

Actor's Safety 101: How to protect yourself while putting yourself out there

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The professional actor's personal information is being sent to complete strangers on a regular basis, and that's if things are going well. In an age where identity theft is a very real crime, we're providing not only our contact information, but our measurements and glossy color photos of just how awesome we look to sweeten the deal.

Even new filmmakers that are on the up and up may not be organized, or know [how to](#) properly dispose of your personal information once they're done with it. [Casting](#) workshops often ask for a lot of personal information 'for their files,' and a lot of [actors](#) fill them out without thinking (i.e., Why do they need my birthdate and my SSN?) Those pieces of paper you're filling out are going to, and through, a lot of different hands, and it's important, and easy, to responsibly protect yourself. It's also important to realize that just because there's a space on the form, doesn't mean you have to fill it out.

If you're new to acting, those first audition submissions will likely be for student or short films, and those first auditions may be in some schools, houses or even apartments instead of a traditional casting office. There's no reason to be paranoid, but there's always a reason to be prepared. Here are some tips to help you be smart, and be safe:

DON'T GIVE OUT ...

- 3 **YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.** When you go to a union audition, you'll be asked to fill out a standard union form, and most offices are still using the old one that asks for your SSN. Instead, put in your SAG-AFTRA ID. If you get called for multiple auditions, or are held longer than normal, your SAG ID will be more than enough for you to get paid. If you're not SAG-AFTRA, use the last 4 of your SSN, but that's it. They can have the rest of it when they've booked you and are handing you forms for payroll.
- 3 **YOUR HOME ADDRESS.** Get a p.o. box. It isn't expensive if you get one at USPS, and you may even be able to split the cost by sharing one with an actor friend. You don't need someone who didn't cast you but thinks you'd be a good date tracking you down where you sleep.
- 3 **YOUR HOME PHONE.** It's way too easy to cross check that online and find your home address. You've got a cell phone anyway, right? If someone starts calling you inappropriately, a lot of cell phones now have a 'block' function. I personally take it a step further and give out my free (read, FREE) Google Voice number, which directs calls to my cell phone but is an additional wall of protection.
- 3 **YOUR REGULAR EMAIL.** Set up a free casting-only email for yourself at a site like Yahoo. It's all too common now for auditioners to add your email to their mailing list even though they didn't cast you, and this will prevent you from getting a bunch of spam in your professional account, while still allowing them a way to contact you for business if they're really interested in hiring you.

DO...

- 3 **TELL A BUDDY.** If you're going to an audition in a non-traditional place, and

you don't have an agent or manager that knows where you're going, tell a friend. Email them all of the audition info, including contact numbers, so they have it on hand in case something should go amiss. You can take it a step further if you get in a jam, and excuse yourself for a fake 'phone call' by downloading a faux call app, or by setting an alarm on your phone.

- 3 **USE ALL THE ABOVE RECOMMENDATIONS RE: THE WEB** Same rules, broader potential for crazy.

All of these tips not only protect you and your information, they lend an air of professionalism to your materials because it shows you're serious, and prepared, for your career to skyrocket.

SUGGESTED LINKS

- 3 **Hidden Talent: How to stream movies for free using your LA library card** 3
- Hidden Talent: How to attend SAG Foundation industry events from home** 3
- 7 Steps to maximize your social networking time**
- 3 **Free 2013 tax return assistance for LA actors from VITA via The Actors Fund**
- 3 **Save money: How to host your professional acting website on the cheap**



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