

How to Direct Actors

Actors and actresses have a reputation for being hard to work with, but this isn't always the case. For the most part, directing is fun and rewarding! Directing allows you to collaborate with other creative individuals to work on a project...

Part 1 of 3:

Getting to Know Your Cast

1.



Select your cast wisely by holding auditions. Casting is the most crucial decision you will make, and you should consider a number of factors including abilities, appearance, attitude, relationships between cast members, motivations, and discipline.

1. It might be helpful to have them fill out a written application in addition to having them read part of the script. You can include questions about their motivations for acting and the time they expect to be able to contribute to the project.

2.



Evaluate why each actor or actress is in your cast. Ask them questions about what they are hoping to gain from this experience. Some crew members will join a project simply because they like the story and believe that it needs to be told. Others are focused on expanding their range. It will be helpful for you to understand their motivations in order to give them direction that fits with what they are hoping to accomplish.^[1]

1. It might be helpful to make note of their biggest focus for working on the project and refer back to it if necessary.

3.



Ask your actors if they have any special abilities. Like anyone else, actors and actresses all come to work with different strengths and weaknesses. Some individuals may have specific skills such as screen fighting, accents, singing, or dancing that may be useful at some point during filming. Be sure to ask your cast if they have any additional skills that might be useful in the film.^[2]

Communicating with Your Cast



Be authoritative. When giving direction, speak confidently and treat your cast with respect. Having a clear idea of what you would like to see in a specific scene will help your cast immensely and will making filming run more smoothly.^[3]

1. This means having a firm tone of voice and providing very specific directions.
2. At times, actors may question your direction. Listen closely to their questions and provide explanations for your decisions if needed.



Remain patient. Directing requires a lot of patience and a large time commitment. It is important for you to be understanding and respectful of your cast. You can set an example for the rest of the cast by

remaining focused on the task at hand despite distractions.^[4]

1. If you remain patient and positive, this will reflect in your cast as well.

3.



Listen to suggestions from the cast. If a member of the cast is having a hard time with a scene, it may be because they don't understand the vision that you are having for the particular part. Take suggestions into account and compromise when necessary. ^[5]

1. For example, if an actor or actress has a specific quirk, it may be necessary to work that into the character that they are portraying.

4.



Explain your vision clearly. Sometimes, you may have to sketch, use props, or simply get up and show the actors what you have in your mind for a particular scene. Doing so will help to remove any misunderstanding or confusion in communicating through just words.^[6]

Putting on a Great Performance



Check that your cast knows the script. Be firm and reinforce the importance of knowing lines before you begin the project and remind them throughout working. Rehearsals and work will go more quickly if everyone is prepared to do their jobs well without repeating scenes due to missed lines.

1. It may be helpful to hold a read-through with all of the actors and actresses before you begin rehearsing and working on the project. This will show the cast how each of the characters interacts with the others and show you who knows their lines and who does not.



Meet with your actors before each rehearsal and performance begins. There will be a chaotic atmosphere if the actors and director are not on the same page. Make sure that your actors take their work

seriously, are committed to being on time, and respect your authority as the director.^[7]

1. Additionally, with regular meetings, you will be able to discuss any problems that you may have had at your last meeting and address any issues that might come up.



Encourage them to research their characters. Assign your actors and actresses some homework before meeting for the first time. Having them understand the emotions, motivations, backstories, and desires of the characters that they are playing will help them to be better actors.^[8]

1. Meet with each actor early to discuss their character and give any specific direction that you may have such as accents and mannerisms that they should incorporate into their portrayal.
2. Doing so will encourage them to put on the best performance.

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