



Self Test Project

CAMERA TIPS FOR SELF TESTERS

- **WHAT CAMERA SHOULD I USE?**
Anything you can get your hands on. An old camcorder will do the trick. A DSLR is amazing, and your iPhone or Android is perfectly fine. *Just make sure you use a tripod.*
- **WHERE SHOULD I SHOOT?**
A plain background that is either light blue or grey or something really neutral. Try to find a cheap bed sheet somewhere and blue tack it to your wall. A plain white wall can be ok, but just make sure there's no wall hangings or light switches to distract our attention, also you may appear a little washed out so be careful with your lighting.
- **SHOT COMPOSITION – and framing.**
If you're working with a camera with a zoom, it's worth starting on a wider shot for your first scene, that way they can see your build, then zoom in slowly to a medium close up. Also, there is no need to fake the paper introduction
- **FOCUS**
I don't mean focus as an actor. I mean focus the camera so it's not blurry.



LIGHTING AND SOUND FOR SELF TESTERS

- **WHAT LIGHT SHOULD I USE?**
You want to use a light that is nice and soft so that there's no harsh shadows and that you can look as good as you can possibly look.
- **CHEAP LIGHTS**
Go to your local hardware store and pick up a single halogen worklight for less than \$20. You want to bounce the light, so shine the light at the wall or the ceiling, and it'll bounce a nice soft light back onto your actor.
- **WHITE BALANCE**
If you're looking particularly orange or blue, your white balance may be out. Simply turn off your camera or the app and turn it back on again and if it's automatic it should correct itself. If it's manual, you may need to do a quick Google or look in the instruction manual under white balance.
- **SOUND**
It might not be necessary to buy a fancy external microphone for your camera or smartphone. Use your common sense, you can close windows and doors to cut out external sound and turn off things that are noisy, like air conditioners or fans or fridges. The microphones on cameras are general purpose microphones, which means they pick up sound from every direction, so if you put your reader right next to the camera, they're going to sound a lot louder than you are.



EDITING FOR SELF TESTERS

- Do not send separate test scenes as separate video files.
- **INGESTING**
Ingesting is getting the footage from your camera and putting it onto your computer ready for editing. There are so many different types of cameras and computers, too many to go into right now, but what you can do is either look up the instruction manual or do a quick Google and there's probably a video tutorial explaining exactly how to do it. Or ask a tech savvy friend to help you out.

EDITING

Once the footage is onto your computer there are multiple programs you can edit with. Most common are iMovie on a mac or Windows Movie Maker on a PC. But we use a simple program called MPEG Streamclip. You can download MPEG Streamclip from squared5.com.

Have the program open and ready to go:

- Drag your first scene and drop it into the box.
- Click on play, or use the spacebar to play and stop the footage.
- To trim the in and out points, set the *in* point by going to edit and clicking on select in. And do the same for the *out* point. Click edit and select out.
- Look for the dark grey area on the timeline that you have chosen the section of the clip to be included in the final video.
- You can change the in and out points as many times as you like.
- Copy it, like you would some text in a word document. Select edit, and select copy or use the shortcut, command or control C depending on if you're on a mac or PC.
- Save to the computer clipboard or the short term memory.
- Grab the next clip. Use the keyboard shortcuts to change the in and out points.
- Trim this clip by going to edit and trim, or command T. And this automatically gets rid of all the extra footage and what we're left with is the finished second clip. Continue if you have more clips.
- To join them together make sure the playhead is exactly where you want your footage to go, in this case it's at the beginning of the video, and edit, paste. Continue until all clips are joined and edited.
- Play it back to check it's all good.
- There's no need for title slates or dissolves tempting as they are, many casting directors have mentioned that they are unnecessary. In fact, in the US, they use the first frame of the video as the thumbnail picture, so if you fade up from black or have text there, they won't be able to see your face, which is what they want.



UPLOADING VIDEO FOR SELF TESTERS

- SHRINK IT – a casting director might not even download your file if it's too large. A 3 to 5 minute video should be less than 40mb.
- Vimeo and YouTube both supply some compression guidelines, and Vimeo conveniently lists video tutorials for a whole pile of different editing programs. The videos show MPEG Streamclip as an example but the theory behind it is the same for all of these programs. Basically we're going to be shrinking the size of the video just like you would resize a digital photo. We'll be taking it from an HD 1920 x 1080, pixel aspect ratio of 16:9, down to 640x 360.
- Have your edited test scene. We are going to export as a Quicktime, which is a .mov file. There are heaps of compression or codec types they're called, but look for H.264. Slide the quality up to 80%, that will help shrink it without losing too much quality. And here is where the magic happens, we want to resize from the original 1920 x 1080 unscaled footage to 640 x 360. You can also set this as a preset so that you don't have to remember these settings every single time.
- Then click make movie and choose where to save it, and it will go ahead and shrink the file for you.
- FILE NAME – File names are crucial. Casting directors receive multiple videos a day so the title of your video file should include:
 - the project name,
 - the name of the character
 - and your name.
- SEND IT! One way is to use a large file transfer service. The most commonly used one in the Australian casting industry is Hightail formerly known as YouSendIt. Another one is called We Transfer. Some of these are free and some cost money so have a hunt around for something that is free. What it means is that the recipient can download the file onto their computer like a normal email attachment. But make sure you don't use a program that means the recipient has to download some random program to have access to your video. The other way to send a video is to send a link to a streamed video. This means the recipient visits a website to view your video, rather than downloading it onto their computer. This is of course how YouTube works.
- THE SOLUTION – some sites combine the two options. So you can head a website to stream the video, and there's also an option to download the video should the recipient want to keep a copy. Examples of this are Vimeo, dropbox and Google drive. Vimeo in particular has some extra advantages. If you upload something at full resolution it can shrink it automatically for you giving the viewer options for what size they want to download. Also, you can put a password on it so if you're working on confidential material it's totally fine.

So now you are ready to go.....