

New YTN Parents' Guide for Auditions

The audition process is often intense and nerve wracking, even for seasoned professionals. At Youth Theatre Northwest, we do our best to make it smooth and welcoming, but it would enhance the experience even more to have your help. Here are some things for you and your child to think about:

Hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

Encourage your child to try their best and have fun at the audition and any callbacks. All of the directors want every actor to do well and have fun during the process. Help your child focus on having a great audition rather than on getting into the play. It is also a good idea to help them prepare for the possibility that they might not get into a show (we do our best to place everyone but that would depend on the overall number). For example, it may be wise to have an alternate activity lined up so that they can see it as a win-win situation. Your positive attitude around this subject will affect your child's outlook on the whole process.

Directors look for students who are talented but also students who are easy to work with.

If it comes down to an actor who is talented but has a bad attitude, and an actor who has a few rough edges but a good attitude, we will always take the actor with the better attitude. Our directors get an indication of a child's personality in how they listen and follow directions, how they interact with the staff outside of the room and how they interact with their peers in callbacks. Professional courtesy is very important, especially in the small world of theater.

Directors, Musical Directors, and other YTN staff talk to each other.

Please know that there is a lot of thought that goes into casting shows at YTN. After callbacks, we have a casting meeting with all the directors present and we discuss every child who auditioned. We share what we know about returning students and share our impressions of new students. This is a very important decision and for the students, and we do not take it lightly.

Respect the casting decision.

Casting decisions are based on each director's individual vision. Please also know that our directors are experts and have years of experience working in theatre and with student actors. If a student does not get cast or does not get the role they wished, some of the reasons why might include:

- They are not right for the show or the role (meaning, their skills were not quite up to the level that the role/show requires).
- They are truly not ready (meaning, they were unable to follow directions or there were behavioral concerns).
- There is a severe scheduling conflict.

It makes the process extremely difficult when we are challenged on casting decisions. As a student of theatre, your child needs to learn the perspective of the director in this process and your help in understanding this is immeasurable.

Don't give up.

Regardless of the outcome, we will send audition feedback to aid everyone in preparing for next time. Help your child to get the right experience before they try again. We always take note of kids who come back. There are many who did not get in the first time but kept trying and were cast again and again, often in leading roles. We feel it is an important life lesson to know that sometimes, things don't work out exactly as you want, but to keep working towards a goal.

As our mission states, "Youth Theatre Northwest nurtures the intellectual, artistic, and personal development of children and youth through drama education, performing opportunities, and live theatre experiences." We are first and foremost invested in the education of the students who come to us. We appreciate your support in our mission and through this important process.

Sincerely,
The YTN Directing Team

FAQ's - These questions and answers have been compiled by parents for new parents like you

How does YTN manage auditions for its plays? How can I plan my child's schedule?

YTN appreciates that parents and children lead busy lives and need to know how to plan a child's summer or academic year. So, quite unique to YTN, auditions for all plays during the academic year are in September, and auditions for all plays during the summer are held in March. Casting decisions are made soon after and thus give parents (and students) solid planning dates and peace of mind in planning for summer or the academic year. Does your child play soccer and can't commit to a play in the fall? No problem, just check one of the plays in the spring on the audition application. That way, the directors will not consider your child for a fall production.

What is the inside scoop -- is there a way to boost my child's chances to get into a play? Are there factors determining whether my child has a better (or lesser chance)?

YTN administrators and staff assure parents that there is no favoritism, no special fast track, no behind-the-scenes deals to get one child cast over another. YTN also listened to parents and instituted a new policy a couple years back which limits each child to no more than 2 plays during the school season and 2 plays during the summer stock. This way, more parts are available to more kids.

OK, my child filled out the audition paperwork and now I realize my child cannot live up to these promises. When, if at all, can my child back out?

If after the first audition, you decide that a particular play for which they received a callback was not going to work for sure, please contact Cory Southwell (cory@youththeatre.org) to withdraw their name from consideration, **before the call back**. YTN staff will know not to expect them at the call back, and casting decisions for other actors still will not be affected and there will be no casting holes. Remember, a child who pulls abruptly out of a production after casting decisions have been made, or worse, after rehearsals have started will negatively impact his chances of being cast in future productions. ***If a student pulls out after rehearsals start, parents are responsible for full payment of all tuition due except for special circumstances.***

My child has soccer/choir/gymnastics/horseback riding/volleyball/band practice/an after-school job/etc. and can't be at all the rehearsals/classes/performances. Can they still audition?

YTN understands and respects that your child has commitments outside of theatre. On the audition form, you'll see a place where you list **all** your child's prior commitments and conflicts. This information may affect the director's decision to cast the child but it also will give the director a chance to see if they can be worked around. YTN makes it very clear that you need to be upfront with disclosing these conflicts as they are the only ones they will work around. Genuine emergencies, of course, will be considered. Also, your child will not be considered for a role in a show if they will have to miss performances for that show.

What will happen after the audition?

At the audition, your child will receive an information sheet with their audition number on it. A few days after the auditions (the date will be specified on the info sheet), the callbacks -- listing numbers not names for privacy -- will be posted on the YTN website listed by audition number. Casting will be posted in the same way after the callbacks.

What are callbacks? What happens at them?

After the initial audition, directors will select certain students they wish to see again to consider for their play. Your child does not need to prepare anything for callbacks unless requested by the director. At the callbacks, depending on the play, the director may have your child read from 'sides' (parts of the script), learn some music or choreography, or play drama games and do character exercises.

Is there tuition for YTN plays?

Yes. The fees for plays vary from \$385 - \$1,372 depending on the length of rehearsal/class time involved and whether or not the play is a musical. For specific tuition information, please Stephanie@youththeatre.org. Tuition is due upfront and is not refundable; this is a reflection of YTN's dependence on your child to perform their part in the production, and your commitment to follow through.

Do you offer financial aid?

Yes. We offer scholarships, payment plans, and work study. To receive more information, email stephanie@youththeatre.org.

Looking ahead, what is expected of me as a parent of a child in a production?

Cast parents have the following obligations:

- First and foremost, ensure that your child is ready and prepared for rehearsal and performances. Sounds like a no-brainer, but rehearsal schedules can fluctuate and lines need to be learned.
- Help market the production your child is in. You will receive a marketing packet via email prior to opening. Word of mouth is the most powerful marketing in theatre and your help is immeasurable.
- Volunteer! Just like volunteering in your child's classroom, this is a great way to see what it takes to put up a production, meet other parents and get to know staff. Look for an email from Mike Lion, our Program Associate regarding any upcoming opportunities.