

A woman with blonde, wavy hair is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a yellow top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

# *Dana's Got Your Back:*

## A Guide to Great Headshots

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**Turn your headshots from So-So to  
Whoa! with these 10 simple steps!**

**Headshots: Casting Directors are scrolling through them, Reps are pitching them, Actors are constantly updating them! And there's a reason. You might think with video and social media that headshots are no longer a top priority. But I'm here to tell you something really important. Are you listening?**

***I mean really listening?!***

**Okay, here we go.**

***Headshots are a big deal!!!***

(Whew. Glad I got that off my chest.)

I mean it friends, working in casting and as a theatrical agent, I can tell you FIRST HAND how important a headshot is. Headshots are your first impression, your calling card, your logo. Casting directors will see your pictures way more often than they will see you, so make sure those pictures are spot on!

It all comes down to this: If you don't have a good headshot, you don't have a good chance of success in this business. May sound harsh, but it is true!

***Here are few common headshot myths, the truths the pros know, and why it matters!***

**Myth:** Headshots aren't that important, it's acting ability that matters.

**Truth:** If your headshots aren't GREAT, you won't get to show your acting ability.

**Here's why:** Getting an acting gig starts by getting in the casting director's door. Did you know that casting directors can get 2000 submissions or more per role? Yikes! Looking through pictures submissions is the MAIN WAY casting choose actors for auditions. Your pictures must stand out so you get called in to share your amazing acting skills!



dana bowling  
AUDITION COACH

**Myth:** I should look like a STAR in my pictures!

**Truth:** You should look just like YOU in your pictures.

**Here's why:** We all want to look awesome and cool all the time. But most days, we just look like us! And guess when auditions come? Most days! Casting directors are looking to fill roles today. So your pictures should look like you do today. A great compliment from a casting director would be, "You look just like your picture!" For women, does it take you longer than an hour to look like your picture? For kids, have you hit a growth spurt? Probably time for new pictures.

**Myth:** I can play any role, so I'll just get a general shot.

**Truth:** The clearer you are on your casting type, the clearer it will be to cast you.

**Here's why:** We are all infinitely unique and one of a kind. But our casting types aren't. It can sometimes feel frustrating to pigeonhole ourselves into a few clear types. You might think: "There is a part of me that can play 'the bully' and another part that connects to 'the nerd.'" But when there are 2000 people up for one role, the person whose essence is the closest to the role has the best chance at getting called in. So find a few archetypes that match who you are the most. And get pictures that really highlight that! This is especially true for the first few jobs you get that might only be one or two lines. The image needs to tell the audience immediately who you are and how you propel the story forward.

**Myth:** Headshot sessions are so expensive, I can just take a picture with my phone!

**Truth:** Unprofessional photos will make you look just that: Unprofessional.

**Here's why:** Having acting be something you do just for fun is totally fine. But if you want to work professionally, you have to treat it like a business. Businesses spend a lot of money at the beginning getting started. This is called an investment. Getting awesome headshots for your acting business is an investment in the awesomeness that is you. It's tempting to have mom or dad take a shot of you in the backyard and call it a day. But professional photographers spend years perfecting their craft, just like you do! They can think about things like exposure, lighting, mood, background. And they have all the equipment needed. Unprofessional pictures stand out to casting directors, and not in a good way. It makes them wonder if you are the professional they need for the job. In the LA market, expect to pay between \$200-\$400 for multiple looks.

**Myth:** It doesn't matter what I'm wearing as long as I feel good.

**Truth:** It matters a lot what you're wearing, AND you should feel good.

**Here's why:** What you wear tells us a lot about you. Clear wardrobe choices help us see you as the character of the cool kid, the bully, the mean girl, or the nerd! If you're wearing busy patterns, or logos for brand or sports teams, casting might be distracted by that, and not be able to see you! It's best to have your shoulders covered so the focus is on your face. Bright colors and layers are great and really stand out against neutral backgrounds. Bring options. Your headshot photographer can help you make final choices on the day.

*"Okay, I get it," you may be thinking. "Now what?"  
Here's a step by step guide to help you walk through the  
process and get the great shot you deserve!*

## **DANA'S ULTIMATE HEADSHOT CHECKLIST:**

Follow these steps to help you enjoy (and not freak out on) your journey to get great headshots:

- ☐ Talk to any reps about what pictures they want for you.
  - ☐ a. Work with your team will help you get the result you want and they want.
  - ☐ b. If you don't have reps yet, ask other actors or casting directors you know about what they think. These new pictures might help you snag great reps!
- ☐ Define 3-4 very clear types that you could play today.
  - ☐ a. Sweet girl, brainy girl, dry humor girl, sporty girl.
  - ☐ b. Really dorky boy, shy boy, annoying little brother, sad boy.
- ☐ Choose a professional photographer.
  - ☐ a. Sometimes this means saving up some money! That's okay, it's worth it!
  - ☐ b. Ask friends who have great photos who they got them from.
  - ☐ c. Ask your reps for suggestions. (We have a few favorites listed below too!)
  - ☐ d. Check out websites and look for pictures that you're drawn to.

## ☐ Choose great wardrobe options.

- ☐ a. Bold colors.
- ☐ b. No logos.
- ☐ c. No distracting patterns.
- ☐ d. Shoulders covered.
- ☐ e. Hints at character without being a caricature.

## ☐ Practice!

- ☐ a. Take some practice shots at home.
- ☐ b. Practice imagining different ideas/feelings/people/images that engage you with the camera and see how they make you look different.
- ☐ c. Write down what works and bring it with you to your shoot!
- ☐ d. Find some photos that you do like of yourself, or other people, and use them as a reference.
- ☐ e. Remember, you're going to take headshots every few years for as long as you choose to pursue acting professionally. It will get easier the more you do it.

## ☐ Set yourself up for success

- ☐ a. Schedule your shoot enough time in advance to prepare.
- ☐ b. Schedule your shoot in a less busy time. (i.e. Not finals week.)
- ☐ c. Get great sleep the week before your shoot.
- ☐ d. Have a delicious meal before your shoot so you have good energy.
- ☐ e. Leave for your appointment with plenty of time so you don't feel rushed.
- ☐ f. Plan something fun for yourself to do after the shoot to celebrate!

## ☐ What to bring

- ☐ a. Bring music that makes you feel alive!
- ☐ b. Bring your list of ideas/feelings/people/images that connect you with the camera and reference it as needed!
- ☐ c. Bring any reference images to show your photographer what you're looking for.
- ☐ d. Bring snacks to keep your energy up.
- ☐ e. Bring more wardrobe options than you think you might need, photographers have great eyes on what will work!



☐ **Communicate with your photographer.**

- ☐ a. Ask your photographer for help finalizing your wardrobe.
- ☐ b. Talk with your photographer honestly and tell them how you're feeling. If you're nervous, tell them! They work with tons of nervous actors everyday and can help ease your fears!
- ☐ c. Make sure to tell them the exact shots you need. It's great to have a written list or example of photos you like.
- ☐ d. Ask to see a few of the first shots in each set up to make sure you are getting the pictures you want.

☐ **Be your AWESOME SELF.**

- ☐ a. Have fun getting to be you in front of the camera! This is an exciting moment, when you get to do a great thing for your dreams!
- ☐ b. Genuine pictures are the best! Only YOU can be YOU!
- ☐ c. And to take some pressure off, think about these pictures as an experiment. Just like in advertising, if it works, great, if not, you can always shoot again.

☐ **Choose the pictures that really stand out,**

- ☐ a. They are in focus.
- ☐ b. They look like you.
- ☐ c. They feel like you.
- ☐ d. They are a clear type.
- ☐ e. Your reps like them.
- ☐ f. You like them.



Whew! This is A LOT!

Friends, let me tell you, **I get it**. It's a lot of info, a lot of money, and a lot of dreams riding on this. So I hope this list helps simplify the process and empowers you to get shots that shine! And remember: YOU'RE WORTH IT!

Wondering how your headshots hold up? What does Casting see when they look at your picture? How likely will it be to get you in the door? My Headshot Review Service is a great way to find out! With every personalized evaluation, I will provide the insider information needed to make sure your first impression puts your best foot (and head) forward!

*Here's a list of some of my favorite KID HEADSHOT photographers in the LA area to get you started. Let me know if you have others that you love!*

- Alex Kruk - alexkruk.com
- Allison Bluestein - alyblueheadshots.com
- Amy Casson - facebook.com/AmyCassonPhotography
- Chris Evan - chrisevanphotography.com
- Deidhra Fahey - deidhrafahayphotography.com
- Emily Rule Sue - instagram.com/emilyrsue
- Joanna Degeneres - joannadegeneres.com
- Kenneth Dolin - kennethdolin.com
- Michael D'Ambrosia - michaeldambrosia.com
- Rena Durham - renadurham.com
- Robin Lorraine - robinlorraine.com
- Sage Kirkpatrick - facebook.com/freshlookphotography
- Shandon Photography- shandonphotography.com
- Tamara Tihanyi - tihanyipho.com

