
UNIONS

What do unions offer me?

Actor's unions have been set up to protect the wages and working conditions of the actor, just as they do for any other industry, such as labor, electrical, etc. There are requirements for membership, but once you become eligible and join the union, your career as an actor becomes more credible and you make a lot more money!

The union offers terrific benefits to its members including medical insurance, a pension plan, guaranteed minimum wages per job and protection from unsafe working conditions while you are employed on any union project. The first union you join is considered your "parent" union and any other union you join after that will be considered a "sister" union.

Why should I join a union?

Now you may be thinking "I don't really need to join a union and spend my hard-earned money on dues; I can take care of myself!" Well, below are some very realistic reasons to join a union.

- 1. Wages**
You want to be guaranteed a realistic wage (not one arbitrarily set by a production company), including any overtime pay, which will be paid to you on time.
- 2. Safety**
You want a work environment that is safe and permits you to do your best.
- 3. Fair treatment**
You want to exhibit your individual talent and be rewarded for it without worrying about favoritism, harassment or being treated unfairly on the job.
- 4. Health insurance**
You want health insurance benefits that will stay with you, not your employer, and will keep you from being wiped out financially if you or your dependents become ill.



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5. **Residual payment protection**
You want additional payment when your work is reused.
6. **Protection of your earnings**
You want reasonable control over the agents who get you work so they won't take more than their fair share of your earnings.
7. **Credit union membership**
You want membership in an established credit union. A credit union will help you buy a car, loan you money for a home and help you build a line of credit.
8. **Legal protection**
You want the protection of a responsible group that will not lead you into a personal confrontation that might jeopardize your career. Now that you realize how important union membership is for your career, let's discuss the different unions, how you can join and how much the dues are for each.

What is SAG?

Screen Actors Guild (SAG)

This is the big one—the union most actors will want to be in, and the trickiest one to join. SAG represents over 87,000 actors working in motion pictures and television, including theatrical films, television films and episodic prime-time programs, commercials, industrial and educational films, music videos and student films. The Guild has negotiated contracts, which establish minimum wages, working conditions, agent rules, arbitration rules; health/pension plans and offer many side benefits for its members (income tax help, casting lines, credit union and access to special union-sponsored events).



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What is AFTRA?

American Federation of Radio & Television Artists (AFTRA)

AFTRA covers all live and videotaped television and radio productions. Included in this category are many commercials, all soap operas, some sitcoms, news broadcasts, some game shows, phonograph recordings and any other programs that happen to be under AFTRA's jurisdiction.

What other questions may I have?

- **How much are the dues?**
- **How can I join?**
- **What is a SAG-signatory production?**
- **What about working as an extra to become union?**
- **What if I Say an “unscripted line” on a SAG project**
- **What is Equity?**
- **What other unions are there?**

What should my next step be?

If you live in Los Angeles or are soon relocating to the Los Angeles area and want more info about unions and or answers to any of the above questions simply fill out the order form below and request your own personal copy of “A-Z How to Make it in Show Business” Guide by Nelson Parks and contact the ESI NETWORK to schedule a meeting to see if they can assist you.