



Rehearsal and Preparation for Actors

Have you ever seen a person “freeze up” during an acting audition? Or maybe you’ve watched someone on *America’s Got Talent* who didn’t rehearse. If you’ve ever watched someone flop, it’s often obvious that little to no preparation was done.

The truth is that most people who make it big in Hollywood are those who rehearse, prepare and continually brush up on scripts. Let’s take a deep dive into acting preparation, acting rehearsal and why making sure you prepare before a casting call or audition is such a crucial element to your success.

The Difference Between Preparation and Rehearsal

Preparation and rehearsal are often used interchangeably, but while both are part of the acting process, they are not the same.

Preparation happens *before* rehearsal. This is where you read the entire script, get to know the character and try to get into the character's mind and understand what their daily life is like. Preparation is the foundation of a realistic character.

Rehearsal is when you take time to memorize the script, act out the script and figure out what works. Rehearsal makes sure that you have that chemistry you need on-set and also ensures that you don't end up forgetting your lines at the worst possible time.

When you combine preparation with rehearsal, you can begin to bring your character to life.

Before we get into the basics of preparation and rehearsal, let's talk about why this is necessary for you and your fellow actors.

Preparing Before the Rehearsal

Every single script is a story with characters that rely on actors to come alive. An actor who takes the time to study the script and learn the character's motivations will do far better in their acting audition than an actor who doesn't take the time to prepare.

Using the script as the foundation, an actor must excavate their character's motivations, background, and reasons why they behave the way they do, in order to connect themselves to the character—and, in turn, connect the character to the story. In this, recommend the classic, [*Backwards & Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*](#), by David Ball

Let's take a look at the six most important perks of preparation:

- 1. Character research:** You can't just go in and expect to fall into the character's mind. You have to think like them, think about how they came to be and have a strong understanding of their motivations for a truly multifaceted approach.
- 2. Building backstory:** Script analysis can only go so far in helping a character become "real." Top actors will have their inner ideas on the backstory of the character they play for a more realistic outcome.
- 3. Memorization techniques:** Everyone has the memorization techniques they use, whether it's waiting for key cues or writing down the lines. It's good to know how you best internalize lines.

4. Costume and prop considerations: Once you read the script, you get a feeling of what your character would wear, hold and use in the scene. For example, would Tony Soprano be as iconic without his white bathrobe or his cigar? Probably not. Preparation means you get into character costume, too. Consult with the costumer early on, so you can prepare for what's ahead. A woman whose dress has a train will need to consider how to walk up a set of stairs, for example. A man wearing a hat may need to remove it when entering a home—where will it be placed, or will it be held in the actor's hands?

5. Mental and physical readiness: No one tells you how physically exhausting acting can be, nor the toll it can take on your mind. Preparation means that you can brace yourself for the emotional impact of getting into your character's head.

6. Time management and professionalism: Preparation includes getting to your rehearsals and costume fittings on time.

The Importance of Rehearsal

Rehearsal isn't just about memorizing your lines—although that is the backbone of being able to deliver any type of performance. After all, how can you recite lines if you don't even remember them?

There are more reasons to rehearse than you might expect, and the following are just some of the benefits you will get from the time you put in:

- **Enhancing performance:** Love it or hate it, a well-rehearsed play often leads to an authentic performance. The more you can snap out those lines, the better and more realistic it will be.
- **Build chemistry with castmates:** Rehearsing with your castmates is not just good for the play, it lets you get a better understanding of their process and how they want to work their characters.
- **Practice perfect timing and delivery:** Being able to time a joke perfectly is an art that requires a lot of rehearsal.
- **Boost your confidence:** Practice makes perfect, and it also fends off stage fright. When you rehearse your lines regularly, you gain the confidence you need to work the stage.
- **Adapt to unexpected challenges:** Weird things and mishaps can happen when you're onstage. Those same things can happen during rehearsal. Finding out what can happen before you have to perform can give you the time and space you need to come up with a solution.

Key Elements of Success

- **Practice script analysis:** Read the script through and ask why your character would act the way they do. Think of how you'd act in that scenario. Would you be angry? Scared? What's going on in your (their) mind?
- **Visualize your character:** If you can, think of your character in a storybook. What do they look like in your mind?
- **Get yourself into "character" mode:** When you are rehearsing, on stage and in front of a camera, you have to remember that you are not you. You are your character. Act like they do, think like they do and immerse yourself in it.
- **Pencil in your rehearsal times and make a point of getting there early:** Timeliness is a must for anyone in entertainment. Directors will drop you from future consideration if they think you're a flake.
- **Write your lines down repeatedly:** This is sometimes called a "silent rehearsal." It's a simple way to learn your lines without having to speak them over and over again.
- **Watch yourself in the mirror as you rehearse:** If you can't do that, then tape yourself rehearsing. A self-video is a great way to see how your performance carries.
- **Call a rehearsal buddy:** Get your castmate's phone number so that you can rehearse over the phone or on Zoom—at least during those early stages.
- **Create a rehearsal space:** Most actors memorize better when they are relating to the director's blocking. Find an indoor place where you can approximate the layout of the acting space. Even if it's smaller than the actual stage, the act of moving on a line will help with line and blocking memorization.
- **Take notes on your weak points:** Whether it's a particular line you forgot or a critique you got from the director, jotting down notes post-rehearsal is a smart idea. It will help you home in on what you need to change.
- **Memorize as much of your lines as possible beforehand:** Memorization of your lines ahead of the rehearsal is crucial. Even if you need to keep writing down those lines or repeat them to yourself, keep at it. Your castmates will appreciate it.
- **Make a point of introducing yourself to the cast:** You want to have their contact information and encourage them to give you advice. When you work together, everyone wins.
- **Show up on time:** This is a must regardless of whether it's your first rehearsal or your last rehearsal. If you want to work in entertainment, the only time that you should ever expect to be late is if you get into an accident, get injured or are sick.
- **Do not be a diva:** Professional acting troupes have plenty of talent to choose from. The easiest way to get blackballed is to become a diva on stage, make demands and get cocky with people. Instead, be cordial and maintain a positive attitude.
- **Learn stress reduction techniques:** Characters can come with a lot of baggage. Be prepared to be stressed out when you get into their minds. It's good to ground yourself and remind yourself that it's not real after your performance is done.
- **When in doubt, ask:** There is never any harm in asking a crew member or director about a mishap or problem. Communication is key.

To sum up, preparation and rehearsal are what make performances great. The more prepared you are, the more professional you will appear to castmates and directors.

Preparation is the work done before the rehearsal, while rehearsal improves confidence and hones your craft. When you accomplish both, you are sure to bring your characters to life.