

Syracuse University

College of Visual & Performing Arts

Department of Drama Self-Recording Tips

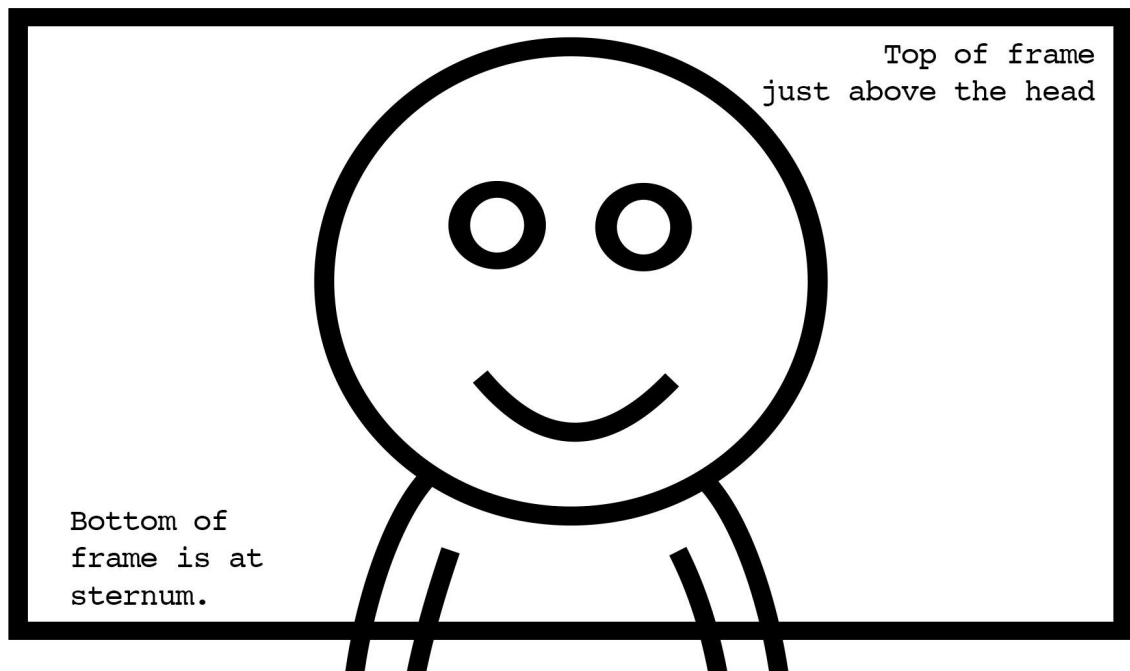
- 1) The most important aspect of recording yourself is your performance. Your connection to the material, your character, your objectives, etc. Everything else that follows in this list should be at the service of your performance. In other words, don't stress out too much if you can't do all the technical aspects below for your self-tape. In the end, if you have a strong performance it will come through the screen no matter what.
- 2) Location: Film indoors in a room that you can control for noise and light. Film against a backdrop that is as plain and simple as possible. A bare wall is perfect. If possible, perform two to three feet away from the backdrop to keep some distance between yourself and the backdrop to minimize shadows.
- 3) Camera: A cell phone camera is perfectly sufficient for filming. Please film in landscape mode (horizontal) and NOT in portrait mode (vertical). If possible, use a tripod. If a tripod is not available, try to use a bookcase, stack boxes, etc. to mount the camera. Ideally, the camera lens should be at approximately eye level. This link provides examples of how to make your own tripod for cell phones: <https://bit.ly/33b8Gfl>. If using a tripod is not possible, have the camera operator try to hold the camera as still as possible.
- 4) Lighting: Make sure there is sufficient lighting for your performance to minimize the "grainy" quality of the recording. Place the primary light source in front of yourself two to three feet to the left or right of the camera above your head level. Using natural sunlight from a nearby window is perfectly adequate. Avoid a strong light source coming from behind you so as to minimize "backlighting" and casting shadows on your face.
- 5) Audio: If the filming location can be secured for noise, then the internal microphone from the camera should be sufficient. If there is a concern about noise, the use of an external directional microphone or lavalier microphone may be considered. There are several options for cell phone attachments such as:
Directional Microphone: <https://amzn.to/39JM06Q>
Lavalier Microphone: <https://amzn.to/2XcGtAU>

- 6) **Slating:** At the beginning of each video performance, slowly and clearly state your name, the name of the piece from which you are performing, and the name of the playwright/composer/lyricist. If possible, film this as a separate video and crossfade into the video of the performance. If video editing is not possible, make sure to take a moment to transition from the slate to your performance piece, but no more than a beat or two.
- 7) **Framing:** This term means how your body is placed within the screen as if you are in a picture frame. For the monologues and song performances, place yourself in one of the following three frames:
- a) “Chest Shot” if there is minimal movement in your performance. The top of the frame is just above your head and the bottom of the frame is at your sternum.
 - b) “Waist Shot” if there is limited movement in your performance (i.e. you use your hands a lot, small crosses, etc.). The top of the frame is just above your head and the bottom of the frame is at your waistline.
 - c) “Cowboy Shot” if there is a lot of movement in your performance (i.e. you sit down or stand up, bigger crosses, high energy, etc.). The top of the frame is just above your head and the bottom of the frame is at mid-thigh.

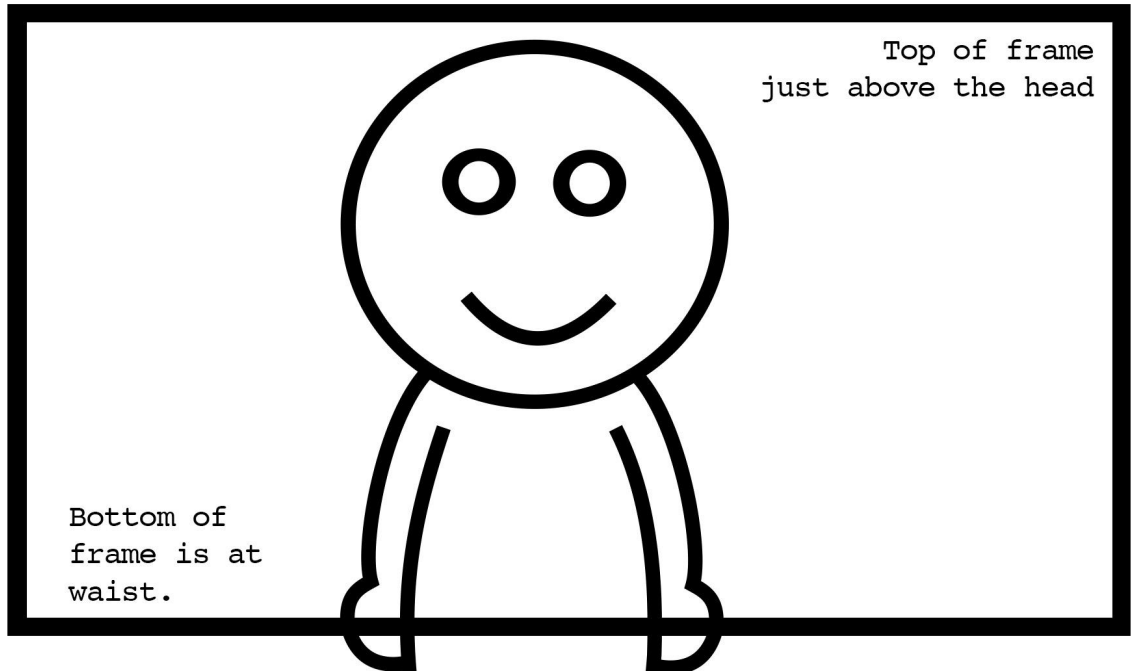
For the movement/dance performance, you will use a “Full Body” frame, meaning the top of the frame is just above your head and the bottom of the frame is at your feet.

Please see the illustrations below for reference:

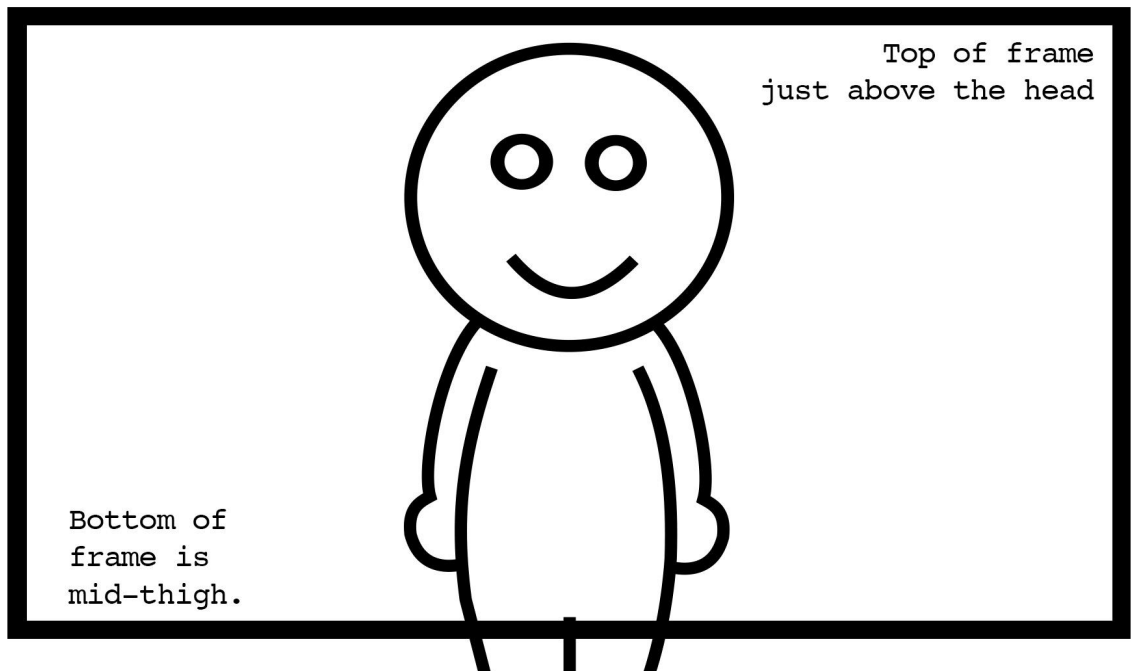
CHEST SHOT



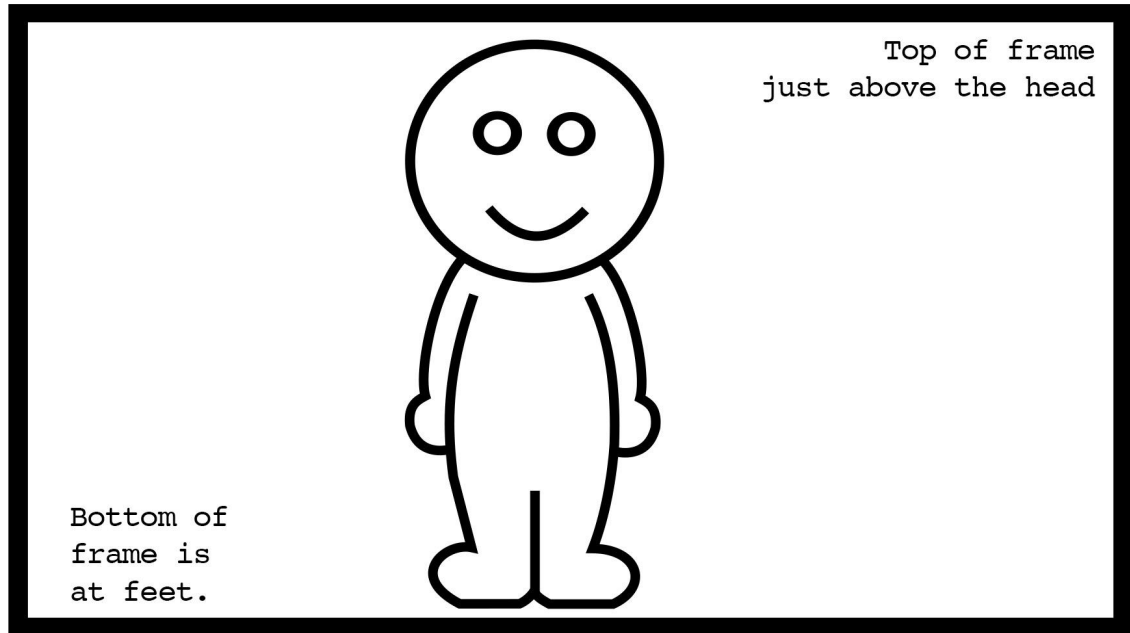
WAIST SHOT



COWBOY SHOT



FULL BODY SHOT



Final advice: It may seem like not being able to audition in person is a disadvantage; however, think about all the films and tv shows you've watched that have made you laugh and cry. You will be auditioning for us on the same medium those actors used to affect you emotionally! Approach recording yourself with an attitude of fun and adventure, and it will greatly enhance your performance. Finally, don't obsess over trying to make the self-tape technically perfect. Give yourself a time limit to film and send in the best take.

We look forward to seeing your work!