

## **Extra Work, what is it?**

### **Should I do extra work to break into Hollywood?**

One of the easiest ways an actor new to Hollywood can get his feet wet is to find work as an “extra”. An extra is the background player or “atmosphere” on a film or television set, who has no lines but helps create the reality of a scene. When you are watching a film or television show, all of the people you see in the background walking, eating, talking etc., are extras—so you can see that the need for extras is enormous in Hollywood.

While you may not get paid a lot of money, or have any speaking lines, there are some benefits to working as an extra when first starting out.

1. You will get hands-on experience being on a film/television set and you’ll learn how everyone works together, whom you report to and what the director and producers expect of you. This will be a huge plus when your first paying role comes along, since you’ll be familiar with how a set works and what to do.
2. You will be exposed to many directors and producers, who sometimes assign extras a line to speak in the production—which will help you obtain your SAG union card.
3. It’s a great way to network with other actors and obtain information about upcoming auditions, productions or other valuable acting tips.

### **Are there extra types?**

Most definitely! Whether you are short, tall, skinny, fat, all races and ages are needed for extra work. When a film is casting, the extras asked for will fall into general categories such as: Under 30, Over 30, Over 18 to look younger, Athletic, Upscale, etc. Know what “type” or category you are so you don’t waste time showing up at a casting call you aren’t appropriate for.

The majority (around 75 percent) of extras work in Los Angeles is handled by two agencies—Central Casting and Cenex Casting. Central Casting handles union talent only and Cenex Casting books non-union talent. For kids in the business much of the work is handled by Screen Children’s Agency.



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### **What info will I get for each extra job?**

When you are booked for a job, the agency will give you the specifics:

1. Your call time
2. Location of the shoot and directions
3. Name of the assistant director or person to check in with
4. Any special wardrobe needs (most of the time your own wardrobe will be sufficient, but if there are any special requirements, the wardrobe department will supply you with a costume).

We don't suggest doing extra work as a full-time job if you are planning to be a principal actor. Although you'll gain invaluable experience, you won't have the time to go on auditions for paying roles, and you can become too well known as an extra. When a producer or director sees you continually as an extra on their productions, they won't see you as a principal actor when you audition for a role. On the other hand, if you are able to get SAG commercial extra work this may be an exception because you are paid very well and we have known many of our actors who were upgraded on set and now have national commercials running and are making residuals.

### **What should my next step be?**

If you live in Los Angeles or are soon relocating to the Los Angeles area and need help deciding if you should or should not do extra work contact the ESI NETWORK to schedule a meeting to see if they can assist you.