

BACK STAGE ETIQUETTE FOR ALL ACTORS AND TECHNICIANS

When to show up.

At least 1 hour before you're required to be here unless your manager gives you a specific time to arrive. We need to be able to start when you're called. If you arrive at that moment it will take time to put your stuff down, visit the restroom, ask the Stage Manager questions, etc. Please get in the habit of getting all that out of the way before you are called. Your Stage Manager will love you for it and so will your Director.

No food or drink back stage.

This can create endless problems. Spilling could completely ruin furniture or paint. Costumes can become stained or things can get knocked over. This includes water.

Absences or Tardiness.

As soon as you know you cannot attend rehearsal or will be late – you must contact the person designated by the Stage Manager. Failure to do this could easily result in being replaced. Even though you are volunteers you are expected to bring professional ethics and work habits. If you're permitted to show up when convenient because you're so busy outside rehearsal, then everyone should be extended the same courtesy. Then we have total chaos and no way to meet deadlines or be ready for our performance.

Check with the Stage Manager (or the person he or she or he designates) before leaving rehearsal.

You may be scheduled to work a certain shift. That does not mean you can leave at the end of your shift without getting permission. Your director may decide to run some of your scenes over.

Help your director and stage manager in their efforts to create an ensemble.

That means we all work together with mutual respect and support for one another. Experienced actors and technicians know that audiences will sense your energy. If there is kvetching, murmuring, or complaining it will show in your work. Again, you're all volunteers but this is how professionals work.

Be positive, open minded, and flexible.

This is exactly what directors look for when they consider casting you in a future production. You speak highly of others and they'll speak highly of you. Life is so incredibly simple. It's only natural to want to work with people who are dependable and pleasant to work with.

Don't hang out in the wings watching the show.

Backstage space is pretty cramped, and the last thing the crew needs is to have to work around an extra body. Things can happen pretty quickly backstage, and you could find yourself causing a disaster by blocking someone's view when a visual cue is needed, or being in the way during a quick entrance or exit. Stay in the green room and out of the way.

Don't talk with anyone backstage unless it is essential to the show.

The hardest rule to follow. We have all done it. It is vital you do not distract your fellow actors or technicians.

A whispered conversation in the wings can be very annoying to actors on stage, actors about to make an entrance and can even be heard in the house. The crew are waiting for a cue, just like you. If you distract them they may miss a cue. If you have something that you must communicate to a crew member because it affects your performance or the show, then do so, but make sure you're not interrupting something else that may be going on. If your crew uses headsets, always make the assumption that they're listening to something when you approach them and you won't go wrong.

Stay put until you're called for your cue. Don't allow your nerves and emotions to get to you while waiting for your cue. You might be in the dressing room applying and re applying makeup or pacing around the halls. Don't Do it! Find a place where you're comfortable for the span of the show and stay put. Hard but vital. We're counting on your help with this one. The crew can't call you if they can't find you. And while you may know perfectly well where you are, they don't. If the actors on stage skip ten pages, you're going to be needed on stage sooner than you thought, so don't count on going somewhere and making sure you're back "in time for your cue." If you need to be someplace away from others so you can run lines, make sure the crew knows that and be there when they come to get you. If you must use the restroom, tell someone else in the same room as you are who will be there until you get back. This rule also applies to arriving in the wings before you're cued. This is one thing that can backfire on you, because the one time you decide to wait until you're cued, the crew figures you're already in place and doesn't bother to call you.

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Don't play with or move the props, and don't sit on the furniture backstage.

What's the big deal with Shoving a prop to a corner so you can perch there, playing with the murder weapon, or even just sitting on the chairs used for the dance sequence? The rule is "don't touch."

Props should only be handled in the context of the performance – you'd be surprised how easy it can be to break or damage a prop that looked sturdy enough when you picked it up. Never move a prop — stage managers and prop masters have specific spots for certain props, making it easier to find things in dim backstage lighting. If a prop or set piece backstage is a safety hazard, talk to the stage manager about it. If you inadvertently take a prop that should remain in the wings to the room with you, try to get it back up into the wings as soon as possible, preferably by handing it off to a crew member who comes to the room to call someone. Don't just lay it down somewhere, promising to put it back later.

Check your props before each performance, including any that are set for you to use onstage

Crew is supposed to set the props so if you don't have them not your fault right? WRONG! Name one director who isn't going to blame you for that? If something that you need to use on stage isn't set, you can lay all the blame you want on whoever fell down on the job, but ultimately you're the one who looks like a fool in front of the audience. This is a self-preservation measure, as well as back-up for the crew. If your props aren't there, blame yourself as well as the crew member who didn't set them, because you should have double-checked.

Problem with an actor or technician?

You wouldn't have been asked to work on the show if the director didn't think you were capable of problem solving and working things out. However, sometimes things get kind of complicated because we are all under a lot of stress to do our best. If something comes up – don't complain to everyone else or walk around with a chip on your shoulder – talk privately to your Stage Manager and he or she will help you find a solution.

No friends or family backstage or in the dressing rooms.

This is very important. They will really want to see the place where you dress and what the backstage and set looks like. Your Stage Manager will let you know when that will be possible. Just let them know it's one of the rules and you feel bad but have no choice.

Don't peek through the curtains.

Honestly... don't ever do this... never..ever..ever.

It does not matter if a family member flew in from another country and has never seen you in a production before. You will have plenty of time to catch up with family and friends after the show.

This goes along with not hanging out in the wings – if you're on stage, you're in the way of the crew. Actors should set foot on stage before the curtain opens only to make a quick check of their props, and then they need to go to the green room. Needless to say, looking out through the curtains is strictly prohibited – under any and all circumstances.

In rehearsal, be nice to the person on book when calling for lines.

The way to ask for a cue when you drop a line is "Line, please." Not "Oh,... darn! or "Ooooh, I know this one, it's right on the tip of my tongue, oh shoot, it starts with..., um..., oh, GIVE it to me!" This is called taking out your frustrations on the prompter and it's a no-no.

Don't get into the habit of looking at the prompter when you ask for a cue. This also causes you to drop character and will be a very difficult habit to break as you get closer to opening.

No Prima Donnas when it comes to costumes.

All actors want to look good on stage. The director and costume designer, quite honestly, are more concerned about how appropriate costumes are for the concept they are creating. They are not designing costumes so you look really good for your friends and family. If there is a problem with the way it fits or inhibits movement, just let the Stage Manager know. He or he or she will do everything necessary to make it work with you.

Receiving Notes and Asking Questions

Eventually the director will give you notes either during or at the close of a rehearsal. It is vital you simply write it down and apply it to the next rehearsal. If you don't understand just raise your hand. If your director has too much material to call on you – he or he or she will get back to you later. The notes you are given are not to tell you how bad you are – quite the contrary – they are to help you become even better. Believe me, your director wants you to look as good as you can.

Head Set Etiquette Actors are not to distract technicians on headsets.

Technicians on headsets are not to use foul language, discuss life outside the play or talk about the play in general. Your Stage Manager is trying to call cues over headsets and the technicians he or she is working with cannot do their work if distracted.

Your Stage Manager will explain the process for cues, i.e. when you will receive a warning, a stand by and a "Go." And you will learn how to respond during and when the cue is complete. It is actually a fun job but if technicians are distracted everyone is a loser.

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Costumes and Dressing Room

Your space in the Dressing Room must be kept orderly. Do not toss costumes to the floor and draped on a chair.

You will be told specifically how to handle costumes and to fail will mean looking bad on stage. No food or drink to EVER be in the dressing room or while you are in costume.

Arguing

Not an option. When you're asked to do something by a director, choreographer, crew head or stage manager you can discuss it later if you are concerned. But the moment you are asked – you must comply.

They may be too busy to take time at that moment to explain or they might be afraid to discuss will distract the actors or be heard by the audience. They are in a leadership role and you are asked to cooperate.

No running

This shouldn't require any explanation.

I can't see where I'm going backstage during crosses.

If it's too dark during scene changes, please let your Stage Manager know. If he or she can provide more escape light without it being seen by the audience or reflecting on scenery or interfering with the lighting – he or she will.

No Flash Photography or Video Taping

Flash photography during rehearsals or performances is strictly prohibited. Flash photography is very distracting and dangerous for dancers. Flashes cause temporary blindness – which can cause falls and injuries. No videotaping is permitted during the performances

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