

The



HEADSHOT CHECKLIST

Real Advice From **Top** NYC Casting Directors

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Intro:

The perfect headshot. A photo that represents you in all the right ways is the Holy Grail for an actor. To leave behind an 8x10 that puts a twinkle in the casting director's eye is the ultimate goal.

Obtaining that perfect photo that casting directors love can be difficult. Conflicting opinions from photographers, agents, friends and family about what your headshot should be is downright frustrating.

This is why I went to the source. I contacted many of the top casting directors in New York City - the people who actually cast you in stuff - to get an idea of what they like and don't like about actor headshots.

I studied their responses to determine the most important headshot tips and put them into this checklist. I hope this is helpful and aids you in capturing your Holy Grail headshot.

TIP!

When planning your next headshot session use this checklist to take note of what casting wants to see and doesn't want to see. Be sure to incorporate these qualities into your new shots.



1. Look Like Your Headshot

This may seem silly to mention, but the sheer amount that this point was stressed shows that casting directors regularly battle with headshots that don't look like the actor.

- ✓ "I don't want to be disappointed when the actor who walks in looks nothing like the picture."
-Jack Bowdan, Binder Casting
- ✓ "I just want the photo to look like the actor...looking like them on their best day."
-Eric Woodall, Tara Rubin Casting
- ✓ "The headshot NEEDS to look like the actor I'm calling in. That's MOST important. But a given."
-Rachel Hoffman, Telsey+Co
- ✓ "The most important thing is that the actor's headshot looks like an approachable person, they should look their best - the way they will actually look when they walk into the room."
-Benton Whitley/, Stewart Whitley Casting

TIP!

The most important take away here is that your headshot looks like you on your best day, a clear and honest representation of you. Nothing flashy, overdone, or distracting. Keep it simple, you are enough :)



2. No Glamour Shots

You should look like a person, not a model. A headshot that is too blown out with lighting, too much make up or over edited/retouched is distracting and turns the casting director off.

- ✓ "Glamor shots are fine for models but not useful to me. I want to see into the eyes/soul/art of an actor. Glamor shots stress outside not inside."
-**Duncan Stewart, Stewart Whitley Casting**
- ✓ "I don't like when an actor's headshot is a glamour shot. I prefer something more natural."
-**Nick Petrovich, Laura Stanczyk Casting**
- ✓ "What I don't like in some current headshots are tricks with lighting or color that may make the photograph incredibly striking."
-**Jack Bowdan, Binder Casting**
- ✓ "Overly retouched pictures are such a turn off. When editing goes to the extreme and it looks like they have been shot through a lens with vaseline, we lose the feeling that we are looking at a real person. Making eyes a different color or adjusting the hue to be extreme is not helpful. It isn't a real person."
-**Cesar Rocha, Telsey+Co**

TIP!

The Glamour Headshot:

A headshot that stresses the outside more than the inside, with excess make up, over stylization, over retouching, and distracting lighting effects.



3. Engaging - Something in The Eyes

Your shot should embody you and have an engaging energy to it. Nothing over the top, just something in the eyes that brings a life-like quality to your shot.

- ✓ "It's all about the story behind the eyes. Not looking too posed, but rather like they were in the middle of a deep conversation with a close friend and looked up because they saw something out of the corner of their eye."
-**Benton Whitley, Stewart Whitley Casting**
- ✓ "There's got to be a story there...something that intrigues me. And it shouldn't be complex...there should just be something active going on, not just a look. Often, it's in the eyes."
-**Rachel Hoffman, Telsey+Co**
- ✓ "I don't like when the person doesn't seem connected to the camera. Dead eyes are bad."
-**Tiffany Canfield, Telsey+Co**

TIP!

Think of confident moments and try to relive and share them with the camera.

Say "I got this! I'm flipping awesome" in your head, and believe it!



4. Quality

The headshot is referenced by the casting team throughout your entire audition process. The quality of your headshot print is important and is noted by many casting directors.

✓ “The quality of the photo (lighting, focus, color, styling) and then the quality of the actual print might get an actor called back over someone else. Usually when people cut corners it shows.”

-Justin Huff, Telsey+Co

✓ “I don’t like when headshots aren't printed correctly. Or if they just seem 'unprofessional.' We can tell if your neighbor's cousin took the picture.”

-Rachel Hoffman, Telsey+Co

TIP!

Make sure your photographer provides you with files formatted for printing.

Also, print your headshots in bulk from a professional printing company such as Reproductions in New York City or L.A.

Outro:

I hope this checklist is helpful to you. Please use it to set yourself up with quality headshots that are infused with your personal vibe, so they can help you book lots of work.

If you have a second, shoot me an email at ted@tedely.com and let me know what you think, I'd love to hear from you.

Cheers! -Ted

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