Events & Festivals

How do I learn my lines for the scripts I am given?

Hello Downunders, @steve.baltzois was speaking with me earlier today about the troubles of the script rehearsal you are all experiencing. I thought I might lend a helping hand on the matter as the Production Supervisor.

The very first thing I have seen with actors is they sit down reading the script and their lines quietly to themselves, similar to reading a book. **This is the worst way to learn your lines**. Consider this as a professional actor:

- A carpenter cannot build his drawers reading from a book.
- A painter cannot finish the painting on the canvas without physically painting.
- A boxer cannot be the next Muhammed Ali without physically boxing in a practise ring.
- A chef cannot make a 3 course meal by sitting in the kitchen reading the menu quietly to themselves.

In all these samples the important thing is the physical working of or acting of that end result. That is why the **worst way to learn your lines** is by quietly reading it. Being an actor you are not reading lines. You physically are acting and when you learning your lines you should be physically acting out those lines, out loud in broad daylight. If you are one of these actors, move away from the behavior of trying to learn your lines by reading them quietly to yourself. It does not work.

YOU HAVE TO SAY YOUR LINES OUTLOUD when you are learning your lines.Â It helps you hear them, it helps you remember them, it helps you recite them, it helps you act and behave appropriately to them.

Everyone learns differently and there are many people all through the internet who have ideas of how to learn your lines. Here are 5 ways that I advise my cast to learn their lines.

1. **Repetition**. It really is the only best way to do it. Remember out loud, never whilst sitting down and quietly reading it to you similar to reading a book. The one key success to learning your lines is acting it out again and again and again and again. Repetition is the key to the successful learning of your lines.

2. **Line Blocking**. Read the first line. Look away from the script and repeat it. Look back to see if you got it right. Do this a few times. Then do this with the second line. Then repeat the two lines and see if you still have them right. Then do this with the third line and see if you have the third then add on the fourth and see if you have all four. Set these aside for a while and work on the next set of four. Then see if you have all eight and then do the next set of four. Then see if you still have all twelve. Of course, it does not have to be exactly four each time. The number can vary depending on how long the lines are. You might then take a break from these twelve or so and work on other sets like this but in the end, see if you still have all your lines of the whole play. Each day read them all and repeat them all back in one continuous read of all lines and then one continuous reciting of all of them.

3. **Recording your lines**. Speak along with the lines as it is being recorded or write out the long passages to learn the lines. Writing out the words of your lines is a terrific way to learn. Similar to an artist painting on the canvas. You have something to look at.

4. **Do it your way**. There is no one way or wrong way to learn dialogueâ€”if it works for you, than that is what you do. Only remember sitting down reading it quietly to yourself is not the tool of an actor. Remember my examples earlier. The more you memorize, the easier it becomes. I donâ€™t know what the psychology of that is, best to ask @steve.baltzois for the answer to this. Itâ€™s certainly a skill like any other and therefore is something that anyone can improve on. People who are playing professional theater related roles need to believe in themselves and need to put the hours into it. Remember the painter, remember the cook

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examples. The masterpiece is not made in 1 or 2 or 3 hours of work. You need to put in the hours, when in the shower, while having lunch, outside of rehearsal time if you do not want to be labelled "first time actor". Most productions require you to be off-book before the first day of rehearsal in large theater productions. No actor should learn their lines at rehearsals. The key to success here is basically time. Memorizing a role in theater is a project. Actors need to commit blocks of time in order to learn the lines properly. Even after the dress rehearsal an actor would be at their best re-learning the lines. A good rule of thumb is that you can learn about 100 lines of verse in an hour, if you devote 2 hourlong chunks everyday. When you put it in these terms, itâ€™s actually pretty manageable. A final thing to note is that there are a few â€˜levelsâ€™ of memorization. An actor ideally has to put enough time into their lines that theyâ€™ve become a muscle memory of sorts. The lines all flow together and the actor never has to work to remember what comes next. However, in a pinch, you can learn a few hundred lines in a really short block of time. You have to learn them as part of your craft and not sitting down reading the script like a book.

5. **Finally Script Rehearser**. There is a software program for all phones and tablets called Script Rehearser. You upload the script to the program. It formats all professionally formatted scripts into character lines and chunks. You tell the program which character is you and then you can have the program pause for your line when it comes to your turn, it can highlight it, or it can read it out after the pause. It is a wonderful tool to rehearse and to repeat, repeat, repeat.

There are many suggestions if you google them on how to learn your lines. Whatever method you find in helping you learn your lines, the one key ingredient is you have to act out your lines to learn them and repeat, repeat, repeat.

I am sure @steve.baltzois has already mentioned this. There is no thing of a 9-5 day job for an actor. In the beginning, during the rehearsals, there are long days, long nights and sweat, tears and muscle aches. Every actor needs to prepare themselves for the hard work. It is the hardest part, but once through it, the rest is fun. Hope this helps you all downunderings.

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