Acting for Film

WELCOME TO *Acting for Film*

Over the course of eight weeks we'll cover the techniques of film acting, the differences between film and theatre acting, and life as a working actor. You'll learn how to develop your skills and techniques specific to film acting, with exercises to develop effective screen presence and tips on understanding the film industry and an actor's place within it.

The course has been designed for those who have never acted before, those who have come from a stage acting background and want to learn how to translate those skills for film, and filmmakers who want to learn more about the actor's craft.

We will be discussing varying approaches to film acting, watching a variety of styles of film performance and, later in the course, putting what you've learned into action. Lights, camera, action, in fact.

This will be an intensive, at times emotional, and, hopefully, fun course to truly test your thespian abilities.

Please note, recording of sessions using any electronic device(s) is not permitted, but do feel free to take written notes.

And there will of course be on-camera exercises – it is acting for *film* after all – so get used to seeing yourself on screen!

SUGGESTED READING

Here is a not at all exhaustive but fascinating list of books that you may wish to check out, both during the course and following it. Much of acting can only be learned by doing, but there is inspiration to be had by exploring other people's experiences.

Secrets of Screen Acting
Patrick Tucker (1994)

A 'magician's box of acting tricks for today's performer', Patrick Tucker's book aims to teach aspiring on-camera actors to approach a film shoot from a (mostly) technical standpoint. From working with frame to mastering vocal levels to understanding the editing process, this is an interesting starting point for all actors – particularly those moving from stage to screen.

Michael Caine – Acting in Film: An Actor's Take on Movie Making
Michael Caine (1990)

I particularly recommend this as it comes from a place of real experience. Caine breaks down every step of the actors' process, focusing on practical how-to guides on topics such as mastering subtle facial expressions and working with directors. Don't expect a love-letter to the art; Caine focuses on technical instruction and teachable personal anecdotes.

To the Actor
Michael Chekhov (1953)

Almost every actor can learn a thing or two from another great Russian actor and teacher Michael Chekhov. Chekhov's book *To the Actor* teaches a lot about actors' emotions, being aware in the space and developing your characters. Chekhov's simple and practical method – successfully used by professional actors all over the world – trains the actor's imagination and body to fulfil its potential.

Acting Face to Face: The Actor's Guide to Understanding How Your Face Communicates for TV and Film
John Sudol (2013)

In this practical, technique-driven text, author John Sudol focuses on what he calls the "language of the face": non-verbal communications achieved through subtle mastery of one's own facial expressions. Sudol describes the "science of emotions", explaining that expertly executed facial reactions can make or break an actor's credibility, relatability and, most importantly, believability. Though Sudol emphasises technique, truthfully created feelings are at the core of his philosophy. As he says, "Think the thought and the camera will pick it up."

Acting for Film
Cathy Haase (2018)

This excellent resource from actor Cathy Haase teaches the detailed mechanics of mastering on-screen presence and your own "creative instrument", alongside thorough explanations of the film industry's inner workings. Haase also offers multiple exercises for everything from text-analysis to voice modulation, shedding light on both the actors' process and the day-to-day experience of a working actor.

The Science of On-Camera Acting
Andréa Morris (2014)

One of the most technically focused on-camera manuals on the market, Andréa Morris gained insights from famed psychologist Dr Paul Ekman (who was loosely fictionalised in Fox's *Lie to Me*) to create this scientific approach to on-screen acting. Morris looks at the neuroscience behind human emotions and what the camera actually captures – from the mechanics of dialogue, voice, and physicality, to discovering your own form of naturalistic acting.

Auditioning and Acting for the Camera
John W Shepard (2004)

John W Shepard's excellent read outlines on-camera acting by genre, offering tailored tips for film, episodic television, sitcom, soap opera, commercial, and industrial acting. Shepard covers all aspects of an on-camera career from audition techniques to what to expect on set – and offers practice exercises to hone your skills.

How to Book Acting Jobs in TV and Film: The Truth About the Acting Industry – Conversations With a Veteran Hollywood Casting
Cathy Reinking (2012)

Hollywood veteran Cathy Reinking shares years of casting wisdom gleaned from the front lines of hit shows like *Frasier* and *Arrested Development*. The former manager of casting at NBC, Reinking demystifies the acting and auditioning process from the other side of the table. Her extremely detailed instruction breaks down specific, frequently overlooked components of actor training, covering subjects such as "Different Styles of Auditioning for Each Type of TV Show" and "Ten Secrets of Charisma: What We Are Drawn To and How To Enhance Your Own".

Action! Professional Acting for Film and Television
Robert Benedetti (2006)

Producer, teacher, and writer Robert Benedetti has authored several great books on acting and filmmaking, with "Action!" proving most useful to those honing their on-camera skills. Benedetti explains the distinction between the camera and the stage, and breaks on-screen acting into two parts: technical approach and the creative process. Learn the basics of starting a career, key terms to know on set, how to "self-train," and more in this extremely useful text.

Playing to the Camera: Film Actors Discuss Their Craft
Eds: Bert Cardullo, Harry Geduld, Ronald Gottesman, and Leigh Woods (2009)

Those seeking a historical context for on-camera work should look no further than this fascinating anthology containing ruminations from some of Hollywood's greatest stars. Forty two curated testimonials from screen actors dating back to the silent era describe their artistic processes, technical challenges, personal experiences and more, creating a thoughtful training ground for emerging actors of today and tomorrow.

The Eight Characters of Comedy: A Guide to Sitcom Acting and Writing
Scott Sedita (2014)

A veritable textbook for comedic actors and writers alike, Scott Sedita's *Eight Characters of Comedy* breaks down comedic work in a fun, engaging, and eminently practical way. A popular acting teacher himself, Sedita relays information with ease and clarity, explaining concepts including the "Three Pillars of Comedy" and "Auditioning for Sitcoms" coupled with immediately applicable exercises. Sedita also includes full explanations of his famously identified "eight characters" – "the logical smart one, the lovable loser, the neurotic, the dumb one, bitch/bastards, materialistic ones, womaniser/maniser, and in their own universe".

Acting for the Camera
Tony Barr (1997)

This practical handbook is an indispensable resource for theatre actors transitioning to film. Author, actor and teacher Tony Barr uses stage actors' existing training to teach "creative adjustments" for the on-camera medium. From preparation to artistic process to detailed descriptions of being on set, Barr's book offers fantastic (and thoroughly craft-based) tools to get all actors on-screen ready.