

« Navigating Intimacy »

Guidelines for Actors and Casting Directors

The Film and Television Industry often tells stories that require physical intimacy, nudity, and simulated sex. While professionals who have honed their craft are involved in the production process, the auditioning and filming of intimate scenes remains a delicate area, particularly for newcomers and performers who may feel pressured to agree to uncomfortable situations.

To address these concerns and ensure that consent is central to all intimacy work, the BVC has established guidelines to set common standards in the auditioning process.

Intimate scenes include all depictions of sexual acts (such as kissing, simulated sex, or masturbation), sexual violence (including rape, sexual assault, or BDSM), non-sexual acts (such as touch between a mother and child or a nurse and patient), and nudity or semi-nudity.

During auditions, a performer's personal sense of modesty and shame should be taken into consideration, along with cultural differences and intersectionalities. Personal boundaries must be respected and honored at all times. We at the BVC are committed to maintaining a sense of play, trust, and goodwill in the creative process while providing a framework for working with intimacy in live auditions.

It is the responsibility of all industry professionals to work professionally and mindfully in this highly sensitive area. The following standards and protocols serve as a guide for ensuring that performers and all professionals in front of and behind the camera feel comfortable, safe, and respected at all times.

- The BVC recommends that performers carefully consider their stance on performing nudity and sexual acts on screen and set personal boundaries before approaching a script or project. Boundaries are personal, can be fluid, and may differ depending on the production, role, or situation. Performers are in charge of their bodies and have the right to determine what they will and will not do during an audition or on film.

- If a role requires nudity, semi-nudity, simulated sex, or sexual violence, it should be explicitly identified and described in detail in the audition brief so that actors can make an informed decision on whether to participate. Performers should receive the entire script at least 72 hours prior to the audition.
- Live auditions should take place in professional settings or secure environments during reasonable working hours. Auditions should not be held in hotel rooms or private residences where the performer is alone with a member of the production team. If no other suitable location is available, the performer may bring a support person of their choosing, who can be present during the audition.
- Simulated sex, intimate contact, nudity, or semi-nudity should never be requested, required, or agreed upon in self-tape or online audition situations.
- In initial rounds of live auditions, simulated sex, intimate contact, nudity, or semi-nudity should not be required, proposed, or agreed upon. If such scenes are necessary for a callback audition due to their importance for the role, the performer must be informed in advance, give their consent, and have support measures outlined in detail in the casting brief.
- A performer has the right to refuse to perform sexual, nude, or underwear scenes during auditions, and their decision should not impact their potential for the role.
- The dress code for intimate scenes should be agreed upon before auditions. Nudity or semi-nudity should not be proposed or agreed to. Light layers of clothing that performers are comfortable in and can be removed while still providing protection should be used. Protective barriers should be provided, and choreographed sequences should be designed to avoid physical contact with intimate body parts.
- Boundaries, the type of physical contact, and choreography should be discussed with performers in advance, including which parts of

their bodies may or may not be touched, what can be filmed, and how kissing should be performed.

- Performers have the right to refuse to kiss in an audition. In such cases, the casting director should find alternative non-sexual actions to convey the intention of the scene (e.g., leaning in and turning heads away from each other). These alternative methods should be agreed upon before the audition.
- Wearing revealing clothing during an audition is only appropriate if it is intrinsic to the role, such as for a burlesque dancer or an erotic dancer. This information should be included in the audition brief.
- Only essential persons, including performers, camera, casting directors, directors, intimacy coordinators, support persons, should be present at auditions for intimate scenes, similar to a 'closed set' approach. Closed audition protocols should be followed, and the material should be handled discreetly and with care.
- Performers must sign a written agreement with the casting director indicating their consent for any recording of intimate scenes, as well as setting out boundaries and agreements to protect the performers. The footage should be shared only with the decision-making team, and only in password-protected, non-downloadable form. All material is confidential and must be protected and destroyed once the role has been cast.
- For films with intimate scenes involving sexual assault or violence or where young performers are involved, it is recommended to consult with intimacy coordinators and/or stunt coordinators to prevent injuries.
- Performers have the right to request an intimacy coordinator at an audition and once they have accepted a role if it is appropriate.
- Performers have the right to halt proceedings during an intimate or violent scene at any time if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

- Improvisation during auditioning or filming of intimate scenes is not permitted. All aspects should be pre-planned and agreed upon.
- If a role includes intimacy, but it has not yet been cast, the intended execution of those scenes should be discussed during the audition process. It is important for performers to communicate their boundaries, which should be respected, rather than misconstrued as refusal to fulfil the role's requirements. Despite this, we believe stories can still be effectively portrayed within each performer's personal boundaries.
- Performers who are cast in a role requiring nudity have a responsibility to disclose any visible tattoos or significant markings that may be exposed during filming or affect the performance. They may be asked to provide still photographs for makeup, wardrobe, or filming purposes. However, performers should not be required to undress during auditions, and no still photography should be taken during auditions for intimate scenes, particularly those involving choreographed sequences of simulated sexual acts or intimate touch.

These guidelines are specifically intended for working with intimacy in an audition environment and are based on global standards for working with intimacy on screen. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Bundesverband Casting. If you have a complaint or need to report any cases of misconduct, we ask you to refer to the prevention office of Themis - Trust Office Against Sexual Harassment and Violence e.V. at: <https://themis-vertrauensstelle.de>.

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