Thomas R. Baker
www.thomasrbaker.com
805-501-6765

Set Behavior

1. **15** minutes is late. **30** minutes is on time. Be at least **45** minutes to **one hour BEFORE** set call.

2. When you break for lunch, let the **CREW** eat first. They're actually hungry. You spent half the morning in the craft truck.

3. Some actors like to hang out on set even when it's not their scene to shoot. That's okay, but stay out of everyone's way.

4. **NEVER** ask people to get you things. If they offer, sure, why not? But be thankful, say so, and mean it.

5. Police your own continuity and remember exactly what you did in the master when it comes time to shoot the close-ups. Continuity on set, especially on small projects, can easily get overlooked and it's a bitch for the editor to create a seamless cut when that glass you're holding keeps switching hands or moving around the table.

6. Try to learn everyone's name as quickly as possible, especially the departments you're going to be working closest with (hair/makeup, wardrobe, ADs, camera, audio). You'll come across much more as a decent human being when you can say "Excuse me, [correct name], the mic pack is digging into my spine. Would you mind repositioning it?"

7. Hit your marks like a precision airstrike. You're just wasting a take if you and that focus point the camera assistant marked aren't going to align.

8. Learn your lines and be able to do the entire scene in one take. Sure, you might not need to run the whole thing in one shot, but editors usually prefer long takes to 1000 cuts in a scene. Give them the option.

9. Don't show up on set wrecked because you went out partying last night. You're making everyone's job harder, especially makeup.

10. Say thank you to everything. **EVERYTHING**.

11. **BE POLITE** and gracious to everyone.

12. Volunteer for **ANYTHING** (within reason!) the director/AD asks. Of course you're tired. We are all tired. Volunteer.

13. Don't ask the director questions that you could direct to someone else. They are very busy and don't need to choose which hand you should hold the prop phone in.

14. **NEVER** smoke on set. Never steal. Never drink. Never do drugs. Never horseplay. Never harass anyone!

15. **DON'T** be a critic. Your makeup is fine. Your hair is fine. Your wardrobe is fine. The camera position is fine. If you don't like something, respectfully suggest a different option or shut the hell up.

16. **DON'T** badmouth the director, AD, PAs, CDs, or any of the crew on or off set! Especially while on set in holding.

17. A good director will allow you freedom to massage your lines to make them more natural. But don't alter the story. Or the character. And don't go overboard. And don't add lines just to try and increase your screen time.

18. Don't make extra work for anyone. There are exactly the right number of people on set and they each have a critical job to do that will keep them busy all day. They're not bored.

19. Don't interfere with set dressing. That "mess" has been positioned deliberately. That is someone's work.

20. In between takes, don't play around. You might have a three-minute break but nobody else does. They're busy resetting.

21. **KNOW** what the shot is. And if the camera isn't on you, your performance isn't important to anyone else except your scene partners. So don't milk it.

22. Don't ask for notes after every take. If the director has one, he/she will tell you. Otherwise, do the same exact thing again.

23. Ask for another take **ONLY** if you know you can do better. Otherwise, you're just wasting everyone's time.

24. After you've shot the master, and the wide, and the mediums, and are setting up for the close-ups is **NOT** the time to "try something".

25. Don't touch **ANYTHING**. Not the camera, not the lights, not the props or the set decorations, not the mics, not the storyboards, not the monitor, not the cables. Nothing.

26. Don't try to do anyone else's job. You're the talent, not the DOP, not the key grip, and certainly not the director. Do **YOUR** job and your job alone.

27. Compliment other people's work. The lighting is great. That focus pull was unreal. That set looks insane. Yes, you're good too, but people will be telling you that for months, if not years, after this thing wraps. The others, not so much.

28. When you're wrapped, don't do a blanket "great day, everyone! Thank you!" Go up to each person individually and thank them sincerely for their contribution to a project that, ultimately, will be more about you than them.

Why You Are An Actor

1. "Stealing the show" is not a compliment. The ensemble is more important than your "moments".

2. You'd be surprised how few people are willing to pay for theatre tickets when they aren't your friends and family and have no personal connection to you whatsoever.

3. No, you can't actually play forty and fifty-year-olds in your twenties. At least, no one will pay you to do it.

4. By the same token, there are very few roles in the theatre for twenty-year-olds.

5. The stage manager always works much harder than you. And technically, you work for him/her, not the other way around.

6. Most people don't get drunk on Opening Night…because they have a show the next day…idiots. Oh, and cast parties are more likely to be cast dinners. They are professional atmospheres filled with professionals. These are not gripe sessions while you stuff yourself silly.

7. Developing and producing your own work is the single MOST important thing you can do after you graduate.

8. Background film roles don't do shit for your career. *(Not always true! Supporting/speaking roles result from volunteering on set.)*

9. Unions are awesome and the worst at the same time. Join a union. Be loyal to your union. Exercise due diligence for any acting job.

10. When people said you would be poor thanks to your brilliant career choice, what they really meant was "completely destitute." And that's okay. They are not you. You have that drive, that spark. You can't explain it. They cannot understand it. And they never will.

11. Auditions are on one level. Knowing the right people is a completely different level altogether.

12. Directors, casting agents, and producers care as much about how easy you will be to work with as they do about how good you are for the role. If not more so.

13. If you are hard to work with, you will be hard to hire.

14. Save up a certifiable amount of money if you're going to move to the big city to try and "make it". Like, a ridiculous amount. Student-loan worthy. That is, if you want to actually be able to go for auditions, take classes, network, and you know, any of those other career-building essentials (LinkedIn, business cards, branding yourself, websites, headshots, etc).

15. Don't do everything. Seriously. Know when to turn something down. And believe me, you'll know.

16. It's not unreasonable to expect to be paid for your work. And you should be. But you won't always be. So when you do work for free, which will be a lot, make sure it's work that you're passionate about or will really be a career booster. And honestly, it should be both.

17. Ninety percent of casting decisions have nothing to do with how you perform in your audition.

18. Most of the time, when you don't get the part, it's not because you're terrible, but because of some other (probably superficial) reason altogether. Unless you're terrible.

19. Energy is more important than appearance. So get more sleep instead of wasting your time making yourself look good. After all, there's always a hair and makeup person on set. There's rarely a person to spoon-feed you caffeine and cocaine.

20. Take your "me" time. And cherish it. Because the pursuit of an acting career will totally consume your life.

21. Don't hide your "physical flaws." Embrace them. And learn how to look at yourself objectively.

22. Your "hit" is no joke. It's what you're selling. Either be okay with it, or figure out a way to change it and still look like a real human being.

23. Become excellent performing unique skills. (Morse Code, lock picking, unicycling, chainsaw carving…you get it.)

24. No matter how big of a star you were in school, out here, you are just a part of a team. So act like it. And give credit where credit is due at every opportunity.

25. Acting is actually easier than you want to believe it is. And more people can actually do it than you want to believe. And most people behind the scenes work harder than you do. So don't be a diva.

26. You are replaceable. It is a privilege to be on set. Be grateful.

27. The camera really does add ten pounds. Eat well. Perfect your craft. Stay away from the crafty.

28. Stage and screen are completely different worlds requiring completely different approaches and are cast in completely different ways.

29. You thought there was "technique" to acting on stage? Just wait till you get some serious face time with the camera.

30. Rehearsals are a luxury. Don't waste them.

31. It is not okay to be drunk, stoned, high, or any other kind of intoxicated behavior while you work. Not for "professionalism" reasons. But because you are, in fact, worse.

32. Try not to get discouraged/cynical/jaded/resentful too early. This is a tough business. That's just the way it is, and it's not going to change any time soon. So be tough. Or get out.

33. Be an actor because YOU LOVE IT, and cannot picture yourself doing anything else.