**

- The fun part! All those mad skillzzzzz. (More info on this in coming pages.)

- **Personal Contact Info**

- We think you should include at least an email address that goes directly to you, if not your phone # as well.
- **Pro Tip:** Get a [Google Voice](#) number that you can give out publicly like on your resume, without worrying about giving your normal cell number. The reasoning behind this is that you may go in for an audition, casting files your headshot/resume away, then a year later want you for a project but you're no longer with those same reps. Now what? What if your old reps don't forward you the information, how is casting going to contact you?

## Anything I shouldn't include?

**You no longer need to include your stats:** height, weight, eye or hair color, or other physical stats.

These are mostly left over from before there were color headshots and online casting profiles with all of our information.

Beyond that, you want everything on your resume to *help* you get a job. Information like your height is unlikely to directly help you and might even hinder you getting a job.

Additionally, **you don't need to have the "commercials, list available upon request" section.** We know that most people have it, but why? What is it helping?

Your commercial agents are the ones managing your commercial conflicts, and casting already *knows* they can ask you about other commercials if they want to. It's a waste of valuable space.

## Notes on Formatting #SizeMatters

You want the resume to be easy to skim, nothing under 10-point font (ideally 12 or larger), and include the appropriate sections outlined above.

Also, it needs to be 8x10, NOT 8.5 x 11. This is because headshots are always 8x10, and you'll be stapling this to the back of your headshot.

**Pro Tip:** Adjust the settings of your word document to make the document itself 8x10 so you can visually see where the margins will be, etc.

☑ **Head over to [www.ActorPaper.com](http://www.ActorPaper.com) and purchase paper that's already 8x10 so you don't need to have an arts and crafts project every time you print your resume...unless you're into that kind of thing, in which case head over to Fedex/Kinkos and use their paper cutting machines.**

## **This is Your Time to Brag!**

You want to look as impressive as possible. Director of your movie won an Oscar for their student film! Put "(Oscar-winner)" next to their name on your resume.

Web series you did has 2 million views? Put "(2M+ views)" next to that credit.

You were in a movie that has a recognizable actor in it? List that!

You get the idea—anything that is going to make a credit seem that much more impressive, list it. This is not about lying whatsoever, it's about shining the best possible light on each element of your resume.

## **Credits Section**

You booked it, baby! Well done. Now it's time to put it into the appropriate section of your resume.

As for which sections to have, only include the sections where you've actually booked something. Never booked television? That's fine, nix that section.

People will often start with a combined "Film/Television" section, or a combined "Television/New Media" section until they have enough credits to round out both individually. That's perfectly fine.

The place that gets most confusing is the billing.

**"Billing" refers to how one is credited—ya know, how you show up in the actual credits.**

In film, for example, agents will negotiate for "top billing" for their clients, meaning they're listed as early as possible in the film credits.

For television, billing denotes status but can also mean a lot more money. On network shows, for example, a Guest Star often makes 10x what a Co-star makes.

## Film Billing

For films, we recommend simply listing "Lead" or "Supporting." Don't lie, but also be generous. If you had a major role in the movie, list it as a "Lead." No one is going to go watch your 2-hour movie, and say *well, he had a big part but not the BIGGEST part. That's supporting not a lead. Never hire them!*

Even if you only had one line, list Supporting.

As for extra roles, don't list those on your resume at all, unless those are the only credits you have. Then work on [Booking Work](#) so you can replace those credits ASAP.

 **Do not list extra work on your resume unless it's literally the ONLY work you've done on-camera.**

## Television Billing

This was the area I got most confused when I was starting out. For union TV jobs billing is easy to discover, because it's literally in the contract. Your agent will negotiate the billing for you before you ever step on set.

**There is no contractual definition of the size of a role, even for union projects. It's what your agent negotiates. You could only say 1 word, but if your agent negotiates you Guest Star billing, then that's a Guest Star.**

Next time you watch an episode of television, pay attention to the credits. The Series Regular will have their names listed at the very start (top) of the show. Then, *some* Guest Stars may be listed. These are called "Top of Show" Guest Stars and are considered more impressive.

At the end of the episode everyone will be listed again. There will be a section that says "Guest Starring" that will list any of the Guest Stars, and then a following section that says "Co-starring" that will list all of the Co-stars on that episode.

In general, Co-stars are smaller roles. Often only a few lines, though sometimes they can even have a pretty significant amount of dialogue. Remember, billing is based on what your agent can negotiate for you.

Guest Stars, in general, are much more central to the plot and often have a lot more dialogue.

## What About Recurring?

As soon as you are brought back for a 2nd episode of show, you're now "Recurring."

**⚠ It's "Recurring." Not "Reoccurring." Reoccurring would mean you disappear as a human and come back to life. You're not a zombie.**

Now, your billing in each episode could *either* be a Co-star or a Guest Star. So you might be a Recurring Co-star or a Recurring Guest Star.

If you are a Recurring Co-star we recommend simply listing your billing as Recurring. There's no need to highlight that it was "only" a Co-star.

Now, if you booked a Recurring Guest Star, that's all the more impressive so we recommend you list that as Recurring Guest Star.

Further, let's say you recur on a significant number of episodes – 3 or more. You might list that as well. For example: "Recurring (5 eps)" or "Recurring Guest Star (4 eps)".

## New Media Billing

New Media billing follows the protocol of television, though it's a little more open to interpretation since there's no union contract that specifically outlines your billing the way union television shows do.

So take a general estimate of the size of role on your New Media project *as if* it were a television show, and list that. Only had one line? Probably list it as a co-star. Had at least 1 solid scene in that web series? List it as a Guest Star. Appeared in multiple episodes? You got it, Recurring.

## Theatre Billing

For theatre credits, this is a place where you can actually list the role you played, not the size of the role. The general idea is that most people viewing your resume will know the size of the role based on the name. If you played Lady Macbeth in *Hamlet*, for example, people will understand the size of the role.

That being said, that philosophy tends to only work with more well know or classic plays. So if you've done plays that aren't ubiquitous, we recommend listing the name of the character, and then in parentheses listing the size of the role...*if* the role is a lead. Otherwise you can just leave the name and let it be ambiguous.

**Pro Tip:** If you have a lot of theatre credits from a college or university, rather than listing them all as produced by the university, you can use the names of the actual theatres themselves to have your credits look more diversified. For example, rather than listing Ben's college credits all as "CU-Boulder", he put the names of the theatres such as "Colorado Main Stage Theatre", "Theatre 509 Productions", and "Onstage Theatre Company."



# Special Skills

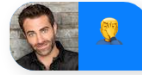
The main thing for your special skills section is to be as specific as possible. Which of these is more likely to grab your attention?

**Option 1:** Football

**Option 2:** Football (all-pro, D1 athlete of the year)



Uh...option 1?



Sportsball!!!



PLEASE stop.

Whatever specifics you can add—number of years training, if you're a professional in that field, specific certifications, etc.—be sure to list those.

Also, especially if you're in a major market (LA, NY, Chicago), please don't list something that everyone can do like ride a bike. You can absolutely check that box on the appropriate section of your [Self-Submission](#) sites, but no need to list it here. Now, can you ride BMX at a high level? Then list that.

For a language, you don't have to be fluent to put it down, but once again be specific. If you speak conversational Spanish then list that. Just intermediate level, put that down accordingly.

Areas often covered by special skills: **languages, dialects/accents, singing/music/instruments, dance, and/or athletics.**

☒ **Brainstorm all the crazy experiences you've had in life. Might some of those be interesting to list here?**

Let's say you've traveled to 50 countries, started a company, or can cook a perfect steak. These might be things to list in this section. They're not special skills per se, but they will get people's attention and help you be memorable.

Similarly, life experiences can absolutely be helpful in casting. Let's say I'm casting a role on a medical procedural, and you studied pre-med in college. That tells me you can probably handle random medical jargon and make it sound natural.

For a real example, Ben recently booked an epic Guest Star playing a cowboy, an audition his agent was able to pitch him for because Ben grew up on a ranch. And on set he was able to help with some dialogue nuance and other behaviors that fit the character because of his background.



## Training

The training section is relatively straightforward. List the training you've had.

Ideally, casting directors are going to want to see at least some recognizable studios on your resume. Check the [Acting Classes](#) section for recommendations on some great places to study in LA.

We like to list "(ongoing)" or "(current)" next to any classes you're currently taking. That shows casting that you're actively studying.

We also don't recommend listing every single class you took in college separately. Just put the degree you got and the school you went to. If there was an especially well-renowned teacher for a particular class then maybe just list that one specifically.

Some people have asked us if they should list online classes they've taken like the Master Class series. If you have enough training to adequately fill that section, then no you don't need to.

When you're just starting out, the more you can demonstrate that you're taking this career seriously the better. Go ahead and list it. You can always remove it as you get additional training under your belt.

# Sample Resumes

Ask and you shall receive. Want a ready-to-go word document you can simply download and edit yourself? Well, look no further.

Here's a version with lots of helpful explanation on it.

[Working.Actor Resume Template - With Instructions](#)

Download (Resume + Instructions)

And here's a version that's cleaner and easier to start with once you're ready.

[Working.Actor Resume Template - Clean Sample](#)

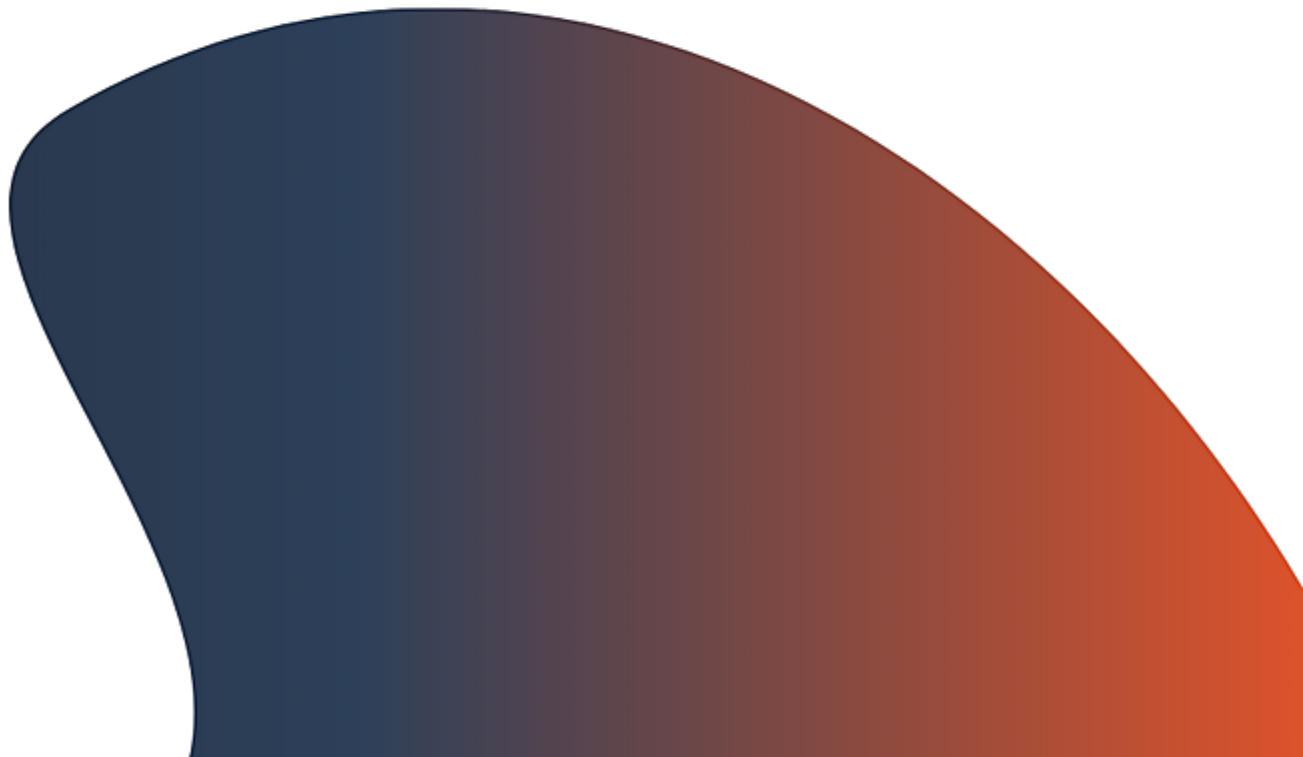
Download (Clean Resume Template)

## What if I don't have Microsoft Word?

No worries, use Google Docs! Or pages if you know that better. They're not quite as fully featured, but if you know your way around how to use them, you'll be able to make something that works.

For students, Microsoft offers a discounted Students edition. Or, if your family has a family subscription (typically 5 users) perhaps you can nab one of those user accounts.

And if you're really on a budget, simply find a local library which assuredly has some public computers you can use with Microsoft Word installed on them.



# Final Note



I think we forgot something.



What's that?



To order more tacos. 🌮 Also, we forgot to mention they should always save their resume as a PDF before sending to people!



Ooooh, good point. Not everyone has Microsoft Word, but basically every computer and mobile device can open a PDF.



Exactly. Be sure to tell people to go to "File" then "Save As" in Word, then select PDF as the file type.



Will do! Anything else?



Yeah, be sure to make the file name something like "FirstName-LastName-Acting-Resume.pdf"



Yeah, there's nothing more annoying than a file name that's all gibberish or confusing.



Really? There's nothing more annoying?



I mean, you right now



# Demo Reel

Years ago, having one was a luxury. Today it's essential.

It's also easy to spend lots of money and not have a good reel.

Here's what you need to know to stand out!



*Demo. Reels. Matter.*

Us

## Do I need a demo reel?

Dear God, yes.

**Your demo reel is the single most important marketing tool to get hired for film and television.**

Think about it, they're hiring you to act on camera, and a demo reel proves to them you can act (well, hopefully) on camera!

So put as much effort as possible into having a kick ass demo reel.

## How long should it be?

**Demo reels can be as short as 30 seconds, but shouldn't be longer than 2.5 minutes.**

Once a demo reel is any longer than a couple minutes people will simply stop watching.

More than that, if after 2 minutes you haven't shown off what a great actor you are, additional footage isn't going to do the trick.

True story: Ben watched over 100 demo reels when he first moved to LA. Do the same and we *promise* you'll realize why you can cut your demo reel shorter.

What you will discover is that after a few quick seconds you've already done your job—people get it. You really don't need much time to communicate a whole heckuva lot.

## **Should I have a montage?**

No, casting directors hate them. (Seriously. Ask them.) *Maybe* you can have a separate reel that has a montage in it for indie films, social media clips, etc. But for your standard demo reel that gets submitted on the [Self-Submission](#) sites, don't have a montage.

If you refuse to take this advice, then at least leave the montage until the end.

## **Do I need a full demo reel? Separate comedy and drama? Just clips?**

In short, it depends. If you don't have enough footage to do multiple different reels or clips don't sweat it. Start with what you have.

You will certainly need a full demo reel that has comedy, drama, and all your best work on the same reel if you're submitting to get an agent or manager. You can also use this reel as your general demo if someone just asks to see your work.

Increasingly, our view is that "comedy" and "drama" aren't so clear cut, and there is often drama in comedy (see: SHAMELESS) and comedy in drama (see: NCIS). As such, why not show off your range.

**If you have enough comedy footage to have a separate 1-2 minute reel of just comedy, go for it!**

It may not get used as often but could be very useful when submitting for comedies.

## **So when do I use clips?**

Clips can be great when submitting for a specific role. Think co-stars on television. If a show is casting a nurse, it would be very helpful if you have a short clip (think 60 seconds, *maybe* 90 seconds) of you playing a nurse.

It can also be useful to have an expanded version of a clip from your demo reel. For example, you would have 23 seconds of a clip on your demo reel, but then a 75-second version as a separate clip that shows more of the full scene.

## **But my reps want something different!**

If your agents or manager ask for one or the other, give it to them. You want them to have exactly what they request to best get you work and pitch you.

## **My footage isn't that great, should I still post it?**

Probably not. It's better to have no footage than bad footage. If a legit casting director sees crappy footage they're going to assume you're green, and not ready for the big leagues.

That said, actors are often their own worst critics. So run the footage by someone trustworthy (like us in the Working.Actor [Community](#)...or a casting professional...or maybe your acting teacher) to see what they think.

**Remember that casting directors are comparing your reel to the other thousands of actors who have legitimate film and TV credits on their reel.**

## **I'm having trouble getting my footage back.**

Ahhh, welcome to the club. This may be cold comfort, but you're not alone. When we're starting out, it's often very difficult to get the actual footage back from projects.

**Use [this form](#) created by Holdon Log when you book a non-union project, to make sure there's a contract in place that says you'll get your footage.**

Early on, Ben purchased an external hard drive and would literally drive to the house of the editor to get the raw footage so he could go edit the footage into his reel directly.

In defense of filmmakers, they are often reluctant to give footage out before the project is done because it could legitimately prevent the film from getting into festivals if released before the film is out.

One of the benefits of students films is they are often doing the film as a class project, which means there's a deadline to actually finish it.

# How do I get the footage from my television episode?

There are many private services which offer this service. The most popular of these is probably the demo reel editing company [Edit Plus](#) whose "[Air Check](#)" service gets you a copy of your scene(s) as well as a discount to upload it directly to Actors Access.

Alternatively, you can use a program like [Camtasia](#) to record the footage off your computer.

## I don't have any footage, what do I do?

### Option 1: Hire a company

The fastest method is to hire a company that specializes in actor demo reels. Within a few weeks, or maybe a month or two you'll go from start to finished scene.

If you're in Los Angeles, our favorite team are the fine folks over at [Rapid Reelz](#). They're professional filmmakers first and foremost, so the quality of their content is always top-notch.

 **Rapid Reelz is our favorite full-service demo reel company.**

If you do go this route, be sure that you're going to have another (good!) actor in the scene and that there will be reaction shots filmed. If there are no reaction shots it becomes very identifiable as a scene you paid to get filmed.

Other companies in LA worth considering are [LA Reels](#), [JIG Reels](#) or [Rock Your Reel](#).

### Option 2: Produce it yourself

This option *sometimes* is cheaper, though it will certainly take more time. It can also be a really great learning experience, but be prepared to spend a significant amount of time and energy on this route.

You, someone you hire, or someone you enroll into working for free will need to: write the scene, secure a location, get the equipment, film the scene, light it, record the sound, direct the scene, edit, color correct, etc. Again, this can be an awesome learning opportunity, but it's a huge project to take on.

**Even if you're on a budget, always pay your sound guy.**

If the sound is shitty, the viewer will have a VERY hard time getting past it. Less-than-exceptional cinematography can be forgiven, but crappy sound won't be.



# Can I use a self-tape on my reel? Instead of a reel?

 **Do not include self-tape footage on the same video you're calling your "demo reel."**

You may, however, absolutely use self-tape footage as a separate clip!


This is actually the most affordable way to have footage of you being a great actor for practically free.

The goal, certainly, is to end up with high-quality, professional footage that is—or appears to be—from legit film and television. In the meantime, use a self-tape!

Note: Pick something that really shows off your acting.

And don't label your self-tape footage as "demo reel." You'll want the title of the video to mention it's a self-tape or audition to properly set the viewer's expectations of footage quality.

You can also use a self-tape to show a side of your acting not yet on your demo reel. For example, let's say you're really great with medical dialogue but don't have that on your demo reel and you're not in a position to create a full scene. In that instance, just film a really great self-tape of you rockin' some medical dialogue.

 **REVIEW our [Self-Taping](#) section for pointers on how to make self-tapes look incredible without spending more than a couple hundred bucks for an entire setup.**

## I have the footage—What do I use to edit it?

Almost everyone should probably hire a professional demo reel editor. It's just so dang hard to be objective about our own work. Similarly, editing is an art in and of itself, and professional editors will have all kinds of ideas you would never think of.

One other benefit is speed—editing a reel yourself is likely to take 10x longer than what a professional would spend.

Some professional editors we recommend are [Rapid Reelz](#), [Edit Plus](#), or [Full Swing Films](#).



But Ben, didn't you edit your own demo reel?



Yes, I suppose I did



at this point I have spent over 100 hours editing my demo reel, which I definitely don't recommend most people do



Yeah, you could have eaten a lot of tacos during that time. Mmmm, tacos 🌮



\*Anyway...\* yeah, I've spent a ton of time, and am very proficient with software so had less of a learning curve there



Got it. So, if you like tacos, hire a professional editor. Now, if you hate tacos and want to do the editing yourself, you'll want to use Adobe Premiere, DaVinci Resolve, or FinalCut Pro.

If the only thing you're doing is splicing together two scenes that are already ready-to-go you *might* be able to get away with iMovie, but it has some pretty severe limitations. So it depends on your needs.

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## Demo Reel Doctrine

*How to have a kick ass demo reel.*

### Be on Brand

Remember the [Defining Your Type](#) section? Are each of your character breakdown types represented on your demo reel?

Remember, we want our character types to match our headshots and those to match our demo reel.

## Show Your Range

A mentor of Ben's, [Kevin E. West](#), says to focus on getting as many different "emotional values" as possible into the demo. Each scene should have 2 (ideally 3) different emotional values, and the overall demo reel should have as many different emotional values as possible.

In addition, once a particular emotional value has been shown on the reel, you don't need to show it again. 7 different scenes of you being angry and yelling at someone is not very interesting to watch.

## Start and End Every Scene on Your Face

This may sound obvious, but you want to start and end every scene on your face. *Especially* the very first scene. Otherwise it can become very confusing as to whose demo reel someone is actually watching.

## Plot Doesn't Matter

You're not editing a movie. This is a demo reel. If the viewer is confused about the plot you've clearly bored them with your acting anyway.

Now, the scene needs to feel cohesive, but the plot doesn't matter.

For example, one of the scenes on Ben's demo reel was 6-minutes long in the original film, but he cut it down to 23 seconds that look like it's all the same, progressing scene.

## Focus. On. You!

This is *your* demo reel. Please stop giving the other actors so much screen time!!! You really don't need to do that.

In fact, very often you can simply cut back to a reaction shot of the other character and then come right back to you.

Let's say this is the scene:

In script form it would be like this:

*Gedaly: Mmmm, this taco is delicious. ::drools::*

*Ben: Give me that taco, you coward!*

*Gedaly: I shall never give up this taco!*

*Ben: Aaaaggghhhhhh!!!!*

*Gedaly: Aaaaarrrrrbgggbhhghg;!!!!*

Now, here's how we would cut that scene for Ben's demo reel:

*Ben: Give me that taco, you coward!*

*Gedaly: ::Just a quick reaction shot of Gedaly looking defiant::*

*Ben: Aaaaggghhhhh!!!!*

And here's how we would cut it if we were editing Gedaly's demo reel:

*Gedaly: Mmmm, this taco is delicious. ::drools::*

*Ben: Give me that taco...*

*Gedaly: I shall never give up this taco!*

*Ben: ::Just a quick reaction shot of Ben looking ugly::*

*Gedaly: Aaaaarrrrrbgggbhhghg;!!!!*

Notice that all versions totally make sense! Each scene starts and ends on the face of the person whose demo reel it is.

Also notice that for Gedaly's version we cut out Ben's line "you coward!" That was a way to ensure Gedaly's reaction line made sense, and to have Ben be on screen as little as possible during Gedaly's demo reel.

## Get Right to it

Similar to the "no montage" rule above, you want to jump right in. No need for 5 seconds of your headshot and name at the start, anyone watching already has that information right next to them on their computer screen.

**Open right into a scene at the top of your demo reel, and if you want you can have your name fade up and then out over the image, just like they do on a television show.**

## Every Scene Can be 23 Seconds or Less

Okay. We don't know why 23 seconds, but it's true.

After spending waaaaayyyy too much time editing his demo reel, Ben realized that every single scene can be cut down to 23 seconds or less without losing its oomph. Every. Single. Time.

If your scene is longer than 23 seconds, we promise there are parts you can cut out.

And even if you don't believe us, PLEASE don't have a scene longer than 30 seconds on your reel. Guaranteed you can cut it down and still show how great you are. Leave the audience wanting more.

Note: Full clips not part of the demo reel can be longer than 23 seconds.

## **BFF (Best Footage First)**

It's sad but true that people may not get to the end of your reel. Put your best footage first.

Some professionals will say that means to put your most recognizable footage—from recognizable TV or with celebrities—at the start. Others will say to lead with the best acting even if that means putting the more well-known footage a little later.

The decision will depend on your specific footage, but focus on doing everything you can to get the best footage first.

Side note: The trap of scenes with recognizable actors or celebrities is that often it becomes about them. You don't want a scene that's 20 seconds of George Clooney and only 2 seconds of you.

## **Show How to Cast You NEXT**

Your demo reel is not a resume—that's what your [Resume](#) is for.

Your reel should demonstrate your acting chops, show people how to cast you *next*, and add a level of credibility that will give the industry confidence they can hire you for their project.

Are you trying to book that first TV gig? Make sure your demo proves you have the chops to do that.

Working on booking your first Guest Star? Be sure to have footage strong enough that a producer of GAME OF THRONES watching your demo is convinced you can handle that much dialogue, pressure, and storyline.

Trying to shift into more comedy? Well then you better have some epic comedy footage on your reel.

## **Include the Network Logo!**

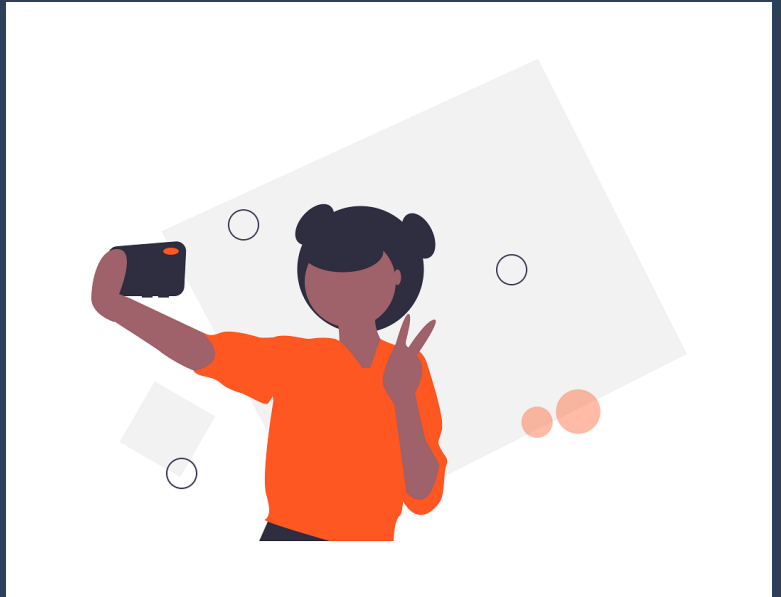
If your footage is from an actual television show, be sure the network logo is on the clip. Often you may get the footage without the logo. That's fine, just add the logo when editing.

☒ **Search for a version of the network's logo with a transparent background.**

☒ **EDIT together your demo reel!**

# Social Media Profiles

Whether you love it or hate it, social media plays a crucial role in today's entertainment landscape. No matter your view, by the end of this section we're going to teach you how to embrace social media and leverage it to forward your career and impact.



## Overview

Social media has become a necessary tool in every actor's toolbox. We understand it can feel highly intimidating or frustrating, but we promise there is so much good that can come from it personally and professionally.

This page gives an overview of the different social media platforms and which are best to focus on (spoiler alert: Instagram for building a fan base and Facebook for keeping in touch with your current network). It also covers how to optimize all your profiles.

If you want the Four Keys to Social Media and more in-depth analysis on how to think about or pursue it, check out our [Social Media page](#).

## Instagram

Best used for:

- Growing a fan base
- Replacing your actor website
- Finding pictures of adorable kittens

In short, we recommend focusing most of your time on Instagram, as it's become the go-to social media platform, and we think that will remain the case for many years.

It's also a visual platform, based on photos and videos which generally speaks more to the proclivities of most performers.



Ben, aren't you also a partner in the premier social media management and growth firm for entertainers?



Why yes, Gedaly. Yes I am.



How can the fine people here find out more information about that?



You're so kind to ask, my friend



Thank you, I know



They can check out [TSMA's website](#) or simply shoot an email to [Ben@TSMAConsulting.com](mailto:Ben@TSMAConsulting.com), mentioning that they're a Working.Actor member and I'll get them all the deets



Why would you give them vegetables?



Deets. Not beets.



Oh, you're giving them bug spray?



No, that's deet.



Ok, just be sure to send them the details!

## Facebook

### **Q: What's the difference between a Facebook Profile and a Facebook Page?**

If you're not familiar with the difference between a personal Facebook profile and a professional Facebook page, just quit the business right now. We're kidding. It can be confusing.

The personal Facebook profile is what most people think of when they say "Facebook profile." It's what you have when you just sign up for Facebook.

A Facebook *Page* is what you might think of as a "like page" or what a company would have. McDonald's doesn't have a personal profile, but rather a page you can like. This allows people to like the page without sending a friend request.

## Facebook Personal Profile

Best used for:

- Keeping in touch with people you've already met
- Remembering people's birthdays

We're generally not a fan of sending a friend request to people you don't know. That's the benefit of Twitter or Instagram—you can simply follow people without them needing to accept a friend request.

Facebook profiles, on the other hand, are a bit more personal and not designed for scale (for example, you can only have 5,000 Facebook friends on a personal profile).

**Your Facebook profile is an excellent place to keep in touch with people you've already met and have a more intimate and personal connection with.**

## Facebook Page

Best used for:

- Targeting and promoting to a mass audience when you already have a huge audience
- If you want to keep your personal profile super private
- Allowing you to have a business profile on Instagram
- Running Facebook and/or Instagram ads

We recommend reserving your name as a Facebook Page so that no one else can take it, but unless you *want* to spend a bunch of time putting out content, we don't suggest you worry much about this.

Once someone starts having tens of thousands of fans, Facebook Pages can come in really handy. But until then they're really of limited utility for you as an actor.

**If you want to build a large fan base, we recommend you focus your energy on Instagram.**

If the sound is shitty, the viewer will have a VERY hard time getting past it. Less-than-exceptional cinematography can be forgiven, but crappy sound won't be.



# Twitter

Best used for:

- Learning about the industry
- Starting relationships with industry people (if they're actually active on twitter)
- News & politics

Twitter has a wealth of knowledge on it. The search feature is incredible, and simply following industry professionals and reading what *they* are paying attention to and care about can be an excellent way to edify yourself on this business.

**Twitter has an especially high concentration of writers and comics on it.**

# LinkedIn

Best used for:

- Targeting corporate types, like producers

LinkedIn is generally an underutilized resource. It may be useful for sending messages to specific filmmakers, producers you'd like to connect with, executive producers, or pretty much anyone who works in entertainment in an office.

Ultimately, casting doesn't happen here, so not a place to focus on generally. Something to revisit when you get deeper into [Targeting](#).


# IMDBpro

Best used for:

- Research
- Industry credibility

IMDb is often the first place that people will search for you, especially casting directors. We *strongly* encourage you to sign up for IMDb Pro so that you can have a profile picture up, control (some of) what shows up on your profile, and—more importantly—so you can use it for [Research](#).

IMDb Pro is *invaluable* when it comes to searching for agents, managers, and everyone involved in film and television projects.

 **SAG-AFTRA members can use code "SAGAFTRAdiscount" (no quotes) to get 30% off a pro membership.**

If you don't yet have a membership, follow [this link](#). On the next screen enter the promo code and follow the on-screen instructions.

If you're already a member but haven't applied the discount, sign in to your account, then on the upper-right click hover over where it says your name, and then on the drop down select "Account Settings." This should take you to the "Membership" page.

In the Payment Plan section click the "promo code" button and enter **SAGAFTRAdiscount**

## Vine

Best used for:

- Nostalgia. RIP.

## MySpace

Best used for:

- If you need a new friend named Tom.

## Other...?

Reddit is useful for getting news, answers to questions, and connecting with people with similar interests. See <https://www.reddit.com/r/acting/>

## Profile Guidelines

The profile page of each social media page is extremely important. It's a way to give an excellent first impression, demonstrate your [Branding](#), and show people that you're an actor.

**A professional-looking social media profile immediately increases your credibility in the eyes of the industry.**

## Profile Checklist

- Have a professional handle
  - The ideal handle is @FirstNameLastName. For example, @BenWhitehair. In the rare instance that your name is as freaking awesome and unique as Gedaly's, you might be able to get away with just your first name, as in @Gedaly
  - Ultimately we want to have name/face recognition in the industry, so we recommend taking every opportunity to get your name and face in front of people

## Profile Checklist (cont.)

- If your @FirstNameLastName is already taken, we still recommend having your first and last names in the handle. Options might be:
  - **The**FirstNameLastName
  - **Its**FirstNameLastName
  - **Sincerely**FirstNameLastName
  - **LifeOf**FirstNameLastName
- Have a professional profile photo
  - Note: This does *not* need to be a headshot, and sometimes headshots look a little cheesy and markety (shut up, it's a word)
  - Do ensure that the photo is well-lit, shows your face, and captures your personality
- Write an exceptional bio
  - Visit the [Defining Your Type](#) page for further deets on this
  - Use the URL on your profile to direct to your IMDb page, or possibly your website

☒ **RESERVE your handle on ALL social media sites.**

Great! Now your profiles look like a million bucks.

## Action Items

It's important that you update your profile on each site, ensuring that you clearly demonstrate you're an actor.

☒ **UPDATE your profile photo on all sites**

☒ **UPDATE bio on all sites**

☒ **UPDATE URL on sites**

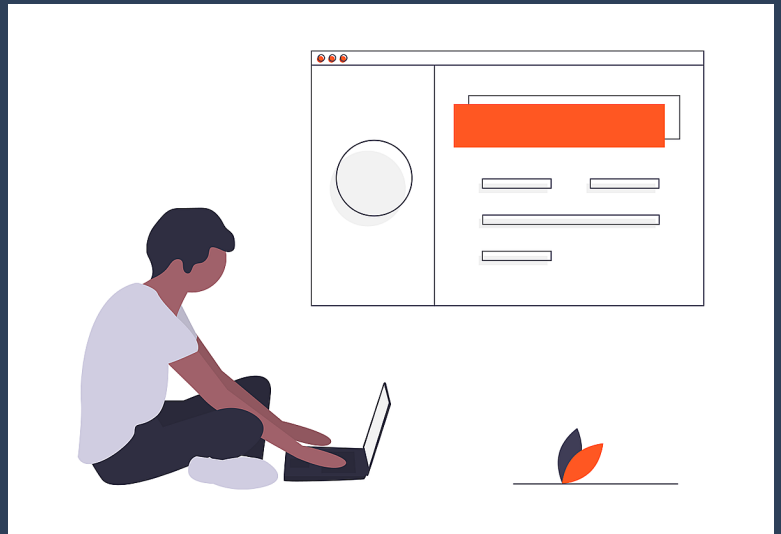
☒ **CREATE a Facebook Page (to at least reserve your name)**

☒ **Now that you've got your profiles set up, check out the full [Social Media Section](#) to learn the most effective strategies for using it to advance your career.**

# Website

Ahhh, the world wide web. Seems like just yesterday we were listening to that lovely dial-up sound while hacking into the school computer.

Oh, how the times have changed. Here we explain why you need a site, what to have on it, and how to actually get one online (no, you don't need to know how to code).



## Should I even have a website?

In short, yes. But with the advent of social media, a website has become less important.

Ben's personal view is that Instagram is replacing the job websites used to serve. Gedaly's personal view is that Ben knows what he's talking about.

That said, it is the easiest place to show off yourself and your marketing materials in an environment *you* control. It also helps when people google you.

If nothing else, your website serves as a virtual headshot and resume (and demo reel!). While IMDb or Actor's Access can serve this function, you have far less control over those sites and cannot add additional content.

**Having a website is an important tool for *the industry*, while Instagram and your social media sites are for fans and relationships.**

## Get Referred

One of the most valuable things actors will get out of their website is referrals from their friends. We can't tell you how many times we've been in the following situation:

*Our Director Friend mentions that she's filming a stellar short in two days but still needs a certain type of actor. We happen to know a certain type of actor and want to refer them to Director Friend. Director Friend is excited at the prospect, but wants to see a few headshots and a demo reel before reaching out. We dial up our modem to search the world wide web for said actor's website. Said actor doesn't have a website. We can't refer them. We curl up in a corner and cry ourselves to sleep.*

Seriously. We've run into this situation dozens of times. We want to refer our friends to people who would hire them as actors, but no one accepts a totally blind referral and if we don't have a site to forward on we can't help you. Worse than missing out on an acting opportunity you might not have had to even audition for, is missing an opportunity you didn't even know you had.

## Weren't You Both Professional Web Designers?

Why, yes. Yes we were. Thanks for asking.

Accordingly, we have rather extensive knowledge in this area, and more than anything are thrilled with how easy it is to create a professional-looking, easy-to-navigate website without hiring a designer.

## What should I have on my website?

You can keep it pretty simple, and often a single-page website is the way to go. The less clicking, the more likely someone is to stay on your site.

We recommend you feature the following:

- [Headshots](#)
  - And *possibly* other images if they're really freaking great and not already represented by the headshots
  - Remember, keep it simple. No need to clutter the site with every headshot you've ever taken
- [Demo Reel](#)
- [Resume](#) (as a downloadable PDF)
- Links to your [Social Media Profiles](#)
- Anything that gives people a deeper sense of who you are, like an "about me" section.
- Contact information
  - Including those for your agents and managers if you have them
- We're also big fans of having a sign-up form for your email newsletter. [Email Newsletters](#) are an incredibly effective marketing tool, but only if you have people to send it to.

And pretty please no autoplaying audio or video. Nothing screams unprofessional like a random audio track that starts playing in the background as soon as you visit a site.

You really don't need any more than that. *If* you want to spend more time and add something else like a blog you of course can, but it's not necessary.

By the same token, if you have anything else that shows off you or your acting chops—say, a web series you created—then of course incorporate that as well.

You do not need any sort of "recent news" section, and only include it if either a) you swear on your life you will update it at least every 30 days, or b) you don't include dates

Almost every actor website we see that has a "recent news" section is...well, the opposite of recent. It just looks bad if the latest blog or update you have is the play you booked back in 2014.

## A Few Notes on Design

First and foremost, keep it clean and simple.

Second, keep consistent navigation. No menus that change on each page. And know that the more you make people click to see new pages, the more likely they are to leave the site.

Third, your site should match your branding and feel like you! You're giving people a sense of who you are.

Also, you're not a design agency or an app, so don't make your website look like those.

Lastly, get rid of "this website is made with CRAPPYSITEBUILDER.COM, click here to get your free site" messages. This is your business website, it should look professional. Free site messages look ugly and don't give a sense that you have invested in your career. Fortunately there are insanely cheap tools that give you great looking results. See below.

## Functionality

Mobile-friendly is a must! Make sure to view the site on your phone. The majority of people who see your site will likely access it via mobile at some point.

☒ **MAKE SURE your site is mobile-friendly.**

You also want to be sure you know how to update the site. Have a site coded in HTML and uploaded to some web host you don't know how to access?

What happens when your friend sends your link to a producer of an indie film that you'd be perfect for, and your site hasn't been updated in 2 years and you really need to get your new reel on there... and new headshots... and totally redesign it? Not ok.

You should have a quick and dependable way of updating the site. Whether it's an easy-to-use website builder that you can update yourself as needed, or a web designer who's available to do work regularly.

## Why Most "About Me" Sections Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuck

Do 🐦 Not 🐦 Write 🐦 A 🐦 Bio 🐦 Like 🐦 That!

One, because it will look like every other actor bio out there and make you seem green.

Two, because it's a *huge* missed opportunity to throw in some flavor and be memorable. *Truly* give people a sense of the kind of person you are, your essence, your [Branding](#).

If your brand is more professional, see the [Marketing Materials](#) page for tips on writing a professional bio. But remember, **there are no rules for how to tell people about yourself!**

Are you a great singer? Incorporate that. Great at comedy? Write a hilarious bio or even do a 90-second comedic video. Speak 4 languages? Studied biochemistry of ancient civilizations? Have 18 siblings? PUT THAT IN THERE!

**Be memorable. Stand out. Give people a sense of who you are and a reason to remember you.**

## Updating Your Website

Part of the reason we recommend you keep your website simple, is so that updating it will be all that much easier.

Any time you have new marketing materials, make sure those get posted to your website along with the [Self-Submission](#) sites.

Similarly, if your contact information or Representation changes, make sure that gets updated on your website. Stat.

God forbid some indie film falls in love with you, reaches out on your website, and it goes to the AOL email address you don't check anymore.

Also, please stop using your AOL email address.

**☒ REVIEW your current website and ENSURE it's up-to-date.**

## OK, Let's Do This!

*So how do I actually create a website?* We're so glad you asked...

## Domain Names

Do your best to get *yourname.com*. It's the easiest to say and will help with having you show up early in search results when people google your name.

Other domain extensions (.net, .org, .actor, etc.) are ok too, but .com is the default for most browsers and how most people think of domains.

If your .com is taken, many people get "iamname.com", "thefirstlast.com", or "firstlastactor.com." Depending on your preference, you could also get firstlast.actor or firstlast.tv or a different top-level domain. Do know that those tend to be a bit more expensive (in the neighborhood of \$40, instead of \$12 for a standard .com).

Register with Google Domains, or NameCheap if you don't have a google account like the rest of the world. And whatever you do, do NOT give GoDaddy your money.

**⚠ Stay away from GoDaddy.**

## Making a Website Yourself

It's cheap, it's easy, and totally possible to do yourself. It takes a little time to set up, but you can make something really nice looking in a day. These days, no tech skills are required to make something that looks good. Yay, innovation!

### Options:

- [Carrd.co](#)
  - You can create a simple, elegant, one-page website in no time at all. And this is by far the easiest and most cost-effective option.
- [Squarespace](#)
  - Relatively user-friendly. Nice-looking templates.
- [WordPress](#)
  - Allows for a lot more customization and functionality, though harder to use if you're not familiar with it
  - Ideal if you're going to have a blog
  - TONS of templates
  - Cheap

### Don't use...

- Actor-specific website builder services...
  - Generally they are over-priced and under-deliver
- Wix
  - If you're using Wix and it works for you (and you got rid of the free site banner) it's fine. Just don't tell Gedaly. He has been a web design professional for many years and hates it with a fiery passion for totally valid reasons he can no longer remember.
- GoDaddy Site Builder #blegh
  - Similarly, GoDaddy is possibly THE worst company in existence. They overcharge for everything, have a horrible user experience, shitty technical support, and if you try to leave their contracts they won't let you. Further, they have a long history of misogyny and their [former CEO was an elephant-killing horror](#)





Ben, is it true you own the domain  
GoDaddyBlowsAss.com?



Abso-freaking-lutely



Why?



Because GoDaddySucksAss.com  
is...owned by GoDaddy



Fair enough

## Hiring A Designer

You really don't need to do this. There are easy DIY solutions listed above that will give you a basic site that looks good in only 1-3 hours of work.

This is coming from 2 guys who are both former web designers and would be happy to take your money. YOU DON'T NEED TO PAY SOMEONE TO DO THIS.

However, if you do...

Have your content already ready. A designer is going to immediately ask you for all the content you want on the site, what pages you need, etc. Have this ready to go.

Also, expect to spend \$200-\$1800 depending on the complexity of the site, experience of the designer, and frankly how much money they think you have.

**⚠ If you're on any kind of budget, don't hire a web designer. You can do it yourself.**

## Things NOT to Spend Your Time On

Websites can be a time suck. Wanna make sure that doesn't happen? Be sure to spend zero time on the following:

### SEO

Take it from Gedaly who has made money doing SEO for businesses big and small... Just don't do it for your actor website. Some actors' expectation is that they can spend time or money getting their site to rank for "musical theatre actor" so that a casting director will type that in google and hire them on the spot. That's not how Google works and that's not how casting works. The only thing your site should rank for is your full name. if you have a unique name, your name is listed on your site, you're done. Realistically, people will only visit your site when you link to it from emails and social media profiles, or other places you might link...so don't waste your time on SEO.

## **Things NOT to Spend Your Time On (cont.)**

### **Analytics**

Tracking your results is a great thing to do. What gets measured gets improved...and web traffic is not something you need to improve. It's not an end in itself. Track your number of auditions, meetings, self-tapes, and the like. Things that actually get you a chance of being cast. Web traffic is not one of those things. You can easily spend lots of time trying to drive traffic without affecting your booking rate at all, so don't waste your time.

### **Figuring out how hosting or web servers work**

Your business is acting. Not IT. Not web marketing. If you're interested in that sort of thing, it's actually a very useful skill. But don't pretend that it's moving you closer to getting more auditions and bookings. Use easy DIY tools or hire someone to help if you really need it.

### **Ads**

Facebook, Google, and Instagram ads are wonderful business tools for some businesses. Acting is not one of them. This is not how casting works. If you have a film you're promoting and you know what you're doing...that might be helpful. But promoting your personal site with headshot/resume/reel...NOPE. Don't do it.

## **Final Thoughts**

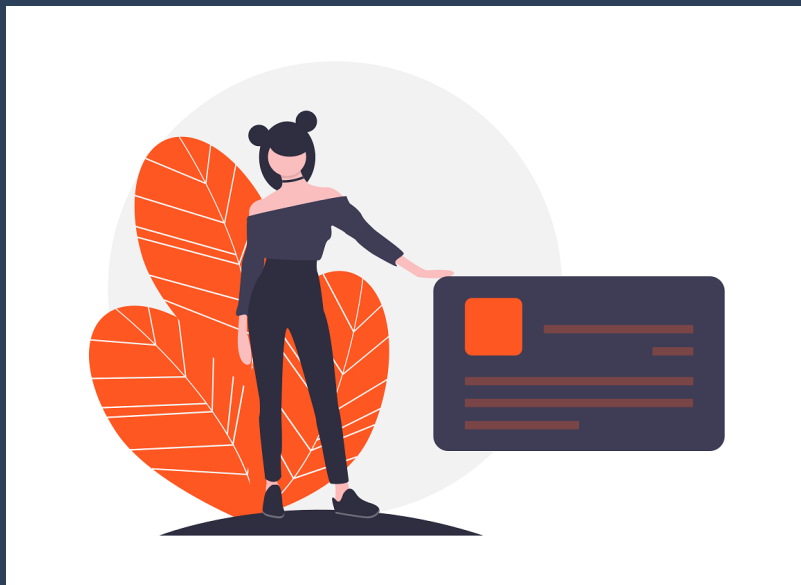
Actors should be constantly working to demonstrate their professionalism and share their essence. For someone to cast you, they want to know exactly who they're casting, and that it will be a pleasurable experience to work with you. Having a website that truly presents your personality accomplishes part of that, and having a clean, professionally-looking website goes the rest of the way.

# Business Cards & Email Signatures

Business cards are fun to have and give out, right!?

But what can it do for you as an actor? Do you need it?

Well, maybe. Read on to find out more...



## Business Cards

*Wait! Guys. How come this isn't like the first thing on the list? Business cards are first step to being a pro, right!?*

Fair question. We love them as much as the next guy, but one of our fundamental [Principles of Success](#) is to focus on what you can *give*, not what you can *get*. Most of the time when someone is handing out their business card, it's based on an assumption that the *other* person should then follow up—that's taking not giving.

Furthermore, we want *you* to have the power. When you give someone else your business card it's frankly very unlikely that you will ever hear from them again.

We care much more about you getting *their* card. That way you're in control of the followup.

**Focus on getting the business cards of *others* and following up, instead of how many people you can give *your* business card to.**

Better yet, exchange information right there in the moment and plan your followup.

All of that said, we both have business cards and there are times when it's handy to have, people legitimately ask you for them, and it can signal a higher level of professionalism.

# Making Cards


## Easiest Option

The simplest way is to design them on [Canva](#), then simply print and ship them through [Canva](#) as well.

Note: You can also design them on [Canva](#), then use [VistaPrint](#) or [GotPrint](#) for the actual printing.

## Cheapest Option

Design the cards using [Canva](#), Photoshop, or whatever other design program you want. Then compare prices on [VistaPrint](#) and [GotPrint](#). Be sure to search the internet for coupon codes for those sites. Never pay full price you are very likely to find 20 - 50% off.

 **Want to make the coupon code process even easier? Install [Honey](#) on your browser, and it will search its database of coupon codes for you.**

## Fanciest Option

[Moo](#) has some very fancy options, including their square cards and luxe options. They are definitely on the more expensive side, but if you want to stand out that's a way to do it.

## What do I need on it?

We're fans of keeping it simple. Include:

- Your name (duh)
- Phone #
  - Side note: Get a [free google voice number](#) if you're concerned about publicly giving out your phone number
- Email address
- Tagline/job title
- Website address (if applicable)
- Social media links (optional)

## Should I have my headshot on there?

**School of Thought 1:** Of course! Your picture will remind them who you are later and is another chance to show them your face.

**School of Thought 2:** Nyah, bro. A picture on a business card is weird and feels kinda spammy. No other profession does that, just have your deets on there.

So which school of thought is right? Whichever one feels more authentic to you.

# Email Signatures

It's kind of crazy that email signatures probably qualify as "old school" now. Regardless, it's definitely smart to have a professional email signature. That is very often where people will look if and when they want to actually contact you, and it provides a great opportunity to market yourself without feeling spammy.

## What to Include

Keep it simple. You don't want to overwhelm people. We recommend including:

- Name
- Phone #
- Email Address
- Website URL
  - Scope our [Website](#) section for reference on creating an actual site
  - If you don't have a site up, obviously don't include your website URL
- Union Status (optional)
  - I would only include this if you're a member of SAG-AFTRA or a sister union. If you haven't joined yet, no need to call attention to that
- Headshot or professional photo of your face (optional)
  - Often a (small!) thumbnail photo of you in an email signature can help jog people's memories of who you are when you email them
  - It's also another opportunity to subtly get your name and face together in front of people. Name/face recognition helps us be top of mind as we build genuine relationships
- Quote (entirely optional)
  - Our research team still isn't sure when this started, but often people will put a favorite quote in their email signature. This can be a way to share some insight about your personality, but certainly don't feel obligated to include one
- Small icons as links to your social media sites
  - The icons are very important. Having a long list of 10 different URLs to all your different sites looks ridiculous and unprofessional. A few different icons are unobtrusive and still allow people to further explore your online presence.
  - Also, only include icons for other sites you actually use. If you haven't posted on Twitter since the Bush administration then don't include a link to your Twitter profile
  - It will look something like this, with each image being a link to your profile on that site:



examples of icons for an email signature

## What to Include (cont.)

- Call to Action/Special Link (optional)
  - If you happen to have something special you're promoting—like, say you're in the middle of a crowdfunding campaign, or you have a movie in theaters—then you can certainly include a link with a very short text description at the bottom of your email signature

☒ **CREATE your email signature.**

☒ **While you're at it, make sure your actual email address is professional. Ideally something like `FirstName@FirstNameLastName.com` or `FirstNameLastName@gmail.com`.**

## How to Make It

Generally, we're fans of you making your own signature, loading it into your email program, and being done with it.

Another option is to use [WiseStamp](#) which will certainly help you have customizable professional-looking email signature and has some premium features, though it may be an unnecessary \$6/month.

Also, we made our own template for you to use!

## Email Signature Template

This is a copy & pastable [template](#) that's fairly simple to paste into your signature in Gmail.

1. Open the template ([click here to view it](#))
2. Highlight everything and COPY
3. In Gmail, click on Settings. Scroll down to **Signature**. (Make sure **No Signature** is NOT selected)
4. PASTE in the text box
5. Edit your personal information
6. Click on each social media image, then click "change" so you can set it to link to the correct profile
7. Delete any social media images you don't want
8. Click on the headshot and remove it. You should be able to place the cursor in the same spot. Upload your own image and set the size to **Small**

# Working.Actor

## A message from the authors...

Congratulations! You've made it through the Working.Actor eBook, and are now that much closer to being a working actor. You deserve a taco.

Every actor starts their journey with the topics covered on this eBook. And sadly, most actors take *years* to learn the basics you have now digested.

We wish someone would have told us everything you just read when we began our journeys, and we hope you found it valuable.

We also know that there is so much more that goes into having a robust, sustainable career as a working actor. Which is why we created [Working.Actor](#).

Being a good, even a great actor, is absolutely key to your career. But if that's all it took there would be far more actors making a living at it.

So if you're committed to booking more work, and greatly accelerating your career, we invite you to take a serious look at becoming a premium member of [Working.Actor](#).

Your partners in success,

Ben & Gedaly

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# Working.Actor

## Take it to the Next Level

If you want more guidance and actual coaching on getting agents, booking work, and becoming a working actor then **become a member**.

"I wish every actor on my sets knew this stuff. Working.Actor has all the information actors should know—in one place. I highly recommend."

**~Mary Lou Belli**

**Multiple Emmy Award-winning Director**

"Working.Actor is a must-have for every actor. Ben has always approached acting with both a creative and business instinct. He's managed to concisely communicate his strategies to his peers for years, and I'm thrilled Working.Actor is a platform that maximizes this information even further."

**~Andrew Carlberg**

**Oscar-Winning Producer**

LEARN MORE ABOUT WORKING.ACTOR