

BACKSTAGE

Voiceover Session Do's + Don'ts

By Kelley Buttrick



Voiceover is a breeze. All you have to do is show up and read at a microphone, right? Wrong.

Yes, your talent plays a vital role in voiceover success. But here are some other crucial tips to keep in mind and ensure you're at the top of your game before, during, and after a voiceover session.

Do's + Don'ts Before a VO Session

Being professional means being prepared. You represent not only the talent agency that booked you but also your own brand, so do your prep work.

DO read the script out loud a few times beforehand to get an understanding of the story being told, check on timing, work through pronunciations and mark good breathing points. My first coach, Paul Armbruster, often cautioned his students not to read a script too much for fear of getting stuck in a tone and not be easily directable in session.

DO a little research on the brand, agency, and production company behind the project so you can get a bigger picture of the brand's story and some insight into the people and companies behind what you're voicing. Not only does this help

with understanding the copy, it reflects your professionalism and commitment to the project.

DO eat, hydrate, and brush your teeth before your session. If you don't eat, your stomach will growl. Drinking water and brushing your teeth helps cut down on mouth noise. By the way, green apples are a great snack before a session as they are particularly good at eliminating mouth noise.

DON'T wear noisy clothing, clanking jewelry, or strong scents. (I often opt for sleeveless or short-sleeve tops.)

DON'T turn the studio staff into your wait staff. Bring your own water, pencils, hot tea, and scripts to the session so you can be the no-maintenance talent arriving ready to walk in the booth and get to work.

Do's + Don'ts During a VO Session

Voiceover sessions are a blast! Most of the people you'll encounter will be friendly and accommodating. Some might even get chatty, but don't ever forget this is a business transaction, so be yourself and keep it professional.

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DO arrive 10-15 minutes early. This doesn't mean pulling into the parking lot 10 minutes early. Arrive 100 percent ready to pop into the booth as soon as you're called into the studio.

DO be confident, but not cocky. Rest assured they booked you because they wanted your voice on their project, and be nice to every single person you encounter from the receptionist to the end client and everyone in between.

DO listen to what the director is telling you, then do what you're told. For that booking, he or she is your boss and if you're told to jump, ask how high. Being easily directable is a key factor in getting hired again.

DON'T disparage the copy or yourself. Never say anything negative about the copy you've been hired to voice and when you make a mistake don't apologize, just go back to the beginning of the sentence and go from there. If you feel absolutely compelled to apologize, do it after the take is done.

DON'T touch the microphone...ever. In fact, don't touch anything in that VO booth. If you need the microphone adjusted, ask the engineer to do it for you.

Do's + Don'ts After a VO Session

The phrase, "It ain't over 'til it's over," certainly applies to voiceover sessions as well. Do you want to get asked back? Make sure you're memorable for the right reasons.

DON'T hang around to chat. Now that the VO is recorded, they've got editing and sound design to do. Say thank you and leave.

DON'T hand out cards or promotional items on your way out without your agent's permission.

DO ask permission if you want to take a photo and/or post anything about the job on social media. In general, it's best to keep the job off of social media until it has been released and never say anything negative about the job or client on social media, even in talent-only groups. Just don't do it.

DO contact your agent after the session with a quick report on how it went, the vibe you got from the client, and anything else your agent should know about, like if there will be revisions or additional projects coming your way.

DO positively shout out the client, studio, agent, etc. after the project has been released publicly, with their permission of course.