

**Get paid to act!**

FabJob Guide to  
**Become an  
Actor**



**JOHN C. HAVENS**

**Visit [www.FabJob.com](http://www.FabJob.com)**

# Contents

About the Author .....	9
<b>1. Welcome .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	11
1.2 Are You a Born Actor? .....	12
1.3 What's In This Guide for You.....	15
<b>2. Getting Experience .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 Areas to Work On.....	18
2.1.1 Your Voice.....	18
2.1.2 Your Body .....	20
2.1.3 Character Work/Scene Study .....	22
2.2 Learning to Act .....	25
2.2.1 An Acting Class .....	25
2.2.2 Get An Acting Coach.....	27
2.2.3 Musical Theatre.....	28
2.2.4 Get in a Show .....	29
2.2.5 Make a Video.....	30
2.3 Apprenticeships and Internships.....	31
2.3.1 Apprenticeships.....	31
2.3.2 Internships.....	34
2.3.3 Regional Auditions.....	35
2.4 Conservatory/Graduate Acting Programs .....	40
2.4.1 Finding a Program.....	41
2.4.2 Choosing a Program.....	43
2.5 Professional Classes .....	45

<b>3. Tools of the Trade</b> .....	<b>48</b>
3.1 Pictures.....	48
3.1.1 A Note About “Type” .....	49
3.1.2 What Should They Look Like? .....	50
3.1.3 Where Do I Go To Get My Pictures Taken? .....	54
3.1.4 What They Cost .....	56
3.1.5 The Shoot .....	57
3.1.6 Reproductions.....	59
3.1.7 Final Thoughts about Pictures.....	61
3.2 Resumes.....	62
3.2.1 What to Put on Your Resume.....	62
3.2.2 What Not To List.....	69
3.2.3 More Than One Resume? .....	69
3.2.4 Formatting .....	70
3.3 Video Demo Reels .....	72
3.3.1 What to Include on Your Reel.....	72
3.3.2 How to Produce the Tapes .....	73
3.4 Your Journal .....	74
<b>4. Acting in Los Angeles or New York</b> .....	<b>76</b>
4.1 Do I Need to Move? .....	76
4.2 Moving to New York City .....	79
4.2.1 What the City is Like.....	79
4.2.2 New York as an Actor .....	80
4.3 Los Angeles .....	82
4.3.1 What the City is Like.....	82
4.3.2 Los Angeles as an Actor.....	83
4.4 How Do I Pay the Bills? .....	85
4.4.1 Waiter/Waitress.....	86
4.4.2 Office Temping.....	86

4.5	Getting Into the Acting Business.....	88
4.5.1	The Trades (Industry Publications).....	88
4.5.2	Making Contacts and “Schmoozing” .....	90
4.6	Behavior to Avoid: “The 5 Deadly Sins” .....	93
<b>5.</b>	<b>Getting Hired .....</b>	<b>98</b>
5.1	Auditions.....	98
5.1.1	Monologues.....	99
5.1.2	Reading a Scene from the Script.....	107
5.1.3	Musical Theatre Auditions.....	110
5.1.4	The Interview .....	111
5.1.5	Go Sees .....	113
5.1.6	Cattle Calls.....	115
5.1.7	Auditioning For the Camera.....	115
5.1.8	Commercial Auditions.....	117
5.1.9	Callbacks.....	118
5.1.10	More Audition Tips.....	121
5.1.11	Final Thoughts .....	125
5.2	Getting Work Without an Agent .....	126
5.2.1	Mailing Your Photo and Resume .....	127
5.2.2	Find Out About Auditions .....	129
5.3	Agents .....	131
5.3.1	What an Agent Is .....	132
5.3.2	Getting An Agent.....	133
5.3.3	Freelancing .....	147
5.3.4	Signing with an Agent .....	148
5.3.5	Managers .....	151
5.3.6	Some Final Thoughts.....	152

5.4	Casting Directors.....	154
5.4.1	What They Do .....	154
5.4.2	How to Get to Know Them .....	156
5.4.3	How to Get Noticed by Casting Directors .....	159
5.5	A Few Words About Directors.....	161
5.6	The Unions .....	161
5.6.1	How To Join.....	163
5.6.2	When To Join .....	164
5.7	What Acting Jobs Pay.....	166
5.7.1	Film.....	166
5.7.2	TV.....	168
5.7.3	The Stage.....	170
5.7.4	Commercials.....	170
5.7.5	A Note on Taxes .....	172
5.8	Other Acting Opportunities.....	172
5.8.1	Voice-overs .....	172
5.8.2	Industrial Films.....	173
5.8.3	Children’s Theatre .....	174
<b>6.</b>	<b>Interviews with Insiders .....</b>	<b>176</b>
6.1	People Who Work With Actors.....	176
6.1.1	Pat McCorkle, Casting Director.....	176
6.1.2	Lisa, Casting Director.....	182
6.1.3	Beth Schacter, Artistic Director, Former Casting Director & Agent.....	186
6.1.4	David Elliott, Commercial Agent .....	189
6.1.5	Cyrena Esposito, Voice-over & Promo Agent.....	195
6.1.6	Michael & Eleanor, Personal Managers.....	197
6.1.7	Scott Ellis, Director .....	206
6.1.8	Austin Pendleton, Director.....	215

6.2	Actors .....	224
6.2.1	Amy Wilson, Actress .....	224
6.2.2	Susan Isaacs, Actress .....	230
6.2.3	Priscilla Manisto, Actress.....	236
6.2.4	Karen Ziemba, Broadway Actress.....	241
6.2.5	Brian D’arcy James, Broadway Actor.....	247
6.2.6	Matt Black, Actor, Voice-over Talent.....	253
6.2.7	Debra Monk, Actress.....	257
6.2.8	Adam Stein, NYU Graduate Actor.....	267
<b>7.</b>	<b>In Conclusion .....</b>	<b>271</b>



# 1. Welcome

## 1.1 Introduction

Imagine strolling the red carpet at the world's most famous film festival, dressed in the latest designer fashions. Chatting up your latest movie as a guest on a popular talk show. Taking a bow as the star of a hot Broadway show. Signing autographs for hordes of clamoring admirers. Rubbing elbows with the rich and famous at a party where you're the host. Walking up to the podium in the midst of thunderous applause to accept your Academy Award.

Imagining what you want to achieve is the first step towards making it happen. In the FabJob Guide To Become An Actor you will discover the next steps to help you launch your acting career and achieve your dream of becoming a working actor.

In this guide we offer you a step-by-step plan for breaking into the professional acting business. The guide starts from scratch with the assumption that you may have no experience whatsoever in acting. If you have some experience, you can skip ahead to the more advanced topics

in the guide. However, we recommend you at least skim the guide from the beginning in case you find some tips to help you get even more work.

The author is a New York actor who has appeared on and off-Broadway; in major motion pictures, television, regional theatres, commercials and industrial films. His experience serves as an anecdotal guide for the newcomer to discover the tools they'll need to approach acting as a career.

Other acting books written by teachers and coaches offer wonderful advice, but this guide is written by an ACTOR who's "living the life" right now.

## 1.2 Are You a Born Actor?

Actors, like people who work in any other career, have many individual differences. However, there are a number of traits that many actors share. See how many you have.

### A Desire to Perform

Do you love to be the center of attention? Do you like to entertain your friends by telling stories or have a talent for telling jokes? For a would-be actor, these are good signs. They are indications that:

1. You have at least an iota of charisma.
2. You instinctively understand the nature of timing.
3. You like to have an audience.

Here's a news flash: We are all actors at some time. Do any of these phrases sound familiar?

1. Your new haircut looks great!
2. No, you are the best kisser.
3. Best meal I ever ate.
4. The check's in the mail.
5. Your butt does not look fat.

Did you say it and keep a straight face? Pass the Oscar, baby, you were acting! Now, it's not my aim here to get into the moral ramifications of these types of statements (meaning, when does a lie become "white"?) My point is to show that we all fabricate our behavior or modify our reactions according to the needs of the moment. In essence, we're playing characters. We're taking on the guise of someone we are not.

These are simple examples of what you do as an actor: you take on the attributes of someone you are not, and make them into a "character." It's really fun. While some jobs or lifestyles offer you the opportunity to meet fascinating people, actors get to BE those people.

## People Watching

Do you like watching people? Do people interest you? Do you stare at people in public, intrigued by a hairstyle or by a homeless man's condition? Maybe you don't do it in such an overt fashion, but you do have an innate fascination with humanity. You wonder what makes people tick, and want to find out. It can be external: marveling at a dancer's perfect posture. Or it can be a personality that intrigues you. What makes the brooding, raven-haired girl at the mall so interesting?

A knack for observation is a good sign. Because once you become an actor, you'll play characters that are different from you. So where do you do your research? People! You watch them to see how they really behave, so you're not just playing a stereotype. It's essential to identify with the characters you play and sympathize with them. This doesn't mean you have to like them. Just understand them.

## Imitation

Do you go one step beyond observing? Many actors get their start from being imitators.

Imitating means you take on recognizable characteristics of someone else and "perform" them. People laugh or are impressed because you really do the character well. But once you start to imitate people, you're incorporating many of the tools that an actor uses. You study the behavior of others and try to imitate it. You practice in your mirror, or rehearse. If this is the case for you, you've got the sickness and you need to act.

## Drive

Drive, or persistence, is the trait that helps you to continue on your journey no matter what happens. Drive motivates you to take classes so that you will be a better actor. It gets you out of bed in the morning and keeps you going to auditions even when you face rejection. Drive can be excessive, but you also need it if you're going to be an actor. You can still have a laid-back personality, but you need to be able to set goals and do what it takes to achieve them.

In other words, drive depends on you. The odds of getting “discovered” in this business are slim. Again, there are always exceptions to the rule, but why not get “discovered” while you're in a great play, because you had the drive to get there?

## Passion

Passion will fuel your drive. You'll see a great play or movie, and be invigorated to keep pounding the pavement. Or you'll have such a desire to play a certain role that you'll get your own theatre company together and just do it.

I'll give you a quick example of something that I felt passionate about. I saw Cherry Jones do a play called *The Heiress*. It was one of the top three performances I have ever seen. It's a darn good thing she won the Tony Award for it. She was mystifyingly amazing in that role. She was ethereal and majestic. And she inspired me. What a precious gift, to know that someone's performance can move you that way. That's why most of us get into the business and stay there — we want to move people. That's the real passion, and I promise it will keep you going through many of your darkest hours.

## The “T” Word

One thing I'll say at this point about acting is that it's very helpful if you have talent. I won't say essential because everything's subjective, and there's always the question of taste. But as a rule you need to have a spark of true talent that manifests itself to others in a very obvious way.

Do your jokes always fall flat? When you do your imitations, do people gaze back with befuddled stares? Is there an aura of pity that surrounds your every effort to entertain? These are bad signs. Again, it's essential to be realistic. I love to bowl, but I stink at it. I might be able to train for years and become a top-notch "strike king." But somewhere deep within me, I just don't think I'll ever wear those golden bowling shoes. I also wouldn't want to work that hard to get there. But I do love the occasional "lane toss" and I have a great time doing it with my friends and loved ones.

This is why I wish to point out that you can pursue acting just for the sheer love of acting. So what if you're not the next Johnny Depp and Charlize Theron?

That said, I assume you're reading this e-book because you have confidence in your talent and want to go far in your acting career. So get ready, get set...you're off to the races my friend.

## **1.3 What's In This Guide for You**

So you know that acting is for you. Now where do you go?

Chapter 2, *Getting Experience*, will explain how to prepare yourself for an acting career and give you plenty of ideas on how you can improve your acting skills and start performing right away. This chapter includes information about acting classes, coaches, apprenticeships, internships and graduate programs.

Chapter 3, *Tools of the Trade*, gives all the specifics of what every actor needs to start his or her professional career – including headshots, resumes, and demo reels. You will discover mistakes to avoid and find out how to produce the types of materials that can help you get the job.

Chapter 4, *Acting in Los Angeles or New York*, explains what LA and New York, and if you live in Canada, Toronto and Vancouver are like to live and work in. You will find out how to break into the acting business in these cities by making contacts and reading "the trades." You'll even get some tips on how to support yourself when you first arrive.

Chapter 5, *Getting Hired*, is the heart of the guide. Here you will find all the specifics of getting work in the acting profession. This chapter tells you how to find out about auditions, get an agent and impress casting directors. The chapter is packed with insider tips about little known ways to get noticed by the people who have the power to hire you. You'll also learn about the acting unions, how to get work without an agent, and acting opportunities in film, television, the stage, commercials and voice-over work.

Chapter 6 is a special bonus chapter containing Interviews with Insiders. In this chapter you will find over 15 interviews from a wide array of professionals currently working in the entertainment industry. Their advice gives a greater overall perspective of the business of acting. All of these people are working right now as actors, casting directors, agents, and directors. They have turned their dreams into reality, and their advice can help you do the same.

**You have reached the end of the free sample of the *FabJob Guide to Become an Actor*. To order and download the complete guide go to [www.fabjob.com/program/become-actor](http://www.fabjob.com/program/become-actor).**