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# 5 Ways to Master the Art of the Audition Room Chair

By **John Stoneburner** | Posted Nov. 3, 2015, 4:30 p.m.

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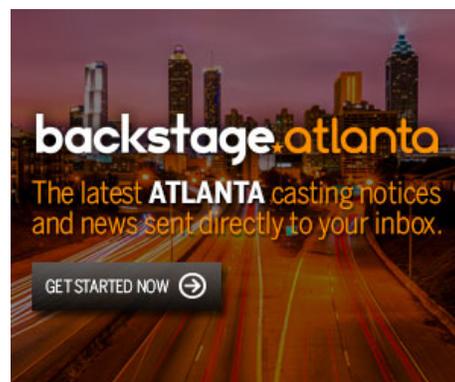
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For the new actor auditioning on camera, the audition room can be a panic-inducing place. Auditioning itself is not a natural thing; there's nothing real about it. You stand on a mark, someone reads with you from a distance, there's no physical contact, and you have to stay within a certain area. Oh, and by the way, we need you to feel, show, and go through a change or two. Thanks. Next.

The most dangerous thing in an audition room for the new actor? The chair.

A chair equals comfort. Comfort, as every acting teacher under the sun will tell you, is the actor's enemy. The first thing a new actor tends to do is sit all the way back in the chair; they get comfortable. All their energy is now going straight down into the floor—it's no longer pointed forward so the camera can pick it up.

When you go on camera, the lens can actually read energy. I can't tell you the science behind it, if there is any, but you can watch two actors read the same sides and tell immediately which has low energy. It's the one you quickly lose interest in. The other is engaging and fun to watch, even if they aren't right for the role. Energy demands attention.

As an example, visualize the following scenario of a police interrogation. Your character is agitated

with the detective for being detained and questioned. Below are five simple ways you might use the chair to keep the scene moving forward as an engaged and engaging actor.

**Sit on the very edge of the chair.**

Yes, you will be very uncomfortable and feel you may fall off at any time. That's good. Your energy will definitely be up.

The beat changes when the detective presents a written witness statement vaguely detailing you were at the crime scene. To you, if this statement is all they have, there's no way you'll be arrested. This is easy to beat.

**Rest all the way back in the chair.**

Cross a leg, even throw your hands behind your head. Relax. You feel confident in your denial.

The beat changes again when another detective rolls a video cart into the room, presses play on the DVD player, and on screen is a clear image of you at the crime scene, committing the crime in question.

**Slouch down in the chair.**

Your shoulders will slump. You are in trouble. All your energy is drained out of you. On the screen, we will see a character that is caught and knows it.

The beat changes again when the detectives leave the room, allowing you time to try to come up with some way out of this.

**Slide forward nearly to the edge of the chair.**

Perhaps bounce a leg as your mind quickly runs through all the possible things you can say or do to get yourself out of this jam.

The beat changes again when you realize there is no way out, you are going to jail.

**Same position, but the head drops.**

Rest on your elbows and bow your head, sending the energy inward and downward. You give up. It's over.

When there's a chair in the audition room, don't fear it or let it control your performance. Learn to use it to add to the levels in your dynamic scene!

*John Stoneburner is co-owner of [The Company Acting Studio](#) in Atlanta and currently teaches group and private sessions with a focus on the on-camera audition for film and TV. His students have booked roles in feature films, network TV, and both national and regional commercials.*

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