

FAQ's and other thoughts about voice-over work

WILL VOICE WORK PROVIDE ME WITH A STEADY INCOME?

Truth is there are very few people that can rely solely on voice-over work. However, if you have the skill it is a useful extra source of income and an opportunity to use your creative skills.

IS IT A SKILL THAT ONLY ACTORS HAVE?

It is not inevitable that having acting skills will guarantee voice-over success! It requires a good deal of specific vocal technique and, of course, an interesting voice! However, in terms of availability, it suits the temperament and sporadic life of an actor.

IS IT WORTH PURSUING?

Of course – if you think you have what it takes give it a try.

That said, it's worth getting an unbiased appraisal, which some studios offer for around £50. Until you have done this, resist the temptation to spend good money (anything between £100 - £350) on a showreel unless you are supremely confident or have been given sound advice!

theShowreel.com is worth considering.

SHOWREELS – SOME USEFUL TIPS

- Two minutes maximum, ideally just one - keep extracts reasonably short, 10-20 seconds.
- Include commercials and a piece of factual narration such as a documentary.
- Make them as authentic as possible by adding music and sound effects if possible.
- Avoid monologues, book-readings and poetry
- Begin with *the most* representative example of your voice.
- Avoid topical themes as these date easily.
- Avoid mentioning specific dates for the same reason.
- Avoid using material with voices of the same gender.
- Always play to your strengths!! Do what you do... well!
- Avoid anything that has taken a long time to perfect in the studio or can't easily be reproduced in a session.
- Avoid accents unless they are authentic – there are plenty of genuine regional voices available.

more...

LISTEN!

- To commercials, and documentaries – *really* LISTEN to the variety of read styles, place yourself in appropriate categories. Note the different vocal attitudes, tone, pace and intonation etc
- To showreels, their content and how they are constructed. Visit our website www.hobsons-international.com

IT'S WORTH PRACTISING

Before you get actual 'hands-on' experience, copy the words from TV or radio commercials and read them aloud. Having an innate feel for the length of a commercial is useful. Using a stopwatch (often found under Applications/Extras on mobile phones) compare your reading with the original.

Recording your efforts would also be valuable, so you can gauge your progress and get acclimatised to hearing your own voice.

Likewise, when you get booked for a session read something aloud, by sight for 15 minutes before leaving home.

HOW DO I GET AN AGENT?

Even though the number of voice-over agents has swelled considerably over the years, so too have the number of budding voices. Therefore, most agencies are over subscribed and, unless you happen to have the voice quality or accent they're looking for, it will likely prove a real challenge to find representation.

Nonetheless, there is a list of voice-over agents in Contacts (published by Spotlight), so once you have your showreel it's worth a mail-shot. But be prepared to wait for a response as most agencies get inundated every week and, be mindful too, that sadly, not all respond!

DO I HAVE TO BE BASED IN LONDON?

It's not essential, but being available for a session at short notice, is often advantageous and it is the epicentre of the major UK advertising agencies and post-production studios!