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How To Become a Voice Over Talent Online

**HowExpert with
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INTRODUCTION

So you want to be a voice over artist, eh? Bravo to you! I'm proud of you for researching and finding your way to this all-inclusive, yet not exhaustive "How To" guide. Oftentimes, when people ask me "I'd like to do voice over work. Sounds like fun! How do I get into it?" I get frustrated. The question makes the job seem so easy. While the work itself is not difficult, it does take a bit of talent and know-how to start making a noticeable income. Besides, if you already had the equipment and setup and skills to record and edit audio, you should be researching online, you know, where the jobs are, not asking someone trying work the field.

I am a big believer in "There is room for everyone that works hard." Many voice over artists will become possessive over their "secrets" and clientele. This is because it does take time, persistence and hard work to earn and keep these clients. Don't fear, though, because no two voices are alike and no two brains will interpret a script the same.

Here's what you can expect if you read all the way through this guide: I'll take you through the ins and outs of some of the vocabulary used in the business, the different types of voice overs you can do, the difference between being a union talent versus non union talent, buying equipment and setting up a studio, how to protect your instrument (voice), reading/interpreting scripts, the secrets of putting together a demo, and maximizing your internet presence to get work!

There is a lot more to it than just reading a few scripts. To start making real money takes time and a lot of effort. In fact, about 80% of what you will actually be doing as a voice over artist, is marketing yourself! But we'll get to that later. First, you should know a few things before you get started.

CHAPTER 1: VOCABULARY

There are a few buzz words and phrases used when working as a voice over talent that may help you understand what a client needs or wants.

Script/Copy-These are used interchangeably. Although, I would argue that a script is used for projects that have character dialogue or audiobooks. A piece of copy is generally shorter projects like a radio or TV commercial.

How will you deliver the product?-Clients will ask this question because oftentimes they aren't quite sure how they need it. They are a middleman; they find the voice they like and send it to their in house producer to finalize the project.

Edit- This means, on your end, to delete mistakes and unwanted sounds out of your reading.

Revisions/Recut-When a client sends the project back to you with notes on your product. They will have either a revised script/copy (because when they heard the words out loud, it didn't flow easily) or they will want you to recut a particular line/lines.

Take-When a client asks for several takes of a project, they want a few options. Don't read them the same way each time, vary up the energy, cadence and delivery of your read.

Many people think that voice overs is all about cartoons. While that is one of the more fun and exciting aspects of voice overs, it is only a small

percentage of the kind of work you can do as a voice over talent. Everything you hear in the world, someone had to record it. On hold messages for businesses, employee training videos, safety videos, product presentations, radio and television commercials, audiobooks, and even the voice you hear on a bus letting you know the next stop or on a plane giving you the safety rules and guidelines. Voice overs are everywhere! So again, there is room for everyone in this business. Getting to know your own voice, the types of voice overs you are best at and/or get the most work for will be beneficial in creating a demo to help you land those types of jobs.

CHAPTER 2: UNION VS. NON-UNION

Many online resources will tell you that in order to be a professional voice over artist, you will need to be a member of the “union.” The union they are referring to is SAG-AFTRA. This is an all encompassing talent union to protect creative people such as actors, directors, broadcasters, journalists, puppeteers, stunt performers, singers, recording artists, dancers and voice over artists. The union does a really great job of helping these performers earn fair wages, health insurance and even 401k. You must be aware that it is very expensive to join the union and that doing so as an inexperienced voice over talent may actually not be that beneficial to you.

As a union talent, you may get higher wages, but the jobs are more difficult to find, let alone get. The competition is fierce and without much experience, landing your first few gigs will be much more difficult. Once you go union, you can never go back either. You can't take non-union jobs at lower rates. You will get fined if you get caught and eventually, you will get caught.

Working as a non-union talent opens you up to the rest of the world of voice overs, audiobooks, on hold messages, product presentations and so many radio and television commercials. The difficult part about working as a non-union talent is the effort on your part to find work and if a client doesn't pay, (which has never happened to me) then you have to fight for yourself to get the money you were promised. Again, this has never happened to me. I also use several

websites and production companies that probably all deal with those kinds of problems for me. I'll discuss these websites and production companies in great detail later.

While we are discussing pay, another major difference between union and non-union talent is HOW they get paid. A union talent will get paid half of the job up front and the rest upon completion while a non-union talent will have to wait until the end to collect their fees. Don't let this stress you out. Think of it like eating at a fancy restaurant. You sit down, order, eat delicious food (hopefully) and pay upon completion of the service. Getting paid at the end of a job is the same thing. You could ask a client to split up the fees for much bigger jobs to know they are serious. Oftentimes for jobs that big, the client will set up several milestones within the job. This way it breaks down the workload for you into more manageable pieces and then you can expect a more steady flow of income until the job is completed.

CHAPTER 3: EQUIPMENT

Getting set up can be one of the more exciting, albeit challenging parts of starting your own voice over business. Remember, this is a business and there will be a bit of over-head before you get your first gig. This does NOT mean you need to go crazy and spend thousands of dollars to get started. In fact, for probably less than \$700 you could be up and running, depending on the equipment you already have!

First, you will need a computer that you don't use for much else other than editing. The last thing you want is a computer running slowly because of a virus you picked up on Facebook. It doesn't have to be fancy. I use a simple Toshiba laptop and an external hard drive to save all of my audio. (Which you will want to do! Save everything because this will help you create and update your demo, which I will cover later).

Next, you will need software to help you record and edit. There is not much editing that needs to be done so don't stress if you have little to no experience. When you send a client your audio, it does need to be finished; as in edit out all of your mistakes, breaths, popping sounds etc. The mic is very sensitive and records everything. You want to send your client the very best. Plus, it will help you deciding charging rates, which I will also cover later.

There is a lot of free software for audio editing online. Audacity is the number one rated software. It is really user friendly. Record, highlight and delete. That's all you really need to use. If you like to get fancy and have some time to peruse other software, I'd recommend

Adobe Audition. There are so many cool tricks in manipulating audio from filters to mixing, it really is my favorite piece of software.

The next piece of hardware you will need is a microphone! This is where things really start getting fun. You can buy a really nice microphone. A high end Audiotechnica AT2020USB Cardioid Condenser USB recording microphone is a mic that just about any computer will recognize once you plug it into the USB port. It can run anywhere from \$100-\$140 depending on when Amazon is running sales. I recommend this microphone highly. This is the exact mic that got me started without the use of a professional grade studio and has helped me build my portfolio and maintain relationships with my clients. Now that I currently work in a professional grade studio, I use this mic and my laptop to accommodate a client during off hours or when I want to get away for the weekend and there might be a “just in case” moment when a client needs a revision, edit or something cut immediately. (You will also find that there is a high need for American voices in other countries. Currently, my biggest and most demanding clients are in Japan, South Korea and Australia. Needless to say, their workdays start during my Sunday afternoon).

You don't need to get the biggest and baddest equipment' however, may I remind you that this is the way you want to make a living, at least part time. You want to sound the best you possibly can. Invest a little in yourself and it will pay you back.

There are a lot of microphones you could purchase. You don't have to get a microphone with a USB plug, but it will be the easiest, one stop purchase, at least to

get you started. There are lots of better microphones that need to be plugged into a sound mixing board. Again, you absolutely could get one of those, along with a condenser, but these are pricier purchases and not really necessary to get you started. Keep it simple, and once you start building clients, (which takes a lot more time than you think) reinvest in yourself with your earnings and upgrade to all the fancy stuff!

Make sure when you are doing your research on the best microphone for you, that you find a mic good for voice recording. Some will be meant more for music, or percussion, but you'd be better off with a mic that is designed to pick up voices and minimize room noise. Trust me, no matter how quiet a room or how much sound proofing, it will never be quiet enough.

This leads us to properly soundproofing your space.

Where ever you decide to record, make sure it is a place that you will be uninterrupted. There is nothing worse than hitting record and you are about half way through a piece of copy only to be barged in on by the kids, or the dog starts barking, or a car drives by. These quiet, uninhabited spaces are difficult to come by. Your first thought may be the bathroom. *Who would bother me in there?* Well, hopefully no one. But bathrooms and any large rooms, really are terrible for recording because they tend to allow sound to bounce around. This causes an unnatural echo in your recordings which clients tend to dislike in the product they pay for. May I recommend a closet or laundry room? These are perfect because they are small areas where sound will not be able to bounce around. The clothing in these rooms are great for absorbing extra

noise, too, so you won't get a bunch of echo in your voice.

If this isn't possible, don't worry! There are alternatives, you just need to get a little creative. I've seen professionals like Mike Rowe from "Dirty Jobs" record voice overs on the road in bed with a mountain of blankets on top of him. I've seen other professionals stand in a corner with blankets hung up on the wall. A more permanent moveable device might look like this: take a plastic tub that you would get at Wal-mart to store Christmas decorations in and line the inside with a mattress topper. I use this sound box when I leave for the weekend but still want to be on stand by for a client. It's easy to carry and I can put my equipment inside and keep track of everything in one place. My sound box is double lined with the mattress topper. All it took was a little gorilla glue on the inside of the box. After the first layer was set, I had extra topper left over so I just double lined the inside, for good measure.

When I use it, I just prop the box up on a flat surface that is either standing height (like on the hood of my SUV...which I've done in the middle of a rest stop or the woods!) or sitting height (like on a desk). I prop the microphone up on it's stand, connected to the laptop, which is usually on top of the sound box and then I read the copy from my phone.

In this case, you may still need to let others around you know that you are about to record and to leave you be or talk a ways away from you, but the sound box will always give you that echo free, pure sound of your voice.

Another little quick tip, if you are struggling to find out why your voice isn't sounding as crisp or clear on the recording as you'd like, you can also try to put a sock over the mic. Professionals will use a "mic sock" which is designed to put over the head of the microphone to reduce the sound of wind and external noise. Find a thick sock at home, it'll work. Just make sure it's clean!

If this all seems daunting and you don't want to record or edit your own stuff, there are professional recording studios every where that will record and edit your audio. It does come at a price, however, so do your due diligence and research to see if paying someone else a portion of your earnings would even be worth the time and money. In the beginning, jobs won't be big or high paying. Approach it with a "take what you can get" attitude.

CHAPTER 4: TAKE CARE OF YOUR VOICE

Your voice is a powerful instrument composed of many muscles including your tongue, teeth, lips, esophagus, lungs, larynx, trachea and even your nose. They are all connected and every one of them is used to speak.

Just as most athletes would never start a game or race without warming up their muscles, a voice actor would never get on the mic without some sort of warm up. After all, the voice, the tongue, the lips, the throat and the face all have muscles and need attending to before you record. If you'd like your money maker to survive day in and day out of recording, you'll want to keep your instrument in tip top shape! Here is a series of warm up exercises you can do that take less than 5 minutes and will certainly warm up your vocal chords.

1. Stand up. You need the best posture possible to allow all of the air to escape your lips and sound like the best version of you! Plus, when the air can easily escape, you tend to have more of it accessible; plus you will be able to breathe deeper. Bonus: you'll have more energy for longer recording sessions. (If you are in a space that does not work for standing and you must sit, finish warming up while in a standing position, but during recording, sit towards the front of the chair, with good posture. Imagine you are a sitting marionette and there is a string pulling the crown of the neck towards the sky).

2. You definitely don't have to do this, but I start with a few jumping jacks. Not only does it get your blood flowing and your lungs really working, but it allows me to relax! Just 8-10 or so will do the trick. It can feel silly standing in front of a microphone reading words from a page that are not your own, sometimes in a different voice. This is totally bizarre! A few jumping jacks are a playful way to get you to loosen up and get out of your comfort zone.
3. Begin humming. Anything. Warm up the vocal chords and let sound resonate in your nasal cavity. The "ABC's" are nice and quick. I generally choose whatever song is stuck in my head at the moment. (Thank you Adele.) If you feel like it, sing a little bit of it. Get the jaw moving.
4. Move the jaw. I like the "ahhhhhh-eeeeeee-ahhhhhh-eeeeeee" movement. Open your mouth as wide as you can in the "ahh" position and transition to move your lips back to "eee." Repeat "aahhh" to "eee" as many times as you can in one breath and keep repeating until you feel satisfied. This sounds weird, but your face will thank you after an hour of recordings!
5. Move the lips. Similar to getting the jaw to move, start by puckering your lips to an "oooo" sound. Then transition to and "eee" sound again. Exaggerate the lips from "ooo" to "eee" and repeat until you feel satisfied.
6. Move the tongue. Take your tongue outside of your mouth and move it in a plus sign motion. Top to bottom, left to right. Reverse! Right to left, bottom to top! Stop when you feel satisfied or can no longer take the almost drool on your chin. Next repeat exaggerated "La's" and let

your tongue really stab the top of your mouth and bounce off the bottom.

These exercises seem silly, but they really do help keep your vocal muscles safe from injury. There is nothing worse than working on a project with a client for a few days and your voice is tired and scratching after day one of work. You want your amazing voice to sound the same every time, so warm up!

It's also important to note that before and during a recording session, you should refrain from smoking and cold beverages. Smoking strains the chords and cold liquids tend to close up your throat. I'd also recommend steering clear from caffeine and extremely hot beverages. Luke warm water or herbal tea (not too hot) will keep your voice nice and lubed for long recording sessions.

CHAPTER 5: READING & INTERPRETING SCRIPTS

You are all set up! You have a mic and you are sitting in your homemade booth. You are warmed up and ready to record. Stop. Step away from the mic. There is more to do before hitting the record button.

When you have a script in front of you, this is called a piece of “copy.” If your client is nice to you, they will send you copy in all capital letters and double spaced. These format settings make your job easier because the words will be easy to see and the lines will be easy to distinguish.

Don't count on your client being so kind! In fact, often times a client will send you a piece of writing they are very proud of that has little to no punctuation and clearly has not been proofread for spelling or grammatical errors. This is ok!

PRO-TIP: Read the copy exactly as it was written. Unless there was an obvious spelling/grammatical error such as “how” when they clearly meant “who.” When you fix mistakes like that, you are setting yourself up for a few things. A) The client will continue to rely on you to proofread their work before you record; and B) you cheat yourself out of extra money. Every time you have to record an edit or revision because of their mistake, you should be paid. Now, if the mistake was on your part, clear it up. Re-record and move on. I'll discuss later on how to charge and invoice a client.

You want to read through your copy to get a general sense and understanding of what it is all about. After all, you are an actor; an actor that is not seen, just heard. You only have the power of your voice to convey your message, whether it be for a commercial, a character in a cartoon, an audiobook, etc.

Read through the copy. Now read it again. What is it telling you? Who is this copy for? Who will likely hear the finished product? Is it serious? For example, is it a piece of copy about asking for donations for a children's hospital? This might require a more somber read than a piece of copy trying to convince you to attend the local fair, where your tone may be peppier and even higher in pitch.

Actors have several tricks they use to interpret their copy. Some may read through the copy once to get a general sense of how the audience will likely receive the commercial. You only get a first impression once, so just read the copy all the way through once. Don't interpret or analyze, just read it and get a sense of what it is about.

The next time you read it through, take a pen/pencil/highlighter/utensil of choice, and mark it up. Here are two important things to look for that will make you sound like a pro when it is time to actually record your commercial. First, underline or highlight every time the client's name appears in the copy. (Obviously, you wouldn't need to for an audiobook or educational presentation). This is the person that has paid for you to read their commercial, they are the ones you need to sell to your audience. The visual reminder as you read during recording, tends to make

you focus and slow down when saying the client's name.

Second, take notice of the punctuation. Not all pieces of copy are going to grace you with great punctuation. Commas, semi colons, periods, question marks and exclamation points all mean different things and therefore should change the way you interpret the copy. A comma is good for a slight pause or quick breath, semi colons are more dramatic pauses while periods mean stop. The sentence should be definitive; it should be very clear that the thought has finished. A question mark should also indicate that the thought is complete but, instead, have a different inflection at the end, as if the thought is complete but you want the listener to contribute to the thought. An exclamation point also completes a thought but is done so with excitement!

Many actors and voice actors will accentuate these punctuation marks with a slash '/' to note a pause or a double slash '/'/' to note a longer pause. Underline important words or phrases. As you read through to make notes, say the words out loud because you will also catch words that are difficult to say or phrases that feel weird. Then you will already have an idea of the portions of the copy that are more troublesome than others.

Here is an example of a script that I have manipulated and marked to help during recording.

For example, here is a commercial for Westhills Village.

“A FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT, /FOCUSED ON EMPLOYEE WELLNESS,/ HAPPINESS AND GROWTH? SOUND TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?! NOT AT [WESTHILLS VILLAGE](#) IN RAPID CITY! [WESTHILLS VILLAGE](#) FEATURES COMPETITIVE WAGES,/ TUITION REIMBURSEMENT TO ADVANCE YOUR EDUCATION,/ EXCELLENT BENEFITS AND PAID TRAINING. EMPLOYEES HAVE ACCESS TO ALL THE [WESTHILLS VILLAGE](#) AMENITIES. [WESTHILLS VILLAGE](#) IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A VARIETY OF POSITIONS INCLUDING C.N.A.’s,/ RN’s,/ LONG TERM NURSING AND MORE.// THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY/...RIGHT HERE, /RIGHT NOW...AT [WESTHILLS VILLAGE](#), APPLY ONLINE NOW AT [WESTHILLS VILLAGE](#) DOT COM.”

As you can see, I have highlighted every time the client name appears in the copy. This is important because Westhills Village is the one paying me to make them sound amazing and hopefully get some great candidates to apply! I want Westhills Village to stand out and be memorable.

Even though this technically is a commercial, advertising has moved from actors who can “SELL” to actors who can sound “natural.” By this I mean, no longer are commercials sounding like an actor trying to sell you something, advertising (even television) focuses on gaining the consumers trust. To do this, they have their ‘friend’ tell them about these products. So when you are reading, you should sound like you are just talking to your friend. THIS IS REALLY DIFFICULT TO DO! It takes practice and time. It is called “reading naturally.”

There is a way you can practice getting better at reading naturally. Read everything outloud! Read the back of your shampoo bottle aloud, the toothpaste instructions, billboards on the way to work, your work emails. Even start repeating phrases you hear on the radio. The more comfortable you become with reading, the better and more conversational you will sound when you read on the mic.

CHAPTER 6: MAKING A DEMO

Now, before you even look for work, a lot of agencies, managers, or producers are going to want to hear how you sound. They want to hear your demo! Your demo is just an example of all of your best work. Don't worry, you don't need to have been paid for the scripts you read in your demo. But, there is a definite order that you should arrange your various samples in that will help you get noticed faster and ultimately, book you more work. Which is the goal, right?

Your demo is supposed to represent your skills and showcase your talent. The tricky part is that anyone listening to your demo isn't going to listen for long. You have to snag them within the first 10-15 seconds. That's not a lot of time! But there are secrets to keeping a listener longer.

Generally, your demo should not be longer than :60 seconds in total. It should contain at least three to five different scripts. First, should be the biggest client you have. In this case, since you haven't even begun to get paid for work, just pick a radio or TV commercial ad on television, and copy down the words. Transcribe it. Pick an ad with a voice that sounds similar to your own. So if you are reading a script for Toyota, it would sound plausible that your voice would be or could be used for that commercial. Just be smart. For example, a young sounding female voice might not fit for a Home Depot read, because a) the audience for that commercial are home owners. Hearing about products for the home won't sound as convincing coming from a youthful female as it would from a

strong male or older female voice; and b) Home Depot already has a pretty famous voice reading their commercials. “You can do it, we can help.” You know exactly how that voice sounds, so trying to pass it off as your own body of work will make you appear deceptive and possibly even difficult to work with.

The next piece in your demo should be the best thing you’ve done. The piece you are most proud of! So you hook them in with the biggest most conceivably recognizable name, then keep them tuned into the best thing you’ve ever done. Whatever that may be; commercial, audio book, training manual, tag line, just put the thing you think sounds the best.

After you have the hook and line, the next few things should round off your capabilities. Do you do an accent? A character? A special kind of reading, like children’s story books, medical jargon, or online classes? This is where you put the next few pieces of audio. This way, the potential client recognizes your voice, hears your best stuff, and then even if they don’t think you are the perfect fit for your project, they get an idea of your range. This is important because people producing projects needing voice overs, generally have several projects rolling at once. So where you may not be the perfect fit for the job you are auditioning for, you may just be what they need on another project.

CHAPTER 7: FINDING WORK

You have the perfect set up and the best demo ready to go! Now what? Find work. The frustrating part is that a good voice and a good demo doesn't mean jobs will be lining up in your email inbox. You have to go look for them. I mean, really look. Luckily, the Internet is a vast place where millions of people are connected and needing things like "American Voice Over Actor-Male (or Female)" aren't difficult to find.

Unfortunately, for this type of work however, a quick Google search isn't going to instantly connect your work to the people that need your type of work. So you might think you need an agent. Or do you?

Agents or managers can be wonderful human beings that can put your talent in the front row of all the best producers and project managers in Hollywood. Which is GREAT! These might even be some of the biggest paying jobs you could get access to. The catch is that agents and managers are incredibly difficult to come by, let alone one that you can trust to do the job you want and need. If you can land a talent manager or agent to help you, then great; I'm still trying to figure out how to accomplish this. If you are struggling, like me, don't fret! I make a great income without the help of anyone else. The income doesn't come without a lot of hard work including hours spent online marketing myself, updating my website and demos, writing potential talent agencies and networking like a bat out of hell.

If you typed in "Voice Over Jobs" in Google right now, you'd probably get a laundry list of services like

Voice123, Voices.com, or EdgeStudio that you could pay a monthly or yearly fee, to get access to auditions for jobs. There are a lot of voices that use these services and even more clients looking for freelance voice talent there. I have several colleagues that use these services and have done very well using them. I have never paid to gain access to this type of information. You absolutely don't have to, but definitely recognize that there is value in paying for that much information and networking ability at your fingertips.

I call these, pay-to-play websites. They are easy to spot because they will ask you for a membership fee to gain access to the auditions. The problem I have with these services, is that in order to gain any reputation, you have to be sitting at your computer ready to pounce on open auditions. This can be okay to do while you are recording for another project, reading industry news, or submitting your demo to talent agents/managers. In other words, these pay-to-play websites can be great if you are online and working on other projects simultaneously. Otherwise, they can be a time suck.

Most likely, when you start in your voice over career, you won't be working at it full time. You won't quit your day job. This will be some fun "play" money to cover a concert, movie night or small bills. Manage your time wisely. It is precious. Let the Internet do the work for you. If you still want to sign up for these pay-to-play websites, do so! But be prepared to sit on them for a while (hopefully while you multi-task) waiting for an audition, or several, to pop up. It may take days, or weeks to land your first audition, but generally, that is all it really takes. One or two paid

gigs and your profile on those pay-to-play websites will start coming up at the top of the feed when a client searches for particular voices. Before you know it, you will begin getting “booked” for jobs. This is when a client selects you, out of all the possible voices in the world, to read and interpret their copy. What an honor!

There are other ways to find and land work, without using these pay-to-play websites. In fact, a little known secret is that there are MANY radio stations across the United States that don't have enough people working in their buildings to cover the volume of commercials they are creating for their local businesses and clients. Generally, the handful of on air talent (radio dj's) are working their shift, then having to cut many commercials. Females are outnumbered in the radio industry and therefore overused in their commercial rotation. Commercials sound less credible when the same voices are used over and over again to sell the Chevy dealership downtown, and then the same voice for the Ford Dealership just outside of town, and then the John Deere Tractor Dealer and so on.

So what happens is these small radio stations pay a service like an outside production company to create these commercials. They will pay an agreed upon fee, let's say \$250 per month to record and produce an agreed upon amount of commercials, let's say 10 per month. That production company will hire freelance voice over talent to keep in their roster and rotate through all of them equally. There are MANY of these production companies. I'm listed on 4 different rosters and they pay anywhere from \$4 per commercial up to \$25 per commercial. The frequency

with which they come also varies. I get far more requests for work from the \$4 per spot company than the \$25 per spot company. If you want to find these radio companies, your best bet is on the website, allaccess.com. This is a radio industry site where you can stay up to date with the who's who in the biz, but also, scan for jobs. Lots of voice over work pops up here, specifically for those production companies.

There are also several websites you can use that don't require you to pay to gain access to audition information. One of my favorites is voicebunny.com. They will make you audition, but this process should be pretty painless. They will send you a sample script, then you have an allotted amount of time to return the sample script. They are looking for quality of equipment and turn around time. Generally, the faster you can return a project to a client in the best quality possible, the more competitive you become. Someone may have an excellent voice, but if it takes them two days to return a :60 second commercial, that is a problem.

Another website I use often, that has been wonderful in gaining exposure to different types of projects; upwork.com. This is just meant for freelance work in general, but the amount of voice over work that comes through there is insane! Clients from all over the world are looking for American accents. They are in high demand right now as many clients are looking to build and develop video games or e-learning programs for kids to learn to speak English.

CHAPTER 8: STAY COMPETITIVE

Getting work is only half the battle. Keeping it and charging a fair wage is another. Clients sometimes have a difficult time understanding the value of what they are paying for so I like to lay it all out for them. Let's say the project is for a product video for Herbalife. They have a 20 minute presentation video they need recorded. I tell them my fee for 20 minutes of finished and mastered recorded audio, exactly how long it will take for them to receive the finished product and how many edits/revisions they get.

There is no real industry standard when it comes to what to charge for voice overs. As a non-union talent my base fee is \$7 per mastered recorded minute. So if I turn in a 3 minute piece of audio, I charge \$21. The general rule of thumb, is that for every one minute of finished recorded audio, it will take 3 total minutes of actual work time to record, edit, master, upload and send the work. So if you were to record a 60 minute piece, I would charge \$420 base fee. Remember, I did not earn \$420 in an hour, this took me at least three hours of work. PLUS, any revisions or edits the client may have are all factored in. For a project that size there are guaranteed to be edits needed.

Usually, I include up to 5 edits/revisions within the base fee. This lets the client know that you are a professional and that your time is valuable. It can be a nightmare when a client refuses to proofread their copy before sending it to you to ensure they get exactly what they want. I put that cap in there because

things do come up and sometimes having a few different varied reads can be helpful.

NEVER change the wording in a piece of copy or script, unless a client asks you for help in this department. You are not a proofreader. You are a voice talent and are only hurting yourself when you do this. Besides, you never know if they actually WANT it read this way. So fight your brain's urge to make everything grammatically correct. Don't be afraid to kick back a piece of copy to a client that has a ton of 'local' words, words that you wouldn't know because they are the names of streets or people you wouldn't be familiar with because you don't live there. (Thank goodness you read through the copy first before you started recording, right?)

If you include up to five edits and they come back with several edits because of grammatical errors on their part, you are cheating yourself out of money. After those 5 edits, I do charge, per mastered minute of edited and mastered audio revisions. Although at a discounted rate. It's frustrating for a client to have to resend their copy and it is distracting to you, especially when they are not the only client you are servicing.

Be realistic in turn around time for a project. No matter the size of the project, I can generally complete it within 24 hours. Unless there is a lot of production necessary, which means adding sound effects or different voices, it shouldn't take more than a day to complete these projects. In fact, the quicker you return them back to a client, the better you make them look and the more likely they are to continue to use your voice. Just stay in touch and let them know

what is going on. Make them feel like the most important client on your agenda. And always double check your work. Did you edit out all of the mistakes on your end? Did you read all the words correctly? If you don't know how to pronounce something...look it up! Youtube is excellent for this.

Also, to be clear, \$7 per recorded mastered audio minute is a number I came up with after years of experience working. This is not an industry standard and I do take jobs for less than that! In fact, I'm working on a project for \$2.50 per recorded mastered audio minute. It's up to you to use your best judgement. I often tell clients that get spooked by that number that as long as you have long term work for me, I'll cut it down significantly to even \$2.50 per recorded minute. Find a number that feels fair for your experience level and that will get your clients coming back to you. As you gain more experience and more clients, continue to slowly raise your rates.

CHAPTER 9: MARKETING YOURSELF

Staying competitive also means marketing yourself properly. You probably wanted to get into this business to have crazy voices or maybe read some fun scripts and the idea of marketing yourself, or putting yourself out there, probably never crossed your mind. Working as a non-union voice talent without an agent means that initially, you are unknown. No managers or agents are rallying for you to get work to earn that 10% commission. No one is putting your demo on the line to be judged by project managers and producers. This is the majority of the work you will have to do for yourself.

Luckily, in the era of the Internet, lots of marketing you do can be free! Uploading your demo and any other samples to a service like soundcloud.com is beneficial because all of your audio will be in one central location. Then you can send the profile link to project managers and producers in need of freelance voice over talent. [Soundcloud.com](https://soundcloud.com) is a free service, up to a certain amount of GB, but your samples shouldn't be entire projects (most clients won't allow that anyway), rather snipbits of the work you've done. This way a future client has an idea of your range.

You can create your own website if you have the chops to do so. [Wix.com](https://wix.com) is a free source you can use. If you care to, you can pay extra for a personal domain name (i.e. your name is Jane Doe, then you can find a dot com that would work for your name like janedoe.com) Your own personal website adds to the illusion of professionalism, which you are, but again, is not

necessary if you are just beginning. Use [soundcloud.com](https://www.soundcloud.com). It's user friendly and awesome to get the ball rolling.

Then, type in any number of combinations in the LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Craigslist search boxes: Voice Over Talent, Voice Over Work, Voice Over Artist, Voice Over Jobs etc to bring up jobs or other people in the field. There should be directions in the job posting regarding how to apply or submit your demo.

Reach out to others in the business. Listen to their demos. Privately critique it; what did you like, what didn't you like? Does yours sound similar? What kinds of jobs are they getting booked for? How does this professional describe their own voice? Make sure to drop a line and say hi and tell them what you liked about their audio. You can also like or follow them to stay up to date on what they are doing. You just never know who you are talking to and how you might be able to help one another in the future. I have needed and used people in the business I have never met face to face for voice over work! So put yourself out there. The worst that could happen is they say "no," and then you move on to the next one.

Throughout this How-To guide, you should now have a better understanding of some of the language used in voice over, the various types of work you can acquire, working as a union vs non-union talent, buying your start up equipment and setting up a studio, as well as how to protect and warm up your voice, interpreting a script, putting together a demo and using the internet to find and keep work. Remember, this is a really fun line of work and there

is room for everyone as long as they are willing to work hard at it. Practice, practice, practice and put yourself out there. You'll be raking in the dough before know it and bragging that you are a professional voice over talent!

Recommended Resources

- [HowExpert.com](https://www.howexpert.com) – Quick ‘How To’ Guides on All Topics from A to Z by Everyday Experts.
- [HowExpert.com/free](https://www.howexpert.com/free) – Free HowExpert Email Newsletter.
- [HowExpert.com/books](https://www.howexpert.com/books) – HowExpert Books
- [HowExpert.com/courses](https://www.howexpert.com/courses) – HowExpert Courses
- [HowExpert.com/clothing](https://www.howexpert.com/clothing) – HowExpert Clothing
- [HowExpert.com/membership](https://www.howexpert.com/membership) – HowExpert Membership Site
- [HowExpert.com/affiliates](https://www.howexpert.com/affiliates) – HowExpert Affiliate Program
- [HowExpert.com/writers](https://www.howexpert.com/writers) – Write About Your #1 Passion/Knowledge/Expertise & Become a HowExpert Author.
- [HowExpert.com/resources](https://www.howexpert.com/resources) – Additional HowExpert Recommended Resources
- [YouTube.com/HowExpert](https://www.youtube.com/HowExpert) – Subscribe to HowExpert YouTube.
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