



A practical guide to headshots

Over the last couple of years you've seen your child grow. They've developed a passion for the performing arts, most likely through school and now they're showing interest in learning new skills at specialist schools. Weekends and evenings are jam packed with courses, classes, practicing and it's amazing to see how their creativity makes them so happy.

But where is this all leading to? Pretty soon, if not already, they'll be asked to audition for something with a professional production company. You'll be asked to help them update their CV and get a professional headshot done. No matter their age or stage in their development, when it comes to working on a professional production whether that be a 2 minute commercial or as part of a chorus line on stage they'll need to fulfill these basic requirements to be 'seen'.

I've put together everything you need to know about headshots into one useful guide with a hope that it helps you make the right choices when it comes to your child's headshots.

So exactly what is a headshot? It's a lot of things, including but not limited to their look, acting type, playing age range and much more besides. Getting all of this info crammed into one single image can seem daunting, it can be but understanding what it is can make what is one of the most important photos of them, relatively easy to achieve.

What's the reward? Getting the headshot right can literally open doors and it works for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I've no doubt raised several questions so before we muddy the water any further, let's break it down and figure out exactly what goes into a winning headshot.

A headshot is often the first thing that is considered when submitting yourself to agents or for castings.

What do you need a headshot for?

Your child's headshot isn't just there to accompany their CV, it has so many uses. Perhaps you have a website, you most certainly will use it for their online casting profiles etc. And of course

you'll submit it to agents in the hope for representation. Their face is literally their brand and their headshot illustrates that for all the world to see.

What do I mean when I say 'brand'? A brand is something that people find immediately recognisable, Your child's headshot represents what's on offer, like a poster advertising a product, when someone meets them for the first time, they should already have an understanding of what to expect. Their headshot will help them do this. So like many big brands it's useful to use their headshot in as many places as possible, connecting any online profiles to their social media and so on.

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What does a casting director want from a headshot?

Similar to a passport photo, a headshot should look like your child. When a casting director looks at their headshot they want to see that it actually looks like them but more than that, they want to get a sense of how they might fit the role they are casting for. They will go through hundreds of submissions making it incredibly important that their headshot stands out, that if they had met them previously, they will immediately recognise them.

Casting directors will have something very specific in mind so it's incredibly important, especially early on in their career, to establish the type of roles they want to go for. Your headshot will, at least in part, represent that. Paired with the right casting, this increases your chances of being picked out from the crowd.



What else should you consider? A casting director should get an idea of their age range from their headshot, their socioeconomic background (working class, upper class etc), an idea of their looks, what role(s) they would be best suited to and of course some indication of their personality.

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What makes a good headshot?



A good headshot should give us an idea of who they are as an actor and potentially which roles they are best suited to. They are unique and their headshot should show that.

Your child's headshot should look like them but on a good day. They say that you should never judge a book by its cover, that's true, however in this case the cover should look the best it possibly can but does that mean having a full makeover and the resulting images be retouched almost beyond recognition, no, and we'll talk about that a little later on.

We can't deny that the physical aspects of a headshot will be considered but there is a great deal of importance in what lies underneath, a good headshot will give us an opportunity to see that too. If you're not

sure what that means or unsure as to who they, the actor, are then it's probably time you sat down with them and write it down. A great exercise is to sit down and write down your best qualities as an actor, your parts of your personality that you want to associate with what you do and then ask your friends to do the same for you. This is your list of things you need from your headshot. Depending on their age, this might not be entirely practical but you get the idea!

What makes a bad headshot?

Think about the absolute worst scenario, you submit your child's headshot to a casting, get accepted, travel all the way down to London only to be turned away because they look nothing like their headshot. That is pretty much the main thing that makes a headshot 'bad'.

It can go horribly wrong elsewhere too, logos, crazy fabrics, distracting jewelry, backgrounds that take over the photo (like trees growing out of the back of your head) and far too much make-up.

The last thing you want a casting director or prospective agent to be thinking is, "what is this person wearing?" or "who on earth took this photo?". If they are thinking that, they aren't thinking of casting you or putting them on their books.

Be prepared – what to know before getting your headshots taken.

You've invested both time and money into getting your child's headshots done, it's important that you should be clear on what you want to get from their headshot session.

Preparing for their headshots isn't just about getting a haircut and getting plenty of sleep, it also requires a great deal of thought as well. What will you use your headshots for? Which type will they play? What do they aspire to?

You should be able to answer all of these questions already, take inspiration from the styles of shows they like on Netflix. If they seem to be drawn to one particular style you should ensure that their headshots fit that tone.

You should also be thinking about the types of roles they wish to play also. The clothing choices you make should compliment the look and feel of those roles they aspire to.

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What questions should I ask a headshot photographer?

These are the best questions to ask a headshot photographer:

- Do you have a portfolio of your past work?
- What are your rates?
- What is included in your rate?
- Do you shoot indoor or outdoor?
- How many looks does your session include?
- How long is a session?
- Do you recommend anyone for makeup, hair, retouching?

What can I expect from a headshot photoshoot?

Headshot photoshoots last at least one hour and can go up to three hours.

You should bring their wardrobe changes with you. If you're shooting outdoors, wear comfortable shoes, especially if you will be walking to different locations—your feet won't show up in the shot. Your photographer will shoot them from various different angles.

You should expect your photographer to sit them down and go through what you've discussed prior to the shoot. This should help keep things fresh and help you relax before the shooting begins!



How can they relax during their headshot session?

This is where having a great rapport with your photographer is really important.

Being able to engage easily with the person taking your photograph will help you relax. Some photographers will even direct you.

It can be overwhelming having built up how important getting this headshot right is, but that shouldn't make you feel nervous. The key to a great headshot is being relaxed, have fun! Let their personality shine through.

How often should I get new headshots taken?

They should get new headshots taken every one or two years, every 6 months to one year for children.

Any time they change their look, they need new headshots. If they get a considerable haircut, dye it a different color, or if they gain/lose a significant amount of weight, they should also get new headshots.

Are their current headshots benefiting or hurting their career. Are they getting positive feedback on them. Or are they getting called in less because their headshot doesn't look like them?

How do I pick the right headshot?



To pick the right headshot, ask your family, friends and other actors, for advice.

Your photographer should send you a link to an online gallery of your images from their shoot. Ask people to take a look through the gallery and pick their favorites. Ask them to give you feedback on the styles or roles they come across as in them, how does this compare to that list you thought of prior to their shoot?

It can be a difficult thing, looking at row upon row of images but keep a clear mind and focus on the importance of this headshot and what it will do for them over the coming months.

Has this left you with more questions?

It's a daunting thing arranging headshots and the compulsion is to go with the first person recommended. Apply the same process you would when making a significant purchase. A headshot isn't a house or a car but done right is incredibly valuable. [Get in touch](#) if you have any questions at all or want to discuss this further!

Best Wishes

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