

YOUR CHILD IN FILM AND TELEVISION

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CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
1 Do You Have the Time to Involve Your Child in Film or Television?	1
2 Assembling Your Team	5
Do I need an agent?	5
How are agents paid?	6
How do I find an agent?	7
Choosing a good agent	12
Getting agents to come to you	15
What if I live out of town?	15
Do I need a manager?	16
Should my child take classes?	16
Talent and model searches	17
3 The Casting Call	19
How does casting work?	20
How do they decide who will audition?	20
Breakdown services	22
Internet breakdown services	22
Auditions	23
Who will be at the audition?	23

How do directors decide which child to use?	24
Who decides who gets the part?	24
Why is more than one child often hired?	25
How does casting differ for film and television?	25
Taping auditions	26
On hold	26
Casting background	26
Internet message boards	27
4 Headshots	29
How important is a good headshot?	29
What to send out for your agent search	30
Taking your own headshots	30
Choosing a photographer	30
Preparing for the photo shoot	31
Choosing the headshot	32
Making reproductions	33
5 The Audition	43
Keeping track of the details	43
Who goes to the audition?	43
Day/date	46
Time	46
Place	47
Casting director	47
Project	47
Scene	47
Appearance	48
Lines, sides, and storyboards	48
Callback dates	50
Shoot dates	50
Expenses	51
Got callback	51
Some guidelines for making auditions go smoothly	51
Take only the child that is going to audition	52
Check in with the assistant when you arrive	52
Keep yourself occupied	54
Familiarize yourself with the proceedings	54

What if my child is reluctant to audition?	55
What happens in the audition?	55
What time will auditions be held?	56
6 Working Background	57
Scheduling your time	57
Working conditions	58
Upgrading	58
Some tips for working background	59
Keeping track of the details	60
Location	60
Project and scene	60
Wardrobe	60
Wrangler/assistant director	64
Expenses	64
Background performer vouchers	64
7 How to Behave on the Set	69
What to do on set	69
What not to do on set	73
8 Working Conditions for Children	75
Parent must be present	76
Performance requirements	76
Child not required to perform in dangerous situations	76
Physical, athletic, or acrobatic activity	77
Parent's written consent required for all stunts	77
Work with animals	77
Children employed in scenes depicting child abuse or carnal acts	77
Responsibility of the parent	77
Parent actions are subject to review	77
Parent must accompany child when traveling	78
Parent must be familiar with child's role	78
Permits	78
School permit	78
Working permit	78
Canadian Union Work Permit	81
Emergency medical authorization	81
Parent disclosure	81

Working hours	81
Rest and recreation	81
Five-out-of-seven-day work week	81
Hours of work for children	81
Meal break	83
Working with infants	83
Infant defined	83
Minor defined	83
Physician's statement	83
Adequate facilities for infants	83
Exposure to light	84
Handling infants	84
Altering an infant's appearance	84
Schooling	84
Wages for time on set	86
Dressing/change rooms	86
Child's coordinator	86
9 The Unions, the Money, and What You Really Want to Know	87
Working in a union	87
Payment scales and minimum rates	88
Background rates	90
Actor rates	90
Session fees and residuals	90
How long before I get paid?	94
Your agent's commissions and deductions	94
Protecting your child's income	95
10 Who Does What in the Film and Television Industry	97
IATSE jobs	98
Director	98
Second unit director	98
First assistant director	98
Second assistant director	99
Production manager, unit production manager, production coordinator, and their assistants	99
Accountants	99
Locations manager and assistants	99

Production designer/art director	99
Editing	100
Sound team	100
Foley artist	100
Photography department	100
Gaffer	101
Grips	101
Greenspeople	101
Makeup and hair artists	101
Construction/painters	102
Property master/props	102
Publicist	102
Script supervisor	102
Set decorating	102
Colorist, color consultant	103
Special effects	103
Video special effects	103
Matt artists	103
Teamsters	103
Producers	104
Producer	104
Executive producer	104
Co-producers	104
Associate producer	105
Line producer	105
Appendix: Online Resources	107
Glossary	109

Checklists

1	Are you ready for the film and television industry?	3
2	Questions to ask an agency	8
3	Permit application	79

Diagram

1	The road to stardom	21
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Samples

1	Letter to agent	10
2	Resume	11
3	Contact sheet (two-year-old)	34
4	Enlargement (with insert)	35
5	Contact sheet (four-year-old)	36
6	Enlargement (four-year-old)	37
7	Contact sheet (older child)	38
8	Enlargement (older child)	39
9	Contact sheet with bad lighting	40
10	Storyboard	49
11	Location Map	62
12	Nonunion extra voucher	66
13	Union background performer voucher	67
14	Call sheet	71
15	Commercial engagement contract	89
16	Payroll extra voucher	93

Table

1	Approximate payment scales	91
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Worksheets

1	Agency tracking	13
2	Audition tracking form	44
3	Child's information	53
4	Background tracking	61



1

DO YOU HAVE THE TIME TO INVOLVE YOUR CHILD IN FILM OR TELEVISION?

When you decide to involve your child in film and television, you are entering into a world filled with happiness, disappointments, and opportunity. The process of finding an agent, auditioning, and doing the shoot can consume huge amounts of time. Most often, you are making the time commitment without really knowing what the result will be.

But don't be discouraged. Whether your child gets a star on the Walk of Fame or plays a cute "bottom" on a diaper commercial, your commitment to his or her involvement in film and television can pay off for both of you in more than just financial ways. Being involved in the industry can —

- ☆ boost your and your child's confidence;
- ☆ help your child grow emotionally and psychologically by tackling new characters and roles;
- ☆ stimulate your child's imagination through role-playing and acting;
- ☆ teach your child to deal with disappointment and rejection and to handle success gracefully;



- ☆ develop organizational and time-keeping skills (necessary if you are to schedule auditions, shoots, etc.);
- ☆ introduce both of you to people from all walks of life and encourage your child to respect others; and
- ☆ teach your child how to manage money.

Furthermore, working inside the industry takes the illusion out of movies and television. When your child is influenced by what a toy does on a commercial, you can remind him or her of the behind-the-scenes tricks it took to make it look as if the toy is fantastic.

As if you don't have enough outside influences on your parenting skills, the movie business will test them even further. You will have to deal with successes as well as failures and rejections. It can be very hard not to take it personally if your child doesn't get a part — and often more so if he or she does!

Friends and family will have questions and comments about what you are doing — both good or bad. You may even be accused of exploiting your child. Be prepared for all kinds of rhetoric from inside and outside the industry's community. (You will have to deal with "stage moms" that will brag about their children and you will see parents do and say things to their children that will sicken you.)

The film and television industry is a unique environment. Along with the financial rewards of being paid as adults, children are also often treated as such and are expected to meet adult responsibilities. It is not like signing your child up for sports at your local recreation center. There is no nice, "all the children will get a chance to play" attitude.

Being involved in film and television can be a rewarding and interesting way to spend time with your child. Use Checklist 1 to help you determine whether you, your child, and the rest of your family are ready to get involved.

CHECKLIST 1
ARE YOU READY FOR THE FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY?

Questions for parents about *themselves*:

- Do you have the support of your spouse?
- Do you have the time to devote to taking your child to agents, auditions, and shoots?
- Do you have suitable transportation to get to auditions and shoots (which can often run late by hours)?
- Are you prepared to travel to remote locations for shoots or into the city for auditions?
- Are you tenacious? Are you prepared to keep going to auditions with little encouragement from casting directors?
- Do you have the patience to spend a lot of time “hanging around” while your child is auditioning or shooting? Remember, your child should always be in your sight while on and off a film set, and you may have to spend long hours finding ways to keep yourself busy.
- Can you keep your feet on the ground and not get caught up in the whole atmosphere of the industry?

Questions for parents about their *child*:

- Does your child have an interest in acting or in being involved in a film or commercial?
- Will he or she enjoy the experience of auditioning or performing without necessarily needing to become a star?
- Does your child have sufficient ability or a particular skill?
- Does your child have the patience required to attend numerous auditions and to wait around a set. He or she may have to spend many hours sitting around waiting. Can he or she stay occupied independently?
- Will your child handle missing regular school occasionally and having to use a tutor?
- Is your child able to take direction?
- Does your child have the self-confidence to handle rejection as well as success?
- If you have an infant, will he or she be willing to go to a stranger, or does he or she “make shy”?

CHECKLIST 1 — CONTINUED

Questions for parents about their *family*:

- What are the dynamics within your family? Do you have other family members (siblings, spouses, parents) that require attention and time? Remember, only one parent and the child may attend auditions and shooting, so you may need to make arrangements for babysitting, meals, and other family activities to fit around audition and shooting schedules.
- Does your child get on with his or her siblings, or is there any sibling rivalry?
- Do you want to involve more than one child?
- Do all your children have good relationships with both parents?
- Are you financially stable? While it's true that some children have earned enough money from film and television to put them through a college education, if your motives are purely financial, you can end up putting undue pressure on your child and yourself to succeed, which can be a sure path to failure.