

ACTING TERMINOLOGY

A-LIST – Usually refers to top-tier actors/actresses who are paid upwards of \$20 million per feature film; can also refer to producers, directors and writers who can be guaranteed to have a film made and released

ACTION! – The command from the director for the scene to begin. It also means that the camera is rolling.

ACTORS REEL – Video footage of on-camera productions the actor has been cast in. Can be footage from Films, TV Shows & Commercials.

A.D. – The Assistant Director.

AD LIB – Spoken words (sometimes witty comments) said out loud that are not in the script. They can also be given “off the cuff” when another actor forgets a line.

AGENT – A person responsible for the professional business dealings of an actor, director, or other artist. An agent typically negotiates the contracts on behalf of the actor or director, and often has some part in selecting or recommending roles for their client.

ANTAGONIST – The main character, person, group, society, nature, force, spirit world, bad guy, or villain of a film or script who is in adversarial conflict with the film’s hero, lead character or protagonist; also sometimes termed the heavy.

AUDITION – A tryout for a film, TV or stage role. Usually auditions involving reading from the script, but can also require improvisation.

BACKGROUND – The Extra performers. On the set, “Background!” is a verbal cue for the Extras to start their action.

BACK TO ONE! – The verbal cue for performers to return to the mark where they started the scene.

BEAT – A deliberate and slight pause (short or long) in dialogue or an action. Most normally in dialogue to emphasize emotion or thought.

BLOCKING – The movement of the performance. Where you walk, sit, cross the stage, enter, exit, etc. A director will usually ‘block’ a scene early in the rehearsal process. Blocking can range from being very general (enter here, exit there) or very specific (pick the pen up on this line, sit on the sofa at this line, etc.)

BOOKING – The job. You will be ‘booked’ for a job; this means you are hired. Usually refers to on-camera work.

BOOM – An overhead microphone, usually on an extended pole. The Boom Operator is the member of the sound department responsible for holding the boom pole, with mic attached, over and sometimes under the actors. Also usually responsible for placing radio mics on actors.

BREAKDOWN – A summary description of a script prepared by or for the casting director often including the names of the director, producer, network or studio, together with audition location and times, storyline and roles available for casting in a production.

CALLBACK – Any follow-up interview or audition.

CALL SHEET – A sheet containing the cast and crew call times for a specific day’s shooting. Scene numbers, the expected day’s total pages, locations, and production needs are also included.

CALL TIME – For on-camera and theater. This is the time that you are called to be either at the theatre or on the set.

CAMERA LEFT – Actors or subjects are positioned (or asked to move) to the left side of the camera frame (from the operators view/perspective). Screen direction is the opposite of stage direction. To move camera left, the actor would move to his/her right side. Whereas on stage, an actor would move to his left for stage left.

CAMERA READY – Definition for anyone who is ready to appear in front of the camera. Actors are sometimes instructed to arrive on set “Camera Ready.” This means you should arrive completely dressed, with your hair and makeup done, and ready to begin for the day.

CAMERA RIGHT – Opposite of camera left. Actor moves to his/her left side.

CASTING – The process of selecting and hiring actors to play the roles and characters in a film production, and be brought under contract; the lead roles are typically cast or selected by the director or a producer, and the minor or supporting roles and bit parts by a casting director.

CASTING DIRECTOR – The producer’s representative responsible for choosing performers for consideration by the producer or director.

CASTING FACILITY – A studio or space used by one or more casting directors for holding audition taping sessions. Many casting directors have their own casting facility and others rent facilities for their auditions as required.

CASTING NOTICE – Similar in format to a Breakdown, the casting notice is not restricted to agents only. They are distributed to actors, agents and the public, much the same as a posting in a newspaper.

CATTLE CALL – An audition open to many, many actors at once

CHANGES – Outfits worn while performing.

CHARACTER ACTOR – An actor who specializes in playing well-defined, stereotypical, archetypal, off-beat, humorous, or highly-recognizable, fictional roles of a particular physical, emotional, or behavioral type, in a supporting role.

CHEAT – The actor’s adjustment of body position away from what might be absolutely “natural” in order to accommodate the camera; can also mean looking in a different place from where the other actor actually is.

CLOSE-UP (CU) – Camera term for tight shot of shoulders and face. See also Big Head CU.

COLD READING – For on-camera and theatre. Acting done with the script in your hand, unmemorized or partially memorized. Usually you will have less than one day to prepare.

COSTUME FITTING – Just like it sounds. You will be fitted for your costume by the costume designer or assistant. Usually you will be measured early in the rehearsal process and fitted with your costume latter. This can be an especially long process for period costumes.

CRAFT SERVICES – Your all purpose snacking table. Usually consists of junk food and your basic munchies. Sometimes known simply as “Crafty.”

CRANE SHOT – A camera shot raised over or above the set or the action.

CUE – The action, line, or phrase of dialogue that signals your character to move or speak. Hand signal by the Stage Manager.

CUT! – The verbal cue for the action of the scene to stop. At no time, may an actor call, “cut!”

DAY PLAYER – A “Day Player” is a category that the Screen Actors Guild uses for an actor who is contracted to perform for a single day only, as opposed to a longer-term contract.

DIALOGUE – The scripted words exchanged by performers.

DIRECTOR – The coordinator of all artistic and technical aspects of any production.

DOUBLE – A performer who appears in place of another performer, i.e., as in a stunt.

DRESS REHEARSAL – Rehearsal with all technical aspects and costumes and makeup.

EXT. (Exterior) – A scene shot outside.

EXTRA – Background performer, used only in non-principal roles.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER – A producer who is not involved in any technical aspects of the filmmaking process, but who is still responsible for the overall production. Typically an executive producer handles business and legal issues.

EYE LINE – Eye line is the direction an actor should look off-screen to match a reverse angle or a P.O.V. (point of view) shot. It is best to give the actor an actual thing or spot to look at rather than a blank spot on an empty wall or an empty space in mid air.

FEATURED EXTRA – When an extra is clearly visible on camera and not just a blur in the background.

FX (Effects) – Special Effects.

HOLDING – The designated area to which the Extra Performers report and stay while waiting to go on set.

INT. (Interior) – A scene shot indoors.

MASTER SHOT – A camera shot that includes the principal actors and relevant background activity; generally used as a reference shot to record the scene from beginning to end before shooting close-ups, over-the-shoulders, etc.

MONITOR – Usually for theater only. This is the person in charge of checking actors in, giving them sides and deciding the order that actors will read.

MONOLOGUE – A scene or a portion of a script in which an actor gives a lengthy, unbroken speech without interruption by another character.

ON-CAMERA – Refers to anything on camera – tv, film, commercials, industrial film.

PRINCIPAL – A performer with lines.

PRODUCER – Often called the Line Producer; the person responsible for the day-to-day decision making on a production.

PROPS – Any objects used by actors in a scene.

REACTION SHOT – The camera shooting a character's emotional or physical response or reaction to something that is happening in the scene.

RESUME – List of credits, usually attached to an 8x10 headshot.

ROLLING! – The verbal cue for the camera film and audio tape to start rolling.

SCRIPT – The written form of a screenplay, teleplay, radio or stage play.

SET – The immediate location where the scene is being filmed.

SIDES – Pages or scenes from a script, used in auditions or (if on a film set) those scenes being shot that day. In Australia, Sides are called Scenes.

SIGN-IN SHEET – A sheet at the casting office where talent will sign their Name, Agency, Phone number and time arrived to the casting office. The Talent are generally called into the audition room based on the time they arrived.

SLATE – A small chalkboard and clapper device, often electronic, used to mark and identify shots on film for editing; also the process of verbal identification by a performer in a taped audition (e.g., "Slate your name!").

STAND-INS – Extra Performers used as substitutes for featured players, for the purpose of setting lights and rehearsing camera moves; also known as the second team.

SUBMISSION – An actor's or agent's suggestion to a casting director for a role in a certain production.

TABLE-READ – A stage of film, television and theatre production when an organized reading around a table of the screenplay or script by the actors with speaking parts is conducted.

TAKE – The clapboard indication of a shot "taken" or printed.

'TAKE 5' – The announcement of periodic five minute breaks.

TELEPROMPTER – The brand name of a device which enables a broadcaster to read a script while looking into the camera lens.

WARDROBE – The clothing a performer wears on camera.

WARDROBE FITTING – A session held prior to production to prepare a performer's costumes.

WRAP – The completion of a day's filming or of the entire production.

8×10 – Commonly used size of a performer's Headshot/photos. Another term for headshot. Black and white was the standard in the old days, today headshots are in color.