

4 IMPORTANT TIPS



CHILDREN BRING A BEAUTIFUL ENERGY TO SET BUT CAN ALSO BE UNPREDICTABLE. AS A STUDENT FILMMAKER, YOU NEED TO TAKE SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN HIRING A CHILD ACTOR. DURING PRE-PRODUCTION, CREATE A PLAN THAT WILL HELP YOU AND THE CHILD HAVE A GOOD EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU GET TO SET. FOLLOWING SOME GUIDELINES CAN KEEP THINGS RUNNING SMOOTHLY WHEN YOU ARE FILMING. EVEN THOUGH AN OLD ADAGE SAYS NEVER TO WORK WITH CHILDREN OR ANIMALS, WORKING WITH CHILD ACTORS CAN BE REWARDING AND ENJOYABLE IF YOU PREPARE IN ADVANCE.

SCHEDULING A CHILD ACTOR

Plan the time that the child actor will be on set far in advance and communicate the schedule with parents early. Children tire easily. Provide the child with sufficient breaks because the mental exhaustion of acting and getting into a role is more strenuous on a child than on an adult. Generally younger children have a routine schedule that they follow, which isn't necessarily the schedule that you are planning for your shoot. Most children can't work long hours or into the night.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Even if a child is non-union, you must follow regulations when working with a child actor. Follow labor laws. Hire the child through the parents, even when hiring a child as old as 17 years.

Make appropriate wardrobe choices for the child actor. Foster an appropriate environment on set. Mention to the actors and crew members the importance of behaving appropriately with a child on set. Supervise as necessary. Children should not be exposed to anything inappropriate during the scene or behind the scenes on your film set.

COLLABORATING WITH PARENTS

While parents' proximity to set is critical for legal reasons, having parents there can help a child relax as long as the parents don't become a distraction. Working with parents should go smoothly. If you are in doubt about how a parent will act on set during the audition process, have a meeting with them before you get to your film shoot. Discuss your expectations of the parents as well as the children. Always remember that building a positive connection with the parents ahead of time will help things run smoothly on set.

CULTIVATING A GREAT PERFORMANCE

When directing a child, you can use many of the skills that you would use to direct an adult. Positive reinforcement goes a long way in helping you change something about the performance. Similar to adults, children can very easily get their feelings hurt. Especially children who are perfectionists at their craft don't want to feel that they let anyone down by giving a bad performance. Explain the strengths of the performance and what else the child might want to add to make the performance even better.