

MONOLOGUES

By the time an actor walks into the audition room, the audition has largely been won or lost based on their preparation. Thorough prep work leads to confidence, commitment, and, ultimately, a quality audition. Being unprepared, however, leads to the opposite result. Although most auditions these days happen with scripts or sides in hand, occasionally actors are asked to prepare and perform a monologue.

Monologue auditions are still common when meeting agents, performing at general auditions, and meeting theatre directors for the first time. Before actors can get to work on a monologue, they must choose one, and that can be a daunting task in itself.

How can an actor choose the monologue that is right for them? What are the different things to consider?

Follow the steps below to select a monologue that is right for you...

#1: Know Your Type

First, a monologue is an opportunity to show who you are as an actor, so knowing your type is important. Usually, actors are called in for parts that are within their type, and a monologue that matches offers directors a peak into your approach to the role. Find one that fits like a glove, so we believe you.

Moreover, watching someone perform a monologue against type can be incredibly distracting. There is a time and a place to challenge the status quo, but the audition room is not it. Know your type and range, and make sure the part is age-appropriate and physically accurate. It's agonizing to watch a 20-year-old trying to be 45 or someone from Minnesota trying to be someone from Brooklyn. A monologue should show who you are, not add layers of dialects, character traits, an affectation, or something outrageous to impress. If they can't tell you're acting, that's good acting.

#2: Are You Not Entertained?

Above all else, acting is about entertaining. Do everything you can to select a monologue that you believe in, while also entertaining to watch. That means finding a piece that has a story arc with a beginning, middle, and end.

That means there is change occurring in the character throughout the speech. That means that writing is "good," and that the character has a motivation for speaking, apart from relaying information.

No one in the industry wants to watch an actor working really hard to impress them with their acting, especially if the piece is boring or mediocre. Choose a monologue you love. Doing so, we will love watching you.

#3: Brevity is the Soul of Wit

Brevity is also the soul of a good monologue. An effective monologue should be around one minute, or 90 seconds max. Length goes hand in hand with entertainment, because you don't want your audience to become bored.

It is far better to fill a 30 second monologue with great acting choices than to dredge on for 3 minutes of mediocre acting.

Auditioners make up their minds about an actor in less than 10 seconds. After two minutes, they change their mind, and it goes the other way. Stay within their attention span and you'll have more success.

#4: Choose Something Familiar

Worked on a play with a great monologue? Have a favorite writer that you would love to perform? Familiarity with a piece can lead to faster preparation and a greater understanding of character. However, actors should avoid monologues that are too famous and/or over-performed.

#5: Who Is It For?

Think about who is going to watch you and what part you are auditioning for. Always try to match the role with the monologue (as stated in #1) so the casting folk can see a glimpse of you in the part. Also, depending on the director's

style, monologue choices will vary. One director might be edgy, another more traditional, so try to choose a monologue that aligns.

#6: Discover One That Shows You're A Winner.

When you leave the room, what will they think of you? What was your lasting impression? Will they cast you? Call you back or shrug? Don't choose to play a loser, someone who whines, or is a victim. Leave them thinking you're amazingly courageous—a pirate, a rebel, a survivor!

Following these steps will put an actor on the track to choosing a good monologue for themselves. But remember, once that's done, the real work starts!

Prepare one 90 second monologue (maximum). This should be from within your age and range. Contemporary only, and no material from monologue books.

Here are the TYPES of Audition Monologues to Avoid:

Monologues That Try to Cover Too Many Emotions: If your monologue requires you to scream, laugh, cry, and whisper all in one sixty-second period...it's time to find a new monologue.

Monologues That Aren't Really "You": The most important part of choosing a monologue is choosing one that represents you, the actor behind the character. Choose a monologue that you care about, one that means something to you. If you can connect to the monologue on some emotional level, we will see and feel that.

Monologues about Suicide. Sadly, people do commit suicide. In the context of a show, it is worth exploring. But as a monologue, it brings everyone in the room down and it deals with a topic some people may not want to think about.

Monologues about how My life sucks/Teenage angst. No one doubts that being a teenager is tough.. However, "my life sucks" is not the message you want to give in an audition.

Monologues about Sex. The topic of sex and sexual exploits from a college student to an adult is awkward and can make people uncomfortable. It is probably best to avoid this topic.

Monologues about Abortion. It can be too controversial, it can be inappropriate, and it can become too dramatic.

Monologues that say, "Haha look how funny I am." You're trying too hard; just be you. If you're funny, then a simple comedic monologue will read funny. Don't push the humor.

Monologues using "F\$%^ that S&@#, I mean #!%" A monologue is not a contest to see how many times you can swear in one minute. Use age appropriate language. You run the risk of alienating everyone within earshot and looking like a mediocre actor. Choose good writing over something offensive.

Monologues From Monologue Books: This is a definite NO NO! If you can find books like , "The Best Monologues for Women" or "The Best Monologues for Men," everyone else has probably found them too. Be original.

SOME TIPS AS YOU LOOK FOR A PIECE

Look for a monologue...

that is Active as opposed to Passive. Make sure you are talking mostly in the present tense as opposed to talking about what you did yesterday or last year. We want to feel like a fly on the wall witnessing a conversation as opposed to being told it second hand.

that doesn't try to shock the auditor by being offensive, using excessive swear words or being inappropriately loud or negative.

that has a clear relationship. Who are you talking to? Why do you feel the need to tell them this? What do you want from them?

that has a clear Super Objective: what do you ultimately want from the person you are talking to by the end of the monologue?

that follows all guidelines, time limits and general requirements for each audition. that is age appropriate!

Hint: Think of your monologue as a Verbal Headshot. This piece should be a representation of who you are and some insight into what kind of actor/human you are. Don't try to impress. The only thing that is really impressive is when a young person walks in the room, stays true to themselves, presents a simple but well thought out package, and then presents him or herself afterwards with confidence, intelligence, and maturity. THAT is what the directors, casting directors, and artistic directors want to see.

Are there certain monologues that are overdone?

There's a lot of debate on this point. One line of thinking is that you should try and find something that isn't done a lot (there are a lot of lists on Google search for "overdone monologues").