FREE FROM SECRET ACTOR SOCIETY

8 things to tell your self tape reader before you roll

From my class Self Tape Mastery.

Hi, Kym here.

A bad reader can sink a great self tape. And most readers have no idea what you actually need from them.

Most film and TV auditions are self tapes now. Some casting offices won't pass your tape to production if it looks like junk. Even if you're brilliant.

So this is what I tell every reader before we roll, word for word. Hand it over as a sheet and it doesn't feel like you're criticising them.

Then turn the page for the setup check I run before every tape.

Kym

01 **"Please stand as far from the phone as I am."**
Otherwise their voice is louder than yours on the tape.

02 **"Stand on the lens side of the phone, at least two feet back."**
That puts your eyeline right beside the lens.

03 **"Please don't redirect me until I ask for notes."**
Give yourself a few takes to feel the scene out first.

04 **"Don't cut the take until I end the scene and look to you."**
Your last beat is part of the audition.

05 **"Please check for shadows, on me and on the backdrop."**
And check hair and makeup before each take.

06 **"Pick up the cues."**
No big gap after a line unless the scene calls for it.

07 **"When my line ends in a dash, start talking two to four words early."**
Then the cut off feels real, not rushed.

08 **"Please don't do an accent unless you can do it properly."**
A bad accent from the reader makes casting listen harder to yours.

> **READING WITH FAMILY?**
> Ask them to be as neutral as possible and stand further back. And be kind. They showed up for you.

Your self tape setup check

When I was casting a film we produced, a ring light up close made performances hard to watch. The setup is part of the audition.

- [ ] **Soft, diffused light.** An LED panel with a softbox, or face a window with a curtain or bed sheet over it. No ring light up close: it puts circles in your eyes.
- [ ] **A blank, one-colour backdrop.** Not your kitchen. Blue or grey suits most skin tones. No backdrop? Clip a bed sheet to a curtain rail.
- [ ] **A real reader.** Recording the other lines yourself, or leaving gaps, is distracting and hard to follow.
- [ ] **Loud enough sound.** Taped on the phone mic? Raise the volume to around 200% in your editing app before you export.
- [ ] **No zoom.** Stay between 1x and 1.3x. Move the tripod closer instead, about a metre away.

Wipe the lens | No stripes or checks | Camera lens on the same side as my reader

> **THEN DO ONE FOR FUN**
>
> Once you've got the take you wanted, jump up and down, shake it off, and do one more with complete freedom. If it's different enough, send it as an option. It's not perfection that gets you the job. It's being interesting.

This guide comes from **Self Tape Mastery**, one of the 18 masterclasses in The Journey at **secretactor.com**.