

# Preparing for College Performing Arts Auditions: 6 Tips

Performing arts auditions can be an exciting yet daunting experience, especially when you're auditioning for a spot in a highly competitive college program. Chances are you want to study your craft before entering into the world of professional artists, musicians, dancers, and actors. But first you need to impress a panel of evaluators.

Your mind is probably racing with questions like: Which materials should I choose? How do I pick the right program? What if I don't get into my dream school? Take a deep breath. If you have drive, commitment, and confidence, you're already well prepared for any audition that comes your way.

In this guide, we'll share our tips for acing your auditions, including:

1. Research the programs you're interested in applying for.
2. Select your audition materials and spend time rehearsing them.
3. Take headshots.
4. Submit your prescreen videos.
5. Practice mindfulness.
6. Prioritize sleep and healthy eating prior to your audition.

Whether you're unsure [how to schedule virtual auditions](#) or submit headshots, we'll walk you through the entire process to help put your mind at ease and make your auditions a rewarding experience.

## 1. Research the programs you're interested in applying for.

Applying to college is a difficult task for any 17-year-old. Students have to fill out forms, write essays, and gather letters of recommendation. But performance arts students have an added layer of stress: choosing the right program and auditioning.

It's important to do plenty of preliminary research before applying and auditioning for a performing arts school. These considerations should include:

- **Choosing between conservatory and liberal arts.** Conservatories place more importance on performance training than academics. If you want to entirely devote yourself to performing, then a conservatory might be the right choice for you. If you would rather explore other general education courses, like psychology, math, and literature, you could benefit from a more well-rounded liberal arts degree.

- **Researching the school's reputation.** Look at graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, facilities, and expert opinions. Pursue schools that have expert faculty, first class performing arts facilities, and successful alumni. [College websites](#) and comparison sites are great resources for searching for this information.
- **Comparing curriculums and degrees.** Although you can always change your mind later, start thinking about what you want to study for the next four years. Narrow down your list of desired programs by asking yourself: Do I want to pursue a bachelor of fine arts, an emphasis in music, or perhaps even a masters degree? Will these schools prepare me for success in my future career?
- **Deciding on a budget.** Consider the cost of attendance and speak with someone from the financial aid office. Do they offer scholarships? Will you need to take out loans? If so, how much will your monthly payments be after graduation? Answering these questions will aid in the decision making process.

One great way to get a better understanding of different programs is attending events or workshops. Events, like [Dancewave's Dancewave Through College & Beyond](#), can help you better prepare for auditions and connect with specific program directors. You can also attend workshops that specifically focus on rehearsals and warm-ups, so you can perfect your technique.

After all that research, you should have a list of college programs that fit your goals. Regardless of your final decision, [an arts education provides skills](#) that you can carry forward into any workplace.

## 2. Select your audition materials and spend time rehearsing them.

Now it's time to prepare for your audition. This involves learning the audition requirements for the programs that you're interested in and preparing songs, dances, or monologues of a certain style and length.

It's important to choose pieces that you connect with and that showcase your strengths. When you come across something that speaks to you, make note of it. Training takes time, so make you sure you decide on these materials well before the audition.

Once you have your materials lined up, work on your skills and hone your craft. There isn't a perfect formula when it comes to rehearsals. Some artists benefit from practicing multiple times a day, while others need longer breaks between their rehearsals. Find a routine that works best for you and stick with it.

Make the most of your audition preparation with these general tips:

- **Work with a coach.** A [knowledgeable coach](#) can help tailor your material to a specific program. They can also coach you through your selection, interview process, and performance. Remember to choose a coach who's skilled in the specific area you need.
- **Video tape your rehearsals and watch them back.** Although it may feel awkward, watching these recordings will allow you to learn from your mistakes and recognize your strengths. Maybe you twirl your hair when you're nervous, or maybe you excel at a particular accent. Either way, watching and taking notes on old takes is an easy way to improve your auditions.
- **Practice doing it in different ways.** Now that you've seen how you perform and received feedback, alter your approach. Switch to a different microphone, change the octave, or assume a different role. Your willingness to adapt will shine through in your audition.

Remember to strive for improvement, rather than perfection, in your rehearsals. Your rehearsals shouldn't feel like a chore!

### 3. Take headshots.

Even if your audition goes well, it can be difficult for a faculty member or panel of evaluators to distinguish your name and face from other applicants. Luckily, headshots are an effective marketing tool that can make you stand out.

[College audition headshots](#) should accurately represent who you are and what you look like on your best day. Go to a professional who is highly trained and understands the fundamentals of photography like lighting, framing, and background. All performers need at least one basic headshot with 8x10 dimensions and is shot from the shoulders up.

Keep in mind that you may need additional photos depending on your specialty:

- **Dance:** Dancers should consider including a full-body shot in their program application. In this photo, a dancer should wear clothing that compliments their figure and showcases their form. You can also demonstrate a skill like an arabesque or split. Just make sure you can easily replicate those poses if asked to do so in an audition!
- **Music:** For musician portraits, it could be beneficial to include a few shots with your instrument. If you're doing an action shot, keep it natural. For instance, strum a guitar or hold a violin under your chin, rather than doing something less natural, like raising it above your head.
- **Acting:** Actors often provide a commercial headshot and a theatrical headshot. Commercial shots generally consist of a smile and a neutral background. A theatrical headshot, on the other hand, should show emotional depth and can be more dramatic.

The perfect headshot captures your charm and personality. Evaluators should catch a glimpse of your character when looking at the picture in their hand.

## 4. Submit your prescreen videos.

Most schools require a prescreen video in their admissions process. These videos determine if you get an invitation to a live audition. In other words, they are the audition before the audition, so they should showcase your full range of talents and be free of mistakes.

Each school and program has its own requirements for prescreens. For instance, if you're submitting a [musical theater prescreen video](#), you may need to do a dance, monologue, *and* song. Make sure you're aware of these conditions before pressing the record button.

Here are some best practices for recording your prescreen video:

- **Record well in advance.** Most schools have a strict prescreen deadline. Don't wait until the last minute to film yourself. Give yourself enough time to rehearse, gather equipment, record, and account for any problems that you might run into.
- **Pay attention to video quality.** While some applicants hire a professional videographer and sound technician to ensure the highest quality prescreen, professionals and their equipment are costly. If you're filming yourself, make sure there are no distractions and adequate lighting.
- **Don't be afraid of multiple takes.** You want to be proud of the recording that you submit. After all, it may be the school's first impression of you. Keep recording until you feel confident in the final product.

Ideally, a prescreen video will lead to an in-person audition, where you can then make a lasting impression on the program directors. However, if you can't make it to a live audition, read the school's recorded auditions policy on their website to make sure you will still be considered for an audition if you send in a video.

## 5. Practice mindfulness.

The college audition process is a stressful time. Although each artist has their own process, it's important to rid your mind of anxiety and fear before entering the audition room. Mindfulness is a common meditation technique used in the art world to relieve tension and promote mental clarity.

According to [Psychology Today's guide to mindfulness](#), it can also help you avoid self-criticism and cope with uncomfortable emotions, skills that performers can greatly benefit from. If you want to be mindful this audition season, follow these steps:

1. **Find a quiet place.** Situate yourself in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed and where you are comfortable. Some people prefer meditating lying down, while others would rather sit upright in a chair. Either way, this is your time to relax.
2. **Put your audition materials away.** Put a pause on running lines in your head and practicing steps. Just close your eyes and start by taking deep breaths.
3. **Focus on your breathing.** One benefit of mindfulness is increased focus. This is achieved by concentrating on a single thing, such as breathing. Notice the sounds as you inhale and exhale. Let the rhythm wash over you.
4. **Shift your attention to the present.** Slowly shift your focus away from your breaths and onto the present moment. Accept any emotions that arise without judgment. Repeating this exercise will eventually help you control your responses to stressful situations.

Even five minutes of meditation can help alleviate your anxiety and fine-tune the muscle in your brain that allows you to be present. After enough practice, you'll be able to embrace the emotions associated with auditioning.

## 6. Prioritize sleep and healthy eating prior to your audition.

During audition season, remember that physical and mental health are closely connected. Losing just a few hours of sleep can make it harder to remember your prepared material and focus on the audition experience.

Being well-rested and well-nourished can make the difference between a powerful performance and a stagnant one. Incorporate rest and healthy eating into your training process by:

- Eating nutrient-rich foods that will help fuel your body.
- Avoiding excess caffeine.
- Staying hydrated.
- Bringing snacks to the audition.
- Sleeping for six to 10 hours each night.

When you stick to these healthy practices, you're more likely to memorize materials, pick up choreography, and excel in the audition room.

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From rehearsals to prescreens, the road to college auditions is a difficult one. However, the most important piece of advice that you will receive along the way is to have fun and learn from the process. This is an exciting step towards your future!

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