

Prescreen Filming Tips from the Pros at My College Audition

PART 1: PREP

Decide on a Filming Device

iPhone/Smartphone/Tablet

- This is a perfectly fine option! Most students film on their smartphones.
- When filming on a smartphone, make sure to place the phone horizontally, not vertically, to fully capture the entire screen.
- If you find the audio quality to be less than ideal, you can purchase an external microphone. [Example here.](#)

Professional Camera

- If you happen to have a great videographer in the house with a professional camera, by all means feel free to use that! These usually come with proper stands.

Get Rid of Shaky Hands

If filming on a smartphone, we recommend propping up your phone to eliminate nervous hands behind the camera!

- You can use a table and stack books, a music stand, etc. There are free ways to set this up at home - get creative!
- If you would prefer to purchase a tripod, there are many [great options](#) for smartphones.

Location, Location, Location

- Find a quiet and clutter-free space.
 - Ask all family members, pets, etc. to remain out of the room and keep the noise level down.
- Check your sound and make sure there are no obvious echoes in the room.

Sound Equipment

Bluetooth Speaker to Play Music Tracks

- This is a perfectly great option! Especially this year, most schools will be expecting to hear tracks as opposed to live accompaniment. A Bluetooth speaker that connects wirelessly to a phone or computer is generally the best way to play your tracks. Here are some great options: [Example 1](#) and [Example 2](#)
- Make sure the device you are playing your tracks from is not the same device you are filming with. These should be separate to best control the sound.
- Test your speaker and make sure the balance is correct against your singing - we need to hear your tracks well, but they shouldn't overpower you. Find the best play for the speaker to sit during filming.
- Delegate someone from your household to hit play for you. Give them a cue to look out for right before hitting play - for example, a solid inhale and exhale after you slate.

Lighting

- Use natural light if possible! Test different times throughout the day to find the best, most flattering lighting.
 - If finding a room with great natural light is difficult, don't sweat it. Bring in multiple lamps in your house and try different setups to find your best light.
 - If you need to purchase additional lighting, here are two examples of great lighting for shoots: [Example 1](#) and [Example 2](#)
- Only set up light in front of yourself as backlighting washes out the shot. Be sure there are no windows behind you.

Backdrops

- Try to find a room in your house that has a simple plain, blank wall to film against. We want the focus to be on YOU.
 - You can always hang up a sheet (make sure it is properly ironed!) to achieve a simple backdrop
 - If desired, you can purchase a backdrop to use for filming. Some examples here: [Example 1](#) and [Example 2](#)

Quick Tip: Worried about having proper space to move? Especially maybe for any dance videos? It's okay to get creative and think outside the box! This year, especially, people need to use the space they have and make the most of it! Need to use your backyard as it has the most optimal space? Groovy! Would your school theatre director let you use the school stage? Amazing! Is there an awesome part of your city that holds a special memory for you? Sounds amazing, use it as your backdrop! Include a quick title card at the beginning (think 3-5 Seconds which is included in your overall time limit) that illustrates where the video is being filmed, if it holds a special meaning for you, etc.

PART 2: FILM

Follow The Guidelines

- Read each school's guidelines carefully and comply with everything required (i.e. Are the pieces separate uploads or should the recording be one continuous take? What is the time limit?)
 - Do not push the time limits! Your slate is included in the allotted times! Carefully time each piece and make sure you are under the time restraints. Do not miss your shot at a dream school because you didn't follow directions.
 - For MT students: Become familiar with the [Musical Theatre Common Prescreen](#) as many of the schools you're likely applying to are following these guidelines.
- Pay extra close attention to how they want each piece of material filmed (i.e. close-up shot, full body, $\frac{3}{4}$ length.)
 - Be prepared to film each piece of material in multiple different shots.

Pick Your Spots

- You should slate directly to the camera.
- Once you are done slating a piece, pick a spot on the wall just to the right or left of the camera lens to use as your "scene partner." Make sure to just shift your eyes away from the lens, not your head/body, so your full body remains in focus. Do not perform directly to the camera.

Dress Rehearsal Shoot & Real Deal Shoot

- We highly recommend having a "dress rehearsal" and a "real deal" shoot. Fully film everything on the dress rehearsal, get some notes and then be prepared to film again in a few days. Likely, you won't be satisfied with the first round of takes - so do yourself a favor and get two dates on the calendar to begin with!
 - Watch back the videos and pay attention to: slates (Were they energetic? Did they show the real me?), sound levels (Can you hear yourself against the tracks well? Any echoes?), outfits (Did you tug at your shirt at all? Does everything look clean and ironed?), and your choices (Did you put it all out there? Satisfied with all choices you made in each piece of material?)
- Get trusted notes from mentors, teachers, coaches, etc. If you don't love watching yourself on film (let's be real, that can be tough!) be sure to ask trusted advisors for some tangible feedback before filming again.
- Wondering who to go to for some feedback? You are welcome to submit your Prescreens to receive comprehensive feedback from the team at My College Audition: [Prescreen Review](#). Please be prepared to film again after you receive your feedback!

PART 3: COMPLETION

Transfer file

- Import the recording to a computer so you can review the quality and prepare the file.
- Trim the beginning and end as necessary, but do not further edit within the recording.
- Save/publish/export the recording as a file (recommended file type: MP4). Do not just save it in the editing program.
- Resources: iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, QuickTime.

Troubleshoot

- Compress the file if it exceeds 4GB and convert it to a better file type (MP4, MPEG, MPG).
- Resource: Handbrake (handbrake.fr).

Deadline

- Start the process of recording early, giving yourself ample time to get everything right. Though unlikely, if technical difficulties arise, you want to be ahead of the game.
- Don't be part of the 40% of students that submit within the last 48 hours of the deadline!

QUICK TIP LINKS:

- [Importing your video from an iPad to your computer](#)
- [Fixing a distorted video](#)
 - [iMovie](#) (for Mac users)
 - [Quicktime](#) (for Mac or Windows users)
 - [Handbrake](#) (for Mac or Windows users)
- [Compressing your video with Handbrake](#)