

unprepared instead of a conscious, aesthetic choice. Smaller roles are sometimes left unrehearsed if the role is not challenging for the actor, but at any level, if you're not getting the rehearsal time you need, don't be afraid to ask for it! While it may not be possible, it may be that the director just doesn't realize that you want more time.

And finally, people often don't realize how long after the film is shot it takes to finish the film. The editing, music composition, and sound design (and special effects, if required), can take MONTHS to finish. Even short films need time to sort through the footage and select and restructure the film. All aspects of post-production are very intense, so please be patient as the film gets completed.

You might get called back after the film's been shot, possibly to re-shoot a scene that had a problem, or to re-record some dialogue (called A.D.R. – Automated Dialogue Replacement). The producer will contact you and work out a schedule if this is necessary.

Make sure you get and keep all the contact information from the producer and director, so when the film is complete, you can get a copy for your reel. That's the bare minimum to expect from them, after giving your time, your emotions, and your experience. Don't be afraid to call if you haven't heard from them in a while. The film may still be finishing up, but it lets them know that you still care about the film, and that's not a bad thing.

A film shoot has often been called a "tiny war," and that's not a bad way to think about it. You're trying to get as much recorded as possible, with the minimum number of casualties. But the more you know what to expect, the more you can be prepared to do the thing you came to the set to do: create a believable character that the audience will care about. Film acting is very challenging work, but the rewards of creating something meaningful that can last forever are definitely worth it.

What Can an Actor Expect on a Film Set? Making the Transition from Stage to Screen

You always hear about film actors heading back to their trailers on a shoot, and there's a reason they're so fond of that "home away from home." A film shoot for an actor (and for some of the crew, even) involves a lot of waiting. A common phrase is "The first day you're on a movie set it's the most exciting day of your life. The second is the most boring." Setting lights, adjusting sets, measuring distances for cameras, changing and cleaning lenses, and a myriad of other things all take time and can cause delays, some expected and some that no one could have planned for. Resetting the scene when the camera changes position means everything has to get moved and re-adjusted, and that means time. While major delays are hopefully kept to a minimum, even the most perfectly running film shoot has a lot of free time for the actors. Bring a book or something to do, because you'll have the spare time. A film set is very different from a theatre production. The key difference is in the manner of performance: you're performing multiple times for a camera that's generally pretty close to you, instead of one time for an audience at a distance. It's not uncommon to do many separate "takes" for many different camera angles. You can usually count on any scene having anywhere from 1 to 10 different camera angles (or maybe more, depending on the complexity of the scene), and at least 2-4 takes from each angle. It's entirely possible you could have to perform the same actions and lines over twenty times before you move to the next scene. As you can imagine, that takes some stamina – you can't give your entire performance in just one take, and have nothing left for the rest of the shots. Film acting is an endurance sport.

The amount of time it takes to shoot also usually requires that scenes are not shot in the order that they appear in the script. If the opening and closing scenes take place in the same location, those two scenes will probably be shot on the same day, to avoid having to secure and prepare the location multiple times. You might even shoot scenes out of order in a single day, on a single location, because of the needs of set design, actors' schedules, or the time of day for the scene. Even though

characters may have lived and died in the script between those the scenes you're filming, simple practicality often requires films to be shot out of order.

There's no audience when filming, other than the director and the crew. While that's obvious, what's often less obvious is how that might affect your performance. Many actors use the energy from a live audience to fuel their performance, and have to learn to act without the crowd. A good director will help give you some of that energy, but one person can't do the job of a crowd. But there's an up side to the lack of audience: film acting often requires a more subtle performance than in the theatre. You don't have to play to the back of the house for a film – the camera will catch the smallest nuance, and “theatre” acting can often look like over-acting for the camera. Use the lack of an audience to help you find the smaller gestures and moments that might only work in front of a camera.

You might also find the process of multiple takes a little strange, and that's natural. Because a film is edited from many takes and many angles, the editor of the film can take your best moments and string them together. The director may want to move on from a shot, even though you don't feel you've given a full performance of it yet. It's very possible that the director has seen the pieces they want in different takes, and is planning to edit them together to make a seamless performance. Ask for another take if you feel you need it, but when there are time constraints, sometimes the director will move on, knowing they have what they need in the shots already completed.

The camera frame also creates a challenge for actors – hitting marks becomes even more important on film than in the theatre, because the camera is likely framing a very small area. You may be asked to restrain your motions in closer shots, just so that you don't move out of the camera frame. Sometimes the camera can move with you, and sometimes it can't. And often the larger gestures that pull you out of the frame will again look like over-acting when the camera is so close. Don't let that restrain you from making larger gestures if that's what the character needs, but please understand if the director asks you to keep it

within the frame – they're just trying to make sure those gestures make it into the film!

Film acting also requires the actor to think about continuity. You may have noticed mistakes in a film when an actor is holding a glass in their left hand, then in the next shot, they're suddenly holding it in their right, or other examples where you realize you're watching a film that was recorded in multiple takes. Those are continuity errors, and they're unique to filmmaking because the different camera angles get edited together as if they're a single, fluid performance from the actors. Because of this, it's important that actors repeat the same actions at the same time in all the takes. Do NOT let worries about continuity affect your performance: good, believable acting will always help mask any continuity errors, but the more consistent your performance, the more the editor will be able to retain that performance in the finished piece without having to edit around any problems. Many films may have a script supervisor, and part of their job is help keep track of continuity – if you can't remember a specific action, they can help you.

You may also have to deal with sound recording while filming: any scene with dialogue must be mic'ed. You'll probably notice the long 'shotgun' microphone over your head as you're trying to film, but you might also need to be “wired for sound” with a small “lavaliere” microphone that can be hidden under your clothes. It may seem a bit strange when the sound recordist is taping a microphone to your chest and running a cable down the back of your shirt, but that's actually standard procedure for recording audio. But because the shotgun or lav mic is so close to you, you don't need to articulate your syllables to reach the back of the house like you do in theatre – you can speak more naturally.

Unfortunately, film acting often has a shorter rehearsal period than theatre acting. How much rehearsal a film has is usually up to the director and producer, but is often simply a matter of scheduling. Some films only rehearse with the actors on the set, preparing a scene on the same day it's to be filmed. But those are usually larger budget films that can afford to have the crew not working while the actors rehearse. Student films rarely do this, and if they do, it's usually an issue of being