MUSICAL THEATER AUDITIONS – DO’S AND DON’TS*
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DO - Prepare a variety of songs for your book that you can pull for auditions, including:
- Standards (up tempo and ballad)
- A character piece (humorous)
- Contemporary Broadway (After “Hair”) pieces, ballad and uptempo
- A 50’s 60’s song (Hairspray, Grease, etc.)
- Something with a simple vocal you can sing on an off day
- Something with a simple accompaniment (in case you get a bad pianist:-(
- Specific song to show what you do well – Jazz, Classical, Country, Sondheim, Pop, etc.
- A Non-Broadway pop

DO - Pick songs that show you off to your best advantage.
- Song should communicate who you are, what makes you unique, as well as what your vocal qualities are.
- Make sure music is in your key – you can transpose it as long as the key change doesn’t change the essential character of the song.
- Make sure song is under two minutes, and also have a 16 bar cut version prepared.
- If you are auditioning for a specific show, try to pick something in the same style.
- If you’re not sure what to sing, it’s OK to give them a choice of two to pick from.

DON’T - Pick songs that are:
- Signature pieces (People, Over the Rainbow).
- Too well known or overdone.
- Too obscure – (pianist won’t be familiar with it – don’t eliminate but be careful).
- Too character or show-specific (Roxy from Chicago).
- Avoid songs currently or recently playing on Broadway (Wicked).
- Too difficult for pianist.
- Too recently learned or risky.
- Too boring or self-indulgent.
- Original songs – you want them to listen to you not the tune.
DO - Be prepared and professional and establish a good relationship with the accompanist!

- Always have a professional accompanist test your sheet music; there are lots of mistakes in sheet music downloaded online and in books.
- Have as much information included in the sheet music as possible, i.e.: notes, chord symbols, lyrics. Use a highlighter to draw attention to confusing repeats, codas, etc. (An accompanist can help with this.)
- Have your music accordion-folded and taped together, or use plastic cover protectors so the pages don’t get out of order.
- Have the intro noted or tell the accompanist what you want, and establish the tempo with him/her by counting or singing.
- Don’t spend too much time explaining your music to the accompanist.
- Don’t let on if there’s a mistake or you’re not happy with the tempo; maintain your tempo and the pianist will find you.
- ALWAYS be polite – you want the pianist on your side!

DO - “Act the Song.”

- Know what show the song is from, who wrote it, where the song came from in the show, what character sang it and why.
- Treat the song as a monologue. Figure out what the lyrics mean to you; create your own subtext, and find a compelling reason to sing it.
- Communicate the lyrics through the music, as though the words had never occurred to you before.
- Practice using gestures that are manifestations of what you’re thinking.
- When you move, move with intention; put your foot in the direction you’re going, take small steps.

DON’T – Make a poor first impression

- Give an over-long introduction.
- Complain or explain or make excuses at the audition.
- Try to be someone you’re not.
- Take it personally if they reject you.

DO – Be your “best self” at the audition

- Dress appropriately to the show, and take special care with your personal appearance.
- Walk into the audition like you own the place.
- Find the light.
- Smile, tell them your name and what you plan to sing.
- Use the audition as an opportunity to practice, and realize you will not be right for every part. Auditioning is part of your job, and remember to act like you enjoy what you do!