Auditioning 107: Demo Reels
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What's a demo reel? A short, professionally edited video containing clips from movies, TV shows or commercials you've been in.

Who needs one? Most working actors (or actors who want to start working). Audition calls often ask for links to reels.

Where will it appear? Online. (Most are on Youtube.)

Who will see it?Friends, family, strangers, other actorsProducers and directorsAgents and managers

Should you pay to have it hosted on a site like Backstage? You can if you want, but this is usually not necessary. Just put it up on Youtube and include the ink when submitting for the audition.

How long should an actor's reel be? 1 to 1.5 minutes (for producers and directors) Up to 2.5 minutes long (for agents and managers)

What should go in it?

1. Most reels start with a few seconds of SOLID BLACK with the actor's NAME on it. Or you might have a still of your headshot on the screen, with your name superimposed on it.
2. After that, you should show some FINISHED, PROFESSIONALLY EDITED CLIPS from movies, TV shows, commercials, industrials, or web series you've been in.
3. They should be, or look like, clips from actual movies.
4. Base your reel around short, focused examples of your very best acting.
5. Your reel should show your _type_ clearly (the sort of role you're typically cast in). It should also include examples showing you _interacting:_ (listening and responding to another actor)
7. Like your headshot, your image in the reel should be kept current (should look like you, not be years out of date.)
8. End it with your contact information (phone and email).

What should NOT go in your reel?

1. Don't include prolonged shots of other actors.
2. Don't include entire scenes. (You're not telling a story, you're showcasing yourself as an actor)
3. Don't include too many clips. (The usual advice is to limit it to three)
4. Don't include repetitive material showing you in the same sort of role or emotion repeatedly.

What ruins a reel?

1. Poor quality footage
2. Poor production values (bad video or audio)
3. Pointless fancy effects (fancy "production" titles, music and graphics at the beginning) (Keep it simple - nothing distracting)
4. Leaving too much of the other actors in the reel

Where do I get material to put into my reel?

1. Short clips from movies you're cast in (after the editing is done)
2. Short clips from web series you're cast in (after the editing is done)
3. Short clips from movies made in the "Let's Make a Movie" class, or similar classes.
4. Some actors film and edit short scenes or short movies themselves, in order to create more materials for their reels. This is fine if you can pull it off, but be aware that anything that goes into your finished reel will need to have excellent production values: high quality writing, acting, audio editing, color correction, and a professional musical score.
5. Whatever you end up putting into your reel(s), it should be your very best work as an actor.

Can I edit my own reel?
- Taking short clips out of existing movies you've been in, and editing them together into a reel, is very skilled work. It's fine to do so yourself if you can do a professional job. Otherwise, hire an editor.

Can I just film a monologue and put it on my reel?
- No, but it's fine to do a separate reel based around a filmed monologue.
- When filming a monologue, don't try to make it look like a scene from a movie. (There's no need to add a musical score, for example.) Just film it against a simple backdrop. Let the focus be on your performance.