

Dr. Schafer
Audition checklist

As soon as possible

Make sure your instrument is in good working condition and obtain any needed maintenance and repair supplies
Register for the event
Acquire music
Take weekly lessons if possible

3+ months out

Sightread music

Listen to reference recordings you trust. Listen to other music by the composers and from the same style period to inform yourself about the appropriate interpretation of the music. Make a list of goals for the music. What is your musical vision for it? What do you need to be able to do to fulfill that vision? What can you already do? What do you need to learn? Make your goals very specific. Rank your goals from most difficult/most important to easy/least important.

Plan a technical practice routine that will address your goals. Determine where you are now in relation to each goal and make a goal for each week leading up to the audition. Try to achieve all of your goals 2 weeks before the audition. Be very specific. Some things (most difficult goals) you will practice every day. Some things every other day or several times a week. Make a thorough plan.

Schedule your practice times for each day. Maintain a well-rounded routine in addition to your goal practice. Plan the other fundamental skills you will practice daily or every-other day. Set goals for those skills too and how you will practice them. Practice should include warm-up, technical practice, and musical practice. Three sessions are ideal. Purchase any practice materials you need.

Progress comes from success. This usually means dividing your music up into small sections and slowing each section down enough so that you can play it accurately and musically. Get many correct repetitions at the slow tempo before you speed it up a little. Then get many correct repetitions at each subsequent tempo before speeding it up. Also practice putting the small sections back in context in the same manner-add the previous measure/note(s) and following measure/note(s) and repeat many times correctly before adding more measures/notes.

Revisit and reassess your musical vision if needed. Make musical expression the most important. Adjust your practice goals based on changes to your vision, or your pacing if your progress is different than you planned, as the weeks pass.

Commit to this routine and do it religiously. But, take a day off or a light day if you feel you need a mental or physical break. Listen to your body. Do not over-practice. Get into a general routine where you are getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, and nurturing yourself mentally and emotionally. Notice negative thoughts or self-destructive behavior. Ask yourself why you are treating yourself that way. Replace your negative thoughts and behaviors with more nurturing, supportive, encouraging, positive ones.

1 month out

Start to schedule mock auditions for other people. Make the mock auditions as close as possible to the real thing (follow your estimated warm-up and audition timing, go through the mental process you will want to use, walk in the room as you think you will, have your “judges” provide instructions, wear the outfit you will wear, eat what/when you will eat, etc.). You may even take a light practice day the day before your fake audition because this is probably what you will/should do the day before the real audition. Provide your judges with the music and ask for feedback in writing. Make sure to recognize your successes when you leave the room and be proud of yourself. Make notes about what you still need to work on. Adjust your practice routine based on the “results”. If nerves are an issue, notice them in the moment, accept them, and give them permission to be there. Afterwards, think about how you might better manage them. Focusing on your breathing and slowing it down might help. Try this in your practice. Try to remain positive before, during, and after your audition. In each mock audition, experiment with changes to your warm-up, clothes, food, etc., if you feel like adjustments might help.

2 weeks out

Plan a detailed schedule for audition day, including when you will wake up, when/what you will eat, when you will warm-up, etc. Allot plenty of extra time. Get directions and make sure you have done all you are supposed to do ahead of time with the event coordinators. Envision the day running smoothly and envision a positive, calm mood for yourself.

2 days before

Make sure you have everything you need for the audition: food, instrument maintenance and repair supplies, music, stand, directions, information, clothes, an inspirational note.

1 day before

Pack for audition day. Make sure you eat well (nothing that will upset your stomach), nurture yourself emotionally, and get a good night sleep.

Audition day!

Follow your schedule

Warm-up at home if possible

Get to the audition site early

Warm-up again; if there is one warm-up room for everyone, find a spot in the room that you can call your own. Focus on yourself and don't listen to others or let them interfere with your confidence. If you feel you need to run any of your music, only run small sections and only once or twice. Don't get tired.

Think positive thoughts. If you are nervous, notice it, accept it, and comfort and praise yourself. Give yourself permission to be nervous. Everyone will be nervous. Observe your breathing and slow it down. Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and not to be influenced by others. The judges want to hear you! Be proud of your hard work and preparation.

Keep to yourself. Do not engage with others. Make sure to breathe and blow.

Congratulate yourself on a job well-done! Celebrate your achievement afterwards, regardless of how you think you played. Praise yourself and be specific about what you did well. Make some notes about things that you wish had gone differently, and how you could have better prepared, but then let that all go and be proud of yourself.