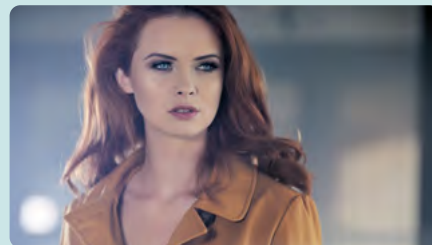# Screen acting:
A teacher's guide

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Transform your drama teaching with screen acting

As a Performing Arts teacher, we know you're always on the lookout for innovative ways to engage your students and make your classes more relevant. In recent years, screen acting has become essential for drama students to perfect, especially those who wish to work in the flourishing film and television industries. With the prevalence of screen-based communication in everyday working life, screen acting offers an exciting new discipline for all students to explore.
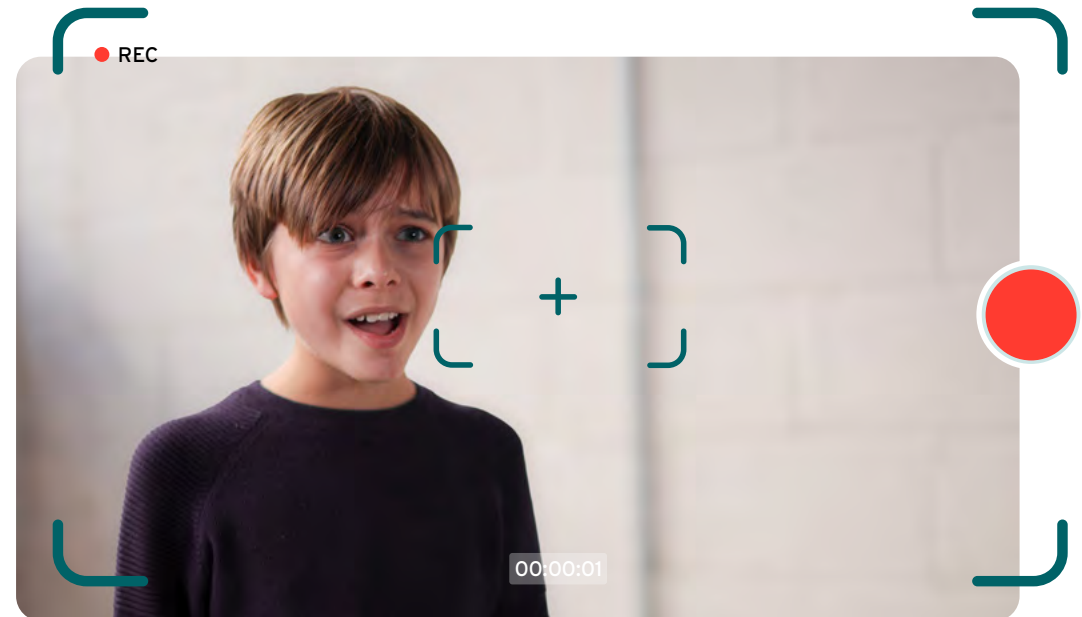
To support you in honing your screen acting offer, we've gathered insights and advice from Academy Principals who have successfully integrated screen acting tuition into their curriculum. In this guide, they share their experiences and top tips to help you make the most of this subject. You'll also find an introduction to Trinity College London's Acting for Screen exams which have been designed to inspire excellence in screen acting and empower students to excel.

Whether you're already incorporating screen acting into your classes or are considering getting started, this resource is packed with valuable information and guidance to support you.

> It's absolutely crucial to teach screen acting. We can't just assume that theatre performance translates directly to the screen. About 85% of people get their first acting job on screen; we live in the digital age of streaming, video games, television and films.
>
> **Jade Matthews, Drama teacher**

Why teach screen acting?

Adding screen acting to your curriculum can boost your Academy's offer and cultivate a broader acting skill base for your students. Discover the benefits that other Principals have experienced on introducing screen acting classes at their Academies.

Build confidence

"They may not be a brilliant stage actor, but they're a beautiful TV actor, or they look great on commercials. You just don't know until your students try screen acting."

Danica Pickett, Principal, Stagecoach Fleet

Teaching screen acting can boost students' confidence, helping them feel at ease in front of the camera. For those who may not enjoy performing on stage, the screen offers a safe space to thrive.

Engage and retain students

The chance to learn screen acting skills has the potential to attract new students, and retain existing cohorts as your curriculum will remain current and engaging. Knowledge of screen acting techniques also equips students with useful transferable skills.

"You need screen skills more and more every day. Screen acting is not just for actors. We just want to teach our students as much as we possibly can to prepare them for life."

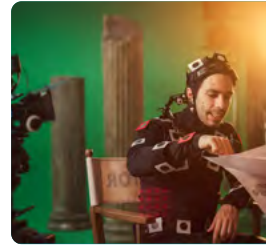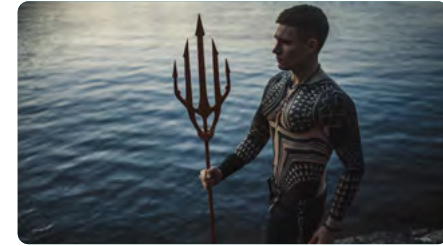**Danica Pickett, Principal, Stagecoach Fleet**

Open doors to new opportunities

Introducing screen acting to your drama teaching can open up a world of opportunities for students who wish to showcase their talents.

"If you have an agency attached to your drama school, then you've got professional opportunities that the children can be introduced to, and that is good for their CVs."

Shelley Lowry, Principal, The Shelley Lowry School

Effective screen acting teaching techniques

Principals we spoke to emphasised that screen acting requires a unique teaching approach, distinct from conventional drama training. While it draws on the same fundamental principles, screen acting needs a more naturalistic style and requires an understanding of the technical aspects of acting for film and television.

Here we share tried-and-tested techniques and valuable insights into the art of teaching screen acting, gathered from the Principals we interviewed.

Start with the basics

'**We recommend you start with the fundamentals as you would do for any drama teaching**' explains Shelley Lowry, Principal at Shelley Lowry School. This includes tailoring your approach to the age group, focusing on vocal and physical techniques and using familiar ice breakers, placing particular emphasis on diction and clarity.

Shelley explains, '**You're preparing students to create their own screen actor's toolbox so they can pull upon things that will help them with characterisation and understanding the challenges of the scripts and the scenes that they've chosen.**'

Introduce screen acting principles

Group conversations about recently watched TV shows or films can capture your students' interest. Focusing on what made the performances effective and how they could be improved is recommended. Reviewing YouTube clips of well-known scenes, both as a group and for independent learning, can also be used to highlight the nuances of screen acting and bring relevance to your lessons.

Perfect performance for the screen

Immersing themselves in their character, and tailoring gesture and expressions for the screen, are crucial screen acting skills for students to grasp. Shelley emphasises the importance of directing students to focus on using their eyes and cultivating an understanding of how to internalise their emotions for a more naturalistic delivery: '**The camera picks up absolutely everything. Every eyebrow move, every twitch of the eye, every expression of the mouth and every movement must have purpose.**'

Engage your class with dedicated workshops

Screen-acting focused workshops are cited by many of the Academies we spoke to as a useful way to introduce a range of inspiring and relevant topics, such as accent training, animal work and commercials. Danica Pickett, Principal at Stagecoach Fleet highlights, '**Adverts make for easy and engaging workshops. Students can generate ideas and create their own advert. We teach them how to create a storyboard so that they have a clear plan.**'
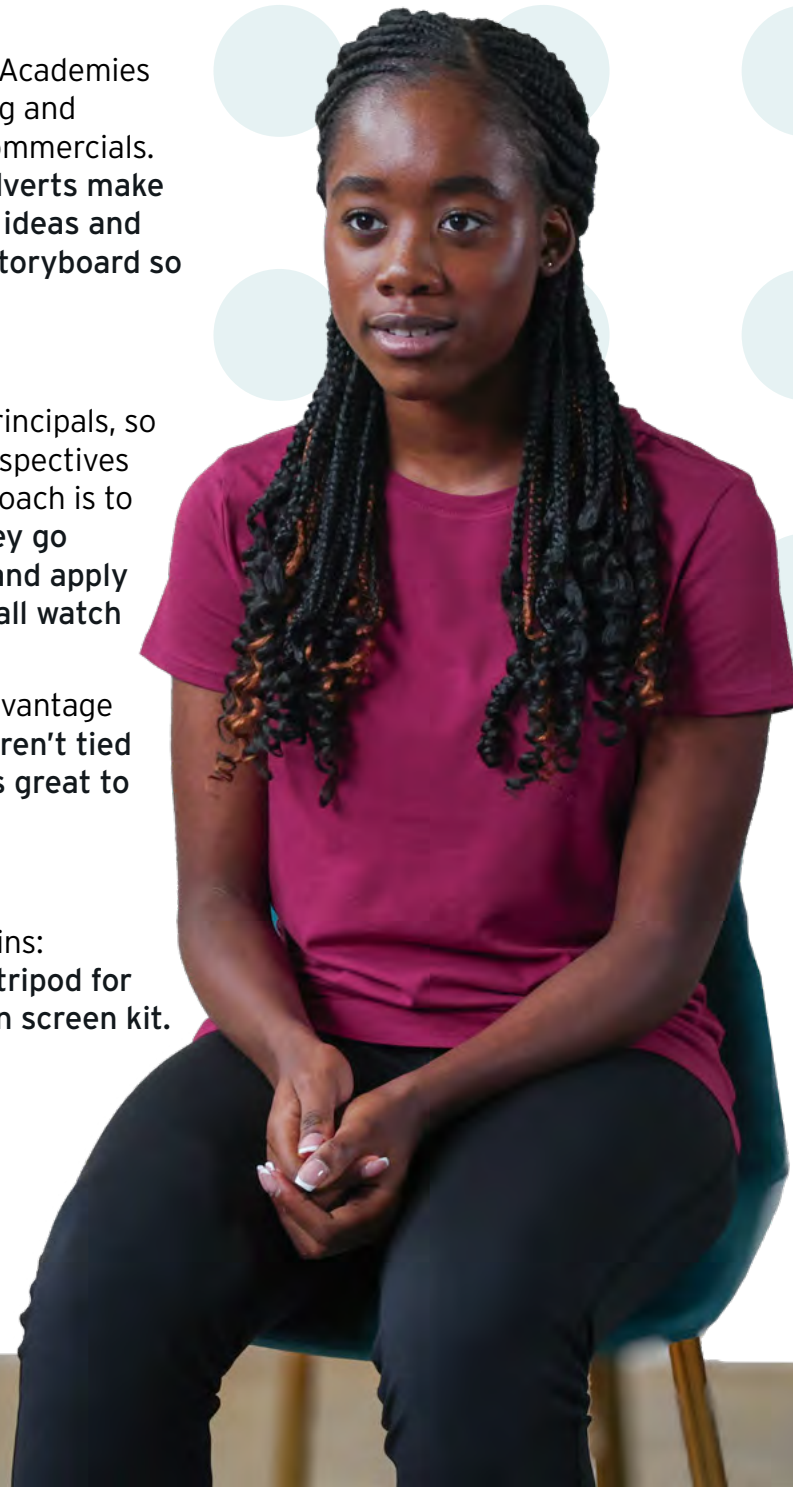
Review recordings together

Reviewing recording as a group was recommended by all Principals, so students can benefit from hearing a range of views and perspectives and make adjustments to their performance. Shelley's approach is to '**film the students in class and watch as a group. When they go home they can learn their script, research the character and apply the techniques discussed. And then film them again, and all watch the recording back together.**'

Drama teacher, Jade Matthews adds that one significant advantage of reviewing screen acting as a group is its flexibility. '**You aren't tied to one performance. You can adapt with each take and it's great to teach actors that skill.**'

All you need is a smartphone

Expensive technical equipment isn't essential. Danica explains: '**When we started, we just used a phone. Later I bought a tripod for the phone. And then I bought some backdrops and a green screen kit. I've slowly built up over the years.**'

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Excelling in screen performance: Your comprehensive checklist

When teaching screen acting, Principals have highlighted the importance of helping students adjust their performances for the screen and supporting them to record themselves effectively. By focusing on both performance and technical aspects, students can greatly improve their on-screen performance. Effectively reviewing their own recorded performance is a key tool in enhancing screen acting acumen.

Use this useful checklist to guide your students' review process, helping them identify areas of strength and areas that need further development.

- How is the shot framed?
- How effective is the lighting?
- What's the sound like?
- Is your eyeline correct?
- How do you use your eyes to convey emotion?
- Is the background clear?
- Do you shift position without realising?
- Do you use your hands unintentionally?
- What's your facial expression like?
- How can you convey emotion non-verbally?
- How naturalistic is the performance?
- Are you maintaining continuity in your positioning and actions?
- Are your movements deliberate and controlled?

- Are your lines delivered with clarity and authenticity?
- Is your body language consistent with the character?
- Are you maintaining energy and focus throughout the scene?
- How well do you react to off-screen cues?

Introducing Acting for Screen exams

In our dynamic digital age, mastering screen-based performance and communication is crucial. Designed by experts from TV and film, Trinity's Acting for Screen syllabus is carefully crafted to build industry-relevant skills, focusing on the practical demands of professional screen acting.

By nurturing the essential technical and performance skills that sit at the heart of the screen acting industry – such as auditions, showreels and self-taping – Acting for Screen exams empower today's learners to become the standout performers of tomorrow.

Trinity Acting for Screen offers a structured pathway to cultivating professional-level screen acting skills required for success in today's screen acting industry, including:

▶ **Technical proficiency**
The development of essential technical skills, such as maintaining eyeline and adapting to various camera framings, is a key principle of the qualification. A deep understanding of the technical requirements of screen acting is fostered by the exam tasks.

▶ **Performance skills**
Mastering the art of expressing character emotions, as well as listening and responding to dialogue, is supported by the exam tasks. Candidates learn to bring their performances vividly to life on the screen.

▶ **Presenting to camera**
Clear and confident presentation to camera will become second nature to candidates – a crucial skill in today's digital job market.

▶ **Reflective practice**
Self review and performance refinement is actively supported by the exam tasks, mirroring professional acting and training methods. This fosters continuous development and hones core screen acting skills.

Acting for Screen exams offer the freedom to select any performance material specifically written for TV or film (choices can reflect students' interests, culture, and playing age). You can film candidate performances with ease using just your smartphone (no editing required) and upload directly to our submission platform.

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> If you've got a phone in your pocket, you've got everything you need to enter for an Acting for Screen exam.
>
> **Gregg Whelan, Director of Performance, Trinity College London**

" Trinity Acting for Screen is a great exam. If you're new to teaching screen acting it could open up a whole new avenue for you.

Shelley Lowry, Principal, The Shelley Lowry School "

Complete preparation for on-screen acting success

Our exams help develop competence and confidence, to support your students to thrive in the ever-evolving screen and media industries.

Industry-aligned skills

Essential skills for auditions, showreels and self-taping are developed by exam tasks that incorporate industry-standard techniques. Candidates refine their vocal, physical, and character skills while building the technical expertise needed for on-camera performance. Many of these competencies are transferable and will support learners in a range of industries.

Technical proficiency

Technical skills are integrated within the performance tasks, enabling candidates to learn essential screen acting practices like maintaining eyeline and adapting to different camera framing (close up, mid-shot and full body framing).

Screen performance skills

Professional-standard screen acting skills can be achieved through tasks that encourage the development of techniques such as creating convincing performances, expressing character emotions and perfecting dialogue.

Three qualification levels help learners to advance their screen acting skills progressively. Each level is recognised on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), with highest eligible for UCAS points. Our solo entry exams allow students, aged 8 and up, to showcase their unique talents.

Prepare candidates for success

We want your students to shine and showcase their talents to the fullest, so here are some suggestions to support you in preparing Acting for Screen candidates to ensure they bring their very best on-screen performance to their exam.

Showcase range
▸ Choose material for Monologue and Dialogue tasks that demonstrates a range of performance skills.

Develop technical skills
▸ Incorporate training to help students maintain eyeline and use appropriate movement and gestures for different frames.
▸ Explore techniques for positioning the camera to meet the requirements of the tasks.

Cultivate performance skills
▸ Learn strategies for helping students to make their on-screen performance more authentic and believable.
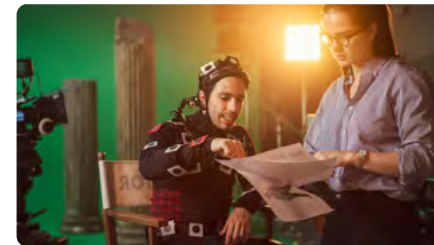▸ Build screen-specific techniques such as creating a mood quickly, and listening and reacting to others.

Boost communication skills
▸ Encourage candidates to practise conveying information effectively and naturally for the Ident and Reflection tasks.
▸ Emphasise the importance of clear communication.

Nurture reflection and improvement
▸ Review recorded performances with students and encourage them to embrace self-reflection.
▸ Support students to identify specific areas for improvement.

A range of **Acting for Screen resources** for teaching and learning are available, including clear, step-by-step videos to fully support you with filming your exam submission.

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Ready to take the next step?

If you'd like to begin offering Trinity's Acting for Screen exams, here's how you can get started.

Find out more about

Explore the full details of our [Acting for Screen](#) qualification on Trinity's website, including the comprehensive syllabus, incorporating a glossary of key screen acting terms.

Already a registered Trinity centre?

Speak to your Trinity contact about arranging Acting for Screen exams.

Not a Trinity centre yet?

Reach out to [Trinity's Drama Specialist](#) for guidance and support.

Or you can enter for Acting for Screen exams directly via our [online booking platform](#) (UK only).

" It's wonderful to see the students progress from not being aware of how to act on screen to understanding how things are different for screen and going on to do their exams. Screen classes are fresh, new and exciting. They are a pleasure to teach.

Shelley Lowry, Principal, The Shelley Lowry School "