



# **LA GUIDE**

USEFUL  
INFORMATION  
FOR MEMBERS  
LIVING AND  
WORKING IN LA  
AND CALIFORNIA

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# Introduction

Equity members are rightly recognised as world-class talents and that means they will get opportunities across the globe. Our Los Angeles network has created this useful resource that covers all the basic information that anyone just starting out in LA, or thinking about making the move, will need.

Within you will find sections on immigration, healthcare, areas to live, agents and managers, and much more. If you want an idea of what to expect from a screen test in pilot season, or are wondering when the best time of year to approach agents is, the guide has you covered. There are member-recommended classes and employment agencies should you find yourself between work. Finally, it can be tough to keep careers going on both sides of the Atlantic so another section tackles keeping things going back in the UK while you are in California.

The Los Angeles network provides a contact point for fellow members looking to work in the US and delivers events, networking opportunities and more. Equity also hosts an annual summer garden party and an awards season brunch, so there's always a way to keep in touch with your fellow members. Contact details are at the back of the guide.

Whether you're making the move for good, trying a pilot season, or splitting your time between the States and the UK, always remember you are not alone.

**Matt Hood**  
Assistant General Secretary  
Equity

## IMMIGRATION & VISAS

Your immigration status is key to getting employment in the United States. The US takes a strict line with those who break immigration laws. The website for the United States Customs & Immigration Service (USCIS) has a lot of information about the various visas and can be found here: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

Do be careful as there are other sites that imitate the USCIS website and try to charge you for services that may be free or cheaper on the official site.

There are three main levels of status: Work permit/visa, Green Card and Citizenship.

**Work Permit/Visa O1B** – The most common visa for Equity members is the O1B. Applicants for this category must show that they have an extraordinary level of ability in the arts, motion pictures or television industry. This can be demonstrated through your work history.

Generally these are applied for by an employer on your behalf – that could be a production company, manager or an agent. They only enable you to work for that one employer.

**Green card** – This is the next stage. Having a Green Card allows you to live and work permanently in the United States. This is what you would get if you married a US citizen, or if you legally moved/emigrated to the US, for example. You can apply yourself but may wish to consider applying through an attorney.

**US citizen** – Citizenship offers the most freedom. Applicants must already have a Green Card. If you intend to stay in the USA forever it may be worth becoming a citizen as soon as you can. It makes your position more secure and you don't need to renew. Once you become a citizen you can apply for a US passport.

**Immigration attorneys** – Equity cannot give immigration advice. You may need to use an immigration attorney. Be careful and make sure you use a reputable one. Here are some that members have recommended:

- Heidi Berger Trombi  
[www.sftvisalaw.com](http://www.sftvisalaw.com) | (213) 385-1888
- Kate Raynor  
[www.kateraynor.com](http://www.kateraynor.com) | (877) 872-9666

- Global Access Immigration  
[www.globalaxs.net](http://www.globalaxs.net) | 323-936-7100  
Global Access specialise in work visas for the entertainment industry. They are not attorneys, but do know the entertainment business.

## UNIONS IN THE US

There are two International Federation of Actors member unions in the US – AEA (Actors' Equity Association; [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org)) and SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors' Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists; [www.sagaftra.org](http://www.sagaftra.org)).

AEA represents actors and stage managers in US theatre and has around 51,000 members. If you are an in-benefit Equity UK member, with 50 weeks' work on UK union contracts and you have US citizenship or a Green Card, then Equity UK can write you a letter of introduction to obtain your AEA membership. There are eligibility restrictions for AEA membership for those on a visa or work permit.

SAG-AFTRA represents actors and presenters in US film, television, radio and online media and has around 160,000 members. Membership is open to any performer working in a position covered by a SAG-AFTRA agreement (one day as a principal, three as a background artist). Unfortunately Equity UK members are not currently automatically eligible for membership.

Without union membership, you can work non-union jobs and still apply for union jobs through audition. Once you are an AEA or SAG-AFTRA member you are not allowed to work non-union jobs, even in the other union's jurisdiction.

Members of AGMA (American Guild of Musical Artists representing opera and dance; [www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org)) or AGVA (American Guild of Variety Artists; [www.agvausa.com](http://www.agvausa.com)) are eligible to join AEA and SAG-AFTRA (subject to immigration status).

## MONEY & HEALTHCARE

**Bank Account** - One of the first things you will do is open a bank account. This is relatively simple as long as you are in the US legally. The banks are not dissimilar to those in the UK. You will have a choice of cheques or debit card or both. The bigger banks

include Chase, Bank Of America, US Bank and Wells Fargo. Online banking is now more common too.

### Tax & Accountants -

TAX YEAR runs from 1 January to 31 December.  
TAX RETURN & TAXES DUE by 15 April.

You will hear people talk about CPAs and Tax Preparers. A CPA is a Certified Public Accountant, so a full accountant, whereas the Tax Preparer is just that: someone who prepares your taxes. At the start you may be OK with a Tax Preparer but when you start having more money and multiple sources of income you may need a CPA. Also you may get to the stage where a CPA advises you to run everything as a Limited Liability Company (LLC) or other entity.

During the year, keep track of all of your expenses related to acting, including: vehicle expenses, travel expenses, special clothing, phone, internet, acting classes, casting services, etc. You can record this on accounting software, an Excel spreadsheet or write it all in a book. Keep receipts organised. Also, keep all of your paystubs which will show how much tax you have paid already. Electronically is OK. The more you do and the more organised you are, the cheaper the CPA or Tax Preparer will be.

Then sometime between January 1st and April 14th, go to see the CPA or Tax Preparer to do your taxes. Once they have done them you will either owe some tax or will get a refund. Don't be excited by a refund, especially a big one. That means you paid too much tax during the year and you lent the government money for free.

When you work for any employer you will need to complete some paperwork. One form is proving your identity and legal status for work. Another is about tax and you list how many exemptions you have. The best result after doing taxes is to owe a small amount or get a small refund. That means during the year you paid about the right amount of tax.

**Business tax** - If you work within the City of Los Angeles as a 1099 contractor (i.e. self-employed) and you receive any cash income (which means cash, cheque or any compensation where you haven't paid tax at source) you must apply →

for a Business Tax Registration Certificate. You are exempt from paying this tax for income up to \$300,000 as a Creative Artist. However, if you do not file for this exemption before 1 January of each year, and you do receive cash income, you will owe a fine even if you don't owe any taxes. Therefore it is worth registering even if you are unsure whether you will receive this kind of income.

Information on registering a new business can be found here: <https://finance.lacity.org/register-new-business>

You can find FAQs for creative talent here: <https://finance.lacity.org/entertainment-creative-talent-faq>

**Credit** - Your credit rating is everything in the USA but your credit rating from the UK means nothing. You are starting from scratch. The easiest way to establish credit is to get a secured credit card. You choose an amount of money which you put down as a deposit, say \$1000. They then give you a credit card with a limit of \$1000. You use the credit card and pay it each month. This builds your credit.

Before long you will get more offers of credit. A search for secured credit cards online will quickly bring up some companies. Read the small print though. You do not want to pay monthly fees. Having no credit in the USA is like having bad credit, so prioritise this.

**Insurance** - The USA has all sorts of insurance available. Here are just some of them. You may find that the larger companies can offer all of them and give you a discount.

Car insurance – There are insurance agents locally and companies that do online insurance also. Check your coverage. Liability Only is just that. It only covers the person you hit in your car. Full coverage covers you and your car also.

Breakdown insurance – AAA is the equivalent of the AA or RAC. They can also provide car insurance and have offices all over. It is worth getting, especially if your car is a bit older. Some dealers offer breakdown insurance with the car also. Generally they just rescue you and tow your car, but they can also jump start your car or bring gas if you run out.

Renters insurance – This covers your apartment or house if you are renting. It is worth getting just in case of burglary, fire or if someone gets injured in your home.

Homeowners insurance – This is for if you buy a home and covers fire, burglary and liability. It may cost extra to cover floods in a flood zone or earthquakes.

Personal umbrella policy – Insurances have a limit that they will pay out. A PUP will kick in if you reach your limits. This is especially good if you have a lot of assets. It is a relatively cheap way of protecting assets.

**Health insurance** – Healthcare is very complicated in the US. Without state-funded healthcare, health insurance is essential. Pay close attention to what your policy does/doesn't cover. There are many different policies. Research online to see what suits you. It is a minefield but you do not want to be without it. Look at their co-pays, deductibles, limits and what they don't cover. Some of the larger companies are Aetna, Blue Cross, Kaiser, Anthem but there are many others.

Members have recommended Beach Financial Group as a health insurance adviser, who specialise in British and Australian clients.

SAG-AFTRA members may qualify for the SAG-AFTRA healthcare plan, but there are eligibility requirements. Check their website for details: <https://www.sagaftraplans.org/health/eligibility>

**Other options for care** - If you don't have insurance and need to see a doctor right away, but it is not urgent enough to go to ER then you can visit many Urgent Care centres that are dotted around the whole city. These centres are roughly equivalent to NHS Walk-In centres in the UK. You can pay as you go here so you will know upfront how much you will be paying before consultation/treatment etc.

#### Recommended Emergency Hospitals

- Weho/Bev Hills - Cedars Sinai Medical Center - 8700 Beverly Blvd / 310-423-3277
- Thousand Oaks - Los Robles Hospital - 215 W Janss Rd / 805-497-2727
- Burbank - Providence St Joseph - 501 S Buena Vista St / 310-829-5511
- Westwood - Ronald Reagan UCLA - 757 Westwood Plaza / 310-825-9111
- UCLA Santa Monica - 1250 16th St / 424-259-6000

## LIFESTYLE

**Accommodations** - Finding somewhere to live in LA can seem like an overwhelming task but whether you are subletting, Airbnb-ing, looking for long term or short term leases there is something to suit all options.

For easy to find, short term sublets check out these member-recommended Facebook pages:

- Brits in LA Housing
- Gypsy Housing LA
- Ghostlight Housing West Coast
- NYC Actor Sublet Connection

**Areas around town** - LA is a large, sprawling city that seems difficult to navigate. Think of it as the opposite to Manhattan. Below find a quick breakdown of a few central areas in LA. These locales are well established with loads of history.

#### Beverly Hills

**Pros:** Very clean, manicured area; good for pedestrians and walking; in the flats, there are many one- and two-hour-free parking lots; parking is generally very easy, very safe, highly regarded neighborhood.

**Cons:** Extremely expensive (you're not just paying for housing, but also for the zip code); traffic and parking can be difficult on the street.

#### Brentwood

**Pros:** Beautiful, well-kept, family-oriented neighborhood in a very good school district; parking is not generally an issue; less than 5-miles to the beaches via Sunset Boulevard.

**Cons:** Not a great location for singles; beyond the main Brentwood marketplace, there is not much going on in terms of restaurants and retail locations; one of the most expensive residential areas of LA.

#### Downtown LA (DTLA)

**Pros:** Exciting arts area with a strong sense of community and feels a bit like New York, which is nice if you're a Londoner or New Yorker who misses home; much of it is accessible on foot; theatre shows and rooftop bars galore.

**Cons:** At night it can get a bit shady and potentially dangerous; it lacks natural green space and gardens.

#### Hancock Park

**Pros:** Charming architecture of old houses; easy to

take walks in the neighborhood.

**Cons:** Not much in terms of convenient stores and restaurants that are accessible by foot; very expensive and tends to be insular.

#### Hollywood

**Pros:** Great old houses by LA standards; charming bungalows and guest cottages; rich with LA history; fairly central and packed with restaurants and nightlife; very popular area for actors to live; very central, so easy for newbies to get their bearings.

**Cons:** Freeway access is somewhat limited to U.S. Highway 101, which locals know as one of the most sluggish freeways; depending on the area, crime and drugs can be an issue; rush hour happens at night as well as in the daytime.

#### Manhattan Beach

**Pros:** Nice family community; pretty beachside setting; close to the airport; small-town vibe; sectioned into mini areas with special characteristics; great lifestyle for outdoorsy people, with opportunities to bike around easily.

**Cons:** Lots of foot traffic especially during the summer tourist season; expensive; a considerable commute if you work in central LA, so factor gas into your budget unless you work in the South Bay; close to the airport and there is airport-related traffic.

#### Miracle Mile

**Pros:** A great neighborhood for kids and home-loving couples; houses are generally charming 1920s architecture, with lots of duplexes and often good yard space; affordable apartments for actors/artists; sidewalks are well paved for walking; close to the Interstate 10 freeway; parking is usually quite good.

**Cons:** Not an incredibly exciting neighborhood for going out, although there are some good ethnic restaurants; gets very quiet at night, which can be nice but also precarious for crime.

#### Santa Monica

**Pros:** Fairly close to the beach, not far from Malibu beaches; mostly good for walking; lots of retail spaces; just as suited to singles as to families but maybe a bit better for singles.

**Cons:** Traffic is notoriously bad due to tourists; for out-on-the-town singles, the nightlife scene can pale in comparison to Hollywood or the East Side.

#### Silver Lake and Echo Park



**Pros:** Extremely hip and trendy East Side areas full of life, activity and edgy young people; some very pretty rustic enclaves in the hills; a loose sense of community.

**Cons:** Crime in some areas; parking issues; a lot of night time activity, which can be noisy.

**The Valley** - Short for San Fernando Valley, the urbanized Valley includes Sherman Oaks, Van Nuys, Encino, North Hollywood, Toluca Lake, Reseda, and Burbank.

**Pros:** Suburban feel; great for kids; much more relaxed in terms of night noise and parking; lots of restaurants and retail spaces that are mostly within walking distance; convenient commute for film and TV industry people working in Burbank.

**Cons:** It gets extraordinarily hot, especially in the summer; it feels a bit detached from the rest of LA since the Hollywood Hills separate it from the Los Angeles basin.

#### Venice

**Pros:** Incredibly charming arts neighborhood of canals, boardwalks, and arcades; close to the beach; eccentric and bohemian with a definite sense of community and history.

**Cons:** Crime can be an issue; if you work or audition in Burbank or Hollywood, this can seem like a long trek; houses are generally small for the price you pay.

#### West Hollywood

**Pros:** More or less a central point in the city—it is not far from Beverly Hills, Westwood, Miracle Mile, Hollywood, East Hollywood, The Valley, and Laurel Canyon; many restaurants and retail businesses; pretty easy to navigate by foot and bicycle; very populated with electric scooters and bikes.

**Cons:** Tricky parking, and a permit is required for much of it; can be loud at night; near Santa Monica boulevard, many of the apartments are tightly clustered dingbat-style and complexes have paper-thin walls.

#### West LA and Culver City

**Pros:** Culver City is really coming up as a fun area for nightlife; cinemas and theatres near by; lots of great restaurants offering eclectic and exotic cuisines; very good for families but increasingly good for singles.

**Cons:** Traffic can be brutal, especially if you are near

the south end (Pico and Olympic); some parts of the West Side feel uninspiring and industrial with lumber yards, carpet stores and the like.

#### Westwood

**Pros:** Student and family neighborhood ideal for taking walks; very well kept and clean; not far from Interstate 405, Brentwood, and the beaches; excellent school district.

**Cons:** If you're not a student, this isn't the most exciting area to live in.

**Getting around** - Ride share is very popular in LA. Uber and Lyft are a great way to get around without worrying about parking and dodging an infamous LA ticket.

Leasing a car is also a very popular option. If you have a Social Security number then you will more than likely be able to lease, however some car manufacturers will give you a lease as a foreign national without a Social Security number, such as Audi. Other rental options include:

- Turo - an app where you can rent cars daily, generally for tourist trips
- Fair - an app where you can rent cars monthly
- LAX - a range of rental options are available at the airport

Before buying a car, seek advice to ensure you can get insured with your driver's licence. Members have recommended:

- Carvana - a service where you can buy cars totally online, including financing and door to door delivery.
- Autotrader.com / Cars.com - a great range of used cars.

Public transport is available, but may not be as pleasant and efficient as the London system. Both buses and subways are usually pretty safe. Always use caution, be alert and don't travel late at night, pretty much like every major city. Main line trains can be caught from Union Station LA.

Metro maps can be found here: [www.metro.net/riding/maps/](http://www.metro.net/riding/maps/)

**Healthy Living** - Los Angeles is a very health conscious city with a focus on not only looking good but feeling good too. From juice cleanses, to Kombucha cafes, to sunset group hikes, LA has a wide variety of things to do for health and wellness.

**Working out** - Members have recommended Class

Pass as an affordable way to sample all the studios and top voted classes in LA. For around \$75 dollars a month you get to sign up for a variety of workouts such as Rise Nation, Soul Cycle, Flywheel, HIIT House LA, CruBox, Carries Pilates, Core Power Yoga, Aura Cycle, Cycle House, Barrys and Training Mate. It also includes healthcare treatments like meditation classes, massages, facials and cryotherapy. For more details visit: [www.classpass.com](http://www.classpass.com)

**Hiking** - Working out doesn't have to be at a cost as there are so many hiking trails in and around LA. Always take care when hiking: never hike alone, carry a phone and water at all times.

A few member-recommended trails that are easily accessible from central LA:

- Runyon Canyon - enter on 2000 N Fuller Ave,
- Fryman Canyon - enter on 8401 Mulholland Dr
- Laurel Canyon Park - off Mulholland
- Topanga Canyon - Enter on 20828 Entrada Rd
- Griffith Park - 4730 Crystal Springs Dr

All Trails App is useful to refer to for hikes and allows you to download easy-to-follow routes, and members have recommended the LAHIKE CLUB Facebook and Instagram group.

**Diet** - Eating healthily is a big focus in LA, though grocery stores can be pretty expensive. Stores on the higher end, stocking organic and higher priced produce, include Erewon and Whole Foods. Vons, Trader Joe's and Ralph's can be more affordable.

**Clothes** - Red carpet events, cocktail parties and film screenings are a regular part of LA life. If you want to rent formal attire check out services such as Rent the Runway, Glamcorner and Black Tux.

**Shopping** - For malls, members have recommended the Beverley Centre in Beverly Hills, Westfield Culver City, Westfield Sherman Oaks and The Grove in West Hollywood. Other shopping areas to check out include the boutiques of Melrose Avenue and Santee Alley DTLA Fashion district where you can find long gowns, formal wear and costume jewelry at a really cheap price.

#### AGENTS & MANAGERS

Most performers in the UK only have an agent, but in the US many have both an agent and a manager. Although in recent years the lines between the roles and remits of agents and managers have

become slightly blurred, there are still significant differences in how they work.

As in the UK, with any type of representation, you should never pay them to represent you. Their commission will be taken from the pay you receive on booked jobs. Avoid anyone expecting any money upfront.

**Agents** - Your agent will be responsible for submitting you for jobs, booking your auditions, following up afterwards and negotiating your contracts. If applicable, they will ensure that you are covered by the union's terms and conditions and that your contract is upheld accordingly. They can also pitch you for roles they think you are right for but will mostly be submitting you for roles through the various casting platforms.

Boutique agencies are ones that focus on a smaller pool of actors and tend to be more open to submissions from new talent. Corporate agencies are much larger and can represent hundreds or thousands of clients. Whilst the opportunities with these agencies can be larger, you can also get lost in their client lists.

Commercial agencies submit clients exclusively for commercial jobs. Many agencies will be able to submit you for theatrical and commercial in-house so it's not always necessary to be represented by two different agencies. There are also agencies that specialise solely in voiceover work.

It's common in LA for an actor to have an agent for theatrical and commercial representation, an agent for voiceover representation and a manager.

Some agents will want to represent you exclusively internationally but others will be happy to cover you for specific castings in a specific region and won't mind you having an agent in another region.

Agencies must be licensed and bonded with the state in which they are operating and they are normally franchised by SAG-AFTRA. They can also be associated with ATA (Association of Talent Agents). The commission percentage that agents take will vary but a general rule of thumb is 10% for union roles and 20% for non-union roles. These rates may also vary depending on whether it is a theatrical, commercial or voiceover job.



If you are working with multiple agents and managers across multiple regions, be sure that you know who is booking which job and who will be receiving commission for it, or how the commission will be split.

**Managers** - Your manager will be responsible for overseeing your long-term career trajectory. They will help you to define your career goals, choices, decisions, branding and outlook. They will look at the overall picture of your career and they will ensure that you are marketing yourself in alignment with your brand, archetype and casting bracket to maximise your opportunities.

Making you more marketable should be something they excel at. They can also connect you with industry people to help promote you and can sometimes help you to find an agent.

They provide career input and guidance but they do not and should not negotiate contracts for you. As mentioned before, the lines between an agent and a manager can be blurry so it's best to talk to your representation to distinguish who does what and to find the best fit.

The strict state licensing rules that apply to agents do not apply to managers. Managers may or may not belong to trade organisations. Managers generally receive 10-15% commission on all of your bookings. This is on top of the percentage that your agent receives.

**How to get representation** - You can get a list of franchised agents from SAG-AFTRA or from Backstage's online directory of agents and managers. Some reputable agents are not SAG-AFTRA franchised. The IMDb COMPANYmeter can be very useful in determining the most successful companies to contact for representation. This is not the only metric to measure the success of an agent or manager but it's one tactic that could be helpful to gauge an idea of who you want to connect with. You can access the lists and contact details for agents, managers, casting directors and producers etc. through a professional account with IMDb Pro.

As always, the best way to get representation for an agent or manager is through a direct referral but if that's not possible, the resources above can

help you form a targeted list of who you feel you'd be a good fit with.

Before you reach out to potential representation, be sure to have an updated headshot, resume, demo reel and, if looking for voice representation, voice reel too. Your demo reels should be around two to three minutes long with each clip lasting twenty to thirty seconds. You can have separate drama and comedy or foreign language reels if appropriate. It's best to ensure that any material on your reels is of the highest quality.

Also put together a short and direct cover letter and be sure to include what you're currently working on and sell what is different and special about you.

It's a good idea to set up a professional profile on IMDb Pro. This way, when potential representatives view your page, along with your credits they will also see your headshot as your profile photo and other key information you have added about yourself. Equity offers a discount on IMDb Pro, go to [www.equity.org.uk/IMDbpro](http://www.equity.org.uk/IMDbpro)

The next step is to reach out to agents and managers at the optimal time. This involves two considerations. Firstly, it's best to reach out when you have something to invite them to, such as a theatre performance or film or web series premiere or screening. Secondly, many actors reach out to seek representation during pilot season (January to April) or episodic season (July to November / December) but the reality is that most agents and managers are inundated submitting their current actors for auditions during these times so other times of the year may be better.

It's true that the seasons are getting blurred now and casting is happening all year round, but some months are definitely busier than others. May and June may be a great time to reach out to prospective representation, but make sure it's when it is best for you too. Create an informed strategy, get all of your materials together and go for it.

Agents and managers do also sometimes attend workshops but be wary of paying money just to perform for representation as nothing is guaranteed.

## STUDIOS & NETWORKS

Most pilots are produced by a studio and then aired on a commercial or cable network. However this can be a little confusing as some studios are also networks, such as Amazon, Netflix, and Hulu, Apple.

Major US commercial networks include:

- NBC
- ABC
- CBS
- FOX
- The CW

Traditionally these networks pay a higher rate than cable networks.

Cable networks include:

- History
- Comedy Central
- USA
- HBO
- TNT
- TBS

With the advent of online streaming there's a host of newer platforms including:

- Amazon
- Apple
- Netflix
- Hulu
- Paramount
- Disney

**Casting process** - Usually before you test for a pilot the casting director and director will call you in for a working session with the creatives to go through the material and make sure you're ready to test in front of the network. At the same time the business side of things will be negotiated with your agent.

During the testing procedure, the contract usually states that you are on 'hold' with the studio and network for an agreed amount of time. Once in this position you usually can't test for any other pilots/networks.

You'll enter a small screening room where there are 20 or so executives, and either a casting director or the actor you're playing opposite will read with you.

Even though the execs may want you to get the role, they don't usually make the environment very

welcoming. If it's a comedy don't expect much in the way of laughter or reaction.

Once you have passed the studio test they then narrow it down again usually to 1 or 2 actors and just when you thought it was over ... then you have to test for the network.

This will happen in a brand new room, new location, but probably with even more executives.

Imagine you're auditioning for a guest star role on a well know crime procedural on a network; the audition process goes as follows:

1. Audition for one casting associate on camera
2. Audition for the casting associate and casting director on camera
3. Audition for casting team plus director and writer on camera
4. Audition for the producers, casting team, writer and director of the episode and maybe one person from the network. Usually around 10 people in a producers session for Guest star.

## THEATRE IN LOS ANGELES

Despite LA having a reputation of not being a theatre town, it's simply not the case. There is a thriving theatre scene in LA and as it's a smaller scene than in NY or London, it can be easier to get involved. It's good to start out by getting acquainted with the large theatres and the smaller theatre scene. Some of the larger theatres include the Ahmanson and Hollywood Pantages theatres, which are like Broadway houses. Be aware that most of the actors working in the productions there are cast in New York, as they form part of a national tour. The smaller theatres however do cast in LA.

**Auditions** - You can find auditions in a number of ways. Many are listed on the casting websites ActorsAccess.com, Backstage.com, BroadwayWorld.com and Playbill.com.

There are also many groups on social media and in particular Facebook, which are worth looking into. Search for Theatre / Theater in LA and see what comes up. It's also worth looking up the local repertory companies in LA and reaching out to them to see how you can audition and get involved. Send your headshot and resume to the artistic

directors, producers and directors of the smaller, local LA theatres and follow up with them to ask about upcoming shows and auditions. It can be a great way to get cast, meet new people and have a showcase to invite agents and managers to.

**Non-union work** - Many non-union contracts in LA theatre will pay you a stipend for rehearsals and the run and realistically, while it will be an amazing opportunity to perform and to showcase your talent, it may not be enough to cover your living expenses. This stipend is also often paid at the start of the run and you may need to cover your rehearsal expenses yourself up until that point. That being said, if you have a particular skill that is required for the part you're auditioning for, feel free to negotiate your pay with the director if you are offered the part. There is always room for negotiation.

**Tools & training** - In general, US casting and creatives have a high regard for UK drama school training. Be sure to have updated US style colour headshots and a resume laid out in the US style that covers all of your training, experience and your additional skills including accents, music & dance. Ensure that all of your social media profiles have consistent branding and are up to date with the correct information and that your website is updated too.

There are many excellent training studios to choose from in LA so it's best to go on recommendations. It's best to have at least three US accents in your pocket: General American, Southern and East Coast. If you're auditioning for an American role, it's usually best to go into the audition with an American accent from the get go. There are many wonderful accent coaches who can work with you to refine your accent skill set.

There are also many wonderful classes for scene study, improv, movement, Meisner technique and much more so target what area you want to develop and look for a class to hone that skill.

**Hollywood Fringe Festival** - The largest theatre festival on the West Coast is the Hollywood Fringe Festival, which takes place every June. Founded in 2010, the Fringe now has 16 venues and celebrates performances in every genre. It's an incredible festival to get involved with and a great place to

produce and stage your own work. Find out more at [hollywoodfringe.org](http://hollywoodfringe.org)

**Broadway on tour** - The commercial side of the theatre world in the US is dominated by New York's Broadway, where the cost of producing a musical averages \$15m and a play \$10m. The hits, such as Hamilton and Dear Evan Hansen, tour across the country. Sometimes they are re-cast for a regional tour and need fresh actors and singers.

**Community theatre** - Whereas in the UK 'am-dram' has a poor artistic reputation, in the US some community theatre is quite a respectable springboard for emerging actors and directors, playing in large local houses that cannot attract big city funding but have good production values. The American Association of Community Theatre has a host of resources on their website: [www.aact.org](http://www.aact.org)

#### Casting Resources

- The American actors' union: Actors' Equity Association (AEA)  
AEA has details of all audition calls for union jobs, ahead of audition dates.
- Backstage  
Backstage is an online resource for theatre (and recorded media) in the US. You can set up a profile and create casting searches by location, production type, age etc.
- BroadwayWorld  
A theatre news website for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional, and international theatre productions. They also have (limited) audition coverage for the West Coast.
- Playbill  
A theatre news site with job listings that cover the US and beyond
- Directly at the theatre  
Big theatres, like the ACT on Geary Street in San Francisco feature casting calls regularly, as does the Center Theatre Group.
- California Theater Companies  
[www.auditionsfree.com/theater-resources/california-theater-companies/](http://www.auditionsfree.com/theater-resources/california-theater-companies/)

#### PR & SOCIAL MEDIA

**PR** - If you have the money to employ a publicist then it can be a great addition to your career

strategy. There are, however, many ways you can promote yourself. It's a good idea to attend as many networking events and premieres as you can from the perspective of meeting new people, but also promote yourself online and in print.

Be sure to get some good quality photos taken and start writing copy to promote yourself. These images and articles can then be posted on your website and blog and can also be published in online and print publications. In LA you can start by reaching out to Brits in LA & Voyage LA who both regularly promote British creatives in their publications. Also check out the BAFTA LA Newcomers programme, which is a new talent initiative supporting international rising stars who have recently moved to LA.

**Social media** - It's increasingly important to have an online presence. Aside from your website, social media is the first place casting directors and industry people will look for you when they want to get a better idea of who you are. It's in your best interests for them to get the most authentic and powerful snapshot possible.

Instagram and Twitter are essential for actors. Having a Facebook page, a LinkedIn profile and a YouTube channel can also be useful too. Be sure to differentiate your personal accounts from your professional accounts.

Whilst you can ultimately share the same content across all platforms, they still each take time to maintain. Figure out which platforms are going to be most beneficial to you and dedicate the time to building your accounts and creating engagement, connection and growth.

**Branding** - As with other aspects of your acting career, having a strong brand is absolutely essential and this most definitely applies to your online presence. It increases your marketability and if a production feels that they can easily market you, it's a massive bonus.

As you're building a professional brand, keep your profile/headshot photos and usernames consistent across all platforms. Your bio must sell you and must promote your brand in a succinct and dynamic way. Be sure to also have a link to your website in your bio.

It's a good idea to include icon links to your social media accounts in your professional email signature.

**Strategy** - Focus on having a posting plan, consistently publishing excellent content and on connections, engagement and relationship building just as you would do in person. This strategy will grow your accounts consistently and organically and many of these connections can also ultimately also lead to auditions and jobs.

Be consistent and post and engage regularly. It might be helpful to have daily themes already planned out so that you can structure what you're going to post in advance. You can plan to publish your content automatically at certain times with apps such as Hootsuite and Buffer. The best engagement with new posts occurs roughly between 8am and 4pm so it's best to schedule your posts in this window. Be sure also to maximize your reach by using the most popular and effective hashtags on Twitter and Instagram.

It's ok to tag industry connections once in a thank you post when you book a role, but don't tag people just to get their attention and don't tag people excessively. Keep an eye on posts that you are tagged in too. You may want to untag yourself if friends are posting pictures that you are tagged in but that you don't want to be seen on your accounts.

Once you're booked on a big production, cast members are often asked to take part in live tweets and Instagram takeovers as part of the production's publicity. This is often from the show's account but it's great to already be up to speed with the functionality of each platform by having run your own accounts.

There are many websites that offer advice on social media strategy, such as [sproutsocial.com](http://sproutsocial.com). **Content** - With regards to professional content, great posts include headshots that promote your casting archetype and your brand, selfies related to professional work, location shots, rehearsal shots, travel shots and anything else that could be of interest.

It's ok to share personal content on your professional accounts too, just be careful not



to post anything that looks unprofessional or could paint you in a bad light. The rule of thumb is not to post anything that you wouldn't want a prospective employer to see. For this reason and extra privacy, many actors keep private accounts just to connect with friends and family, and have public accounts to connect with industry professionals and followers.

Aside from engaging with your followers on your own posts, it's also essential to connect with others and comment on their posts too. Beyond this, you can also curate other people's content & promote their work on your accounts. Always check with them first though to see if they're happy for you to share their content.

Many industry names say that if one in every five to seven posts is self-promotion, that is probably a good figure.

**Equity UK LA social media** - An Equity UK Los Angeles Network YouTube channel will be launched soon where our members' demo reels will be posted. Please reach out to us to share your content. Please also tag us and add our hashtag #equityukla on your content across all platforms for us to view and share. On Twitter we're @EquityUkLa, and on Instagram it's @equityukla

### KEEPING IT GOING IN THE UK

If you are going to be spending time in LA auditioning but you still want to keep your representation and opportunities in the UK then it's imperative to get all of the information together to make this a reality.

**Representation & scheduling** - Whilst there are an increasing number of agents and managers working together internationally, it's still in the minority and it may take time to secure the right representation and the right fit for you. Your representation will need to work together very closely to coordinate your timelines, locations and bookings.

Sometimes, the agent that books the job may take the full commission but other times the commission could be split between your US agent, UK agent and manager. It's essential to discuss the arrangement fully with your team and agree on a

defined solution in order for it to be a success.

When approaching casting directors and production teams, it's a good idea to target shows that are casting and filming in your regions. Be aware though that if you're listed as local hire in LA and are called for an important casting there, if you're in another region it may be your responsibility and your financial obligation to get yourself to the audition. With the increase in self-tapes, many initial auditions can take place from anywhere but at the later stages, the casting team will usually still want to see you in person.

**Visas & passports** - Make sure that you have all of the visas and passports that you are eligible for and ensure that they are kept up to date. If you are on an O-1 visa you have no time restrictions on the amount of time you need to spend in the US but if you are a Green Card holder you will have to spend a minimum amount of time in the US each year. Have a yearly plan and know in advance which region you will be in at what time so that you meet your visa's minimum requirements, and also so that you maximise your opportunities, e.g. being in LA for pilot or episodic season.

Your representation will be able to advise you on when you will need to be in each region but it's good to have an idea yourself so that you can make a collaborative plan.

**Admin** - Being based in two countries means double the admin. It's essential to keep all of your union memberships and casting platforms up to date in each region. For the UK, be sure to keep up your Equity UK & Spotlight memberships. For the US, you will want to keep up your SAG-AFTRA / AEA etc. memberships along with the casting platforms you and your representation submit you on.

Check that you are still entitled to UK healthcare. Be aware that you can only sign up for US health insurance at certain times of the year.

Keep your driving licences up to date in each country. Make sure you have a Social Security number in the US and also apply for your California state ID.

It can be helpful to set up an official address in each country with a mailing box service. This way, your mail can be forwarded to you when you're

elsewhere.

If you will be flying a lot, sign up for reward miles with the airlines you frequent. Travel insurance may also be a good idea if it works for your situation.

Finally, it's helpful to make sure that all of your official information is stored safely in the cloud so that you can access it whenever you need to from any location.

**Equipment** - Living and working in multiple locations means that you will want to have all of the necessary kit and equipment with you at all times so that you can do a last minute self-tape or voiceover submission from anywhere in the world. Make sure you have the right equipment in both countries, or know which pieces you need to travel with every time. It's a good idea to back up your files, video, audio and images securely to the cloud so you can access them anywhere.

### WORK OUTSIDE ACTING

First of all, check that your immigration status allows work other than acting. Assuming that's in order, take a look through this list of member-recommended employment agencies and websites:

Craigslist - <https://losangeles.craigslist.org>

Indeed - <https://www.indeed.com>

Yoh - <https://yoh.com>

### RESOURCES

Here are just some of the acting schools, coaches, dialect coaches, show reel companies and photographers our members have recommended. Always ask around - social media details for the LA network are available at the back of the guide.

#### Acting schools

Baron Brown Studios

Phone: 310 451 3311

e: [info@baronbrown.com](mailto:info@baronbrown.com)

BGB Studio

Phone: 818 755 9500

e: [info@bramongarciaBraun.com](mailto:info@bramongarciaBraun.com)

Beverly Hills Playhouse

Phone: 310 855 1556

e: [interviewer@bhplayhouse.com](mailto:interviewer@bhplayhouse.com)

Howard Fine Acting Studio

Phone: 323 965 488

e: [info@howardfine.com](mailto:info@howardfine.com)

Identity School of Acting LA

e: [info@idsala.com](mailto:info@idsala.com)

Ivana Chubbuck

Phone: 323 935 2100

e: [ivanachubbuckstudio@mac.com](mailto:ivanachubbuckstudio@mac.com)

Margie Haber Studio

Phone: 310 854 0870

e: [info@margiehaber.com](mailto:info@margiehaber.com)

New Collective LA

Phone: 323-871-1376

e: [info@newcollectivela.com](mailto:info@newcollectivela.com)

Sanford Meisner Centre

e: [contact@sanfordmeisnercenter.com](mailto:contact@sanfordmeisnercenter.com)

Stella Adler Academy of Acting

Phone: 323 465 4446

e: [adler@stellaadler-la.com](mailto:adler@stellaadler-la.com)

#### Acting Coaches

Caryn West

Phone: 323 876 0394

Christinna Chauncey

Phone: 818 720-3052

DW Brown

Phone: 310 451 3311

Risa Bramon

Phone: 818 755 9500

#### Dialect Coaches

Bob Corff

Phone: 323 851 9042



Denise Woods  
Phone: 310 550 6806

Jon Sperry  
e: jon@jonsperry.net

### Show reels

Show reels/demo reels are an integral part of the casting process as well as a 'must-have' for any potential agent. Your reel needs to look professional and should not be filmed on a phone. The companies listed here will write, direct, cast, shoot and edit your footage into a professional, industry-accepted reel:

- Relentless Filmworks  
Creating dynamic original demo reels for actors since 2007. Each scene is tailored to the client.  
[www.relentlessfilmworks.com/](http://www.relentlessfilmworks.com/)  
IG @relentlessfilmworks
- Create Your Reel  
Create Your Reel shoots on-brand, custom-written scenes and have won the Backstage Readers' Choice Award for Best Demo Reel Company.  
[www.createyourreel.com](http://www.createyourreel.com).  
T: @CreateYourReel  
IG: @createyourreel  
FB: [www.facebook.com/createyourreel/](https://www.facebook.com/createyourreel/)
- REELARC  
REELARC create original, narrative content for actors for their demo reels. They've created over 3000 unique scenes for working and aspiring actors to better market themselves to the industry.  
[www.reelarc.com](http://www.reelarc.com)

### Photographers

It's important to choose the right photographer for your headshots. If you are doing commercials and theatrical then you will need two sets of headshots.

- Commercials  
Robin Emtage: <http://robinemtage.com>  
Brandon Espy:

<http://www.brandonespyphoto.com>  
Theo & Juliet: <https://theoandjuliet.com>

- Theatrical  
Robin Emtage: <http://robinemtage.com>  
Stephanie Girard:  
<https://www.stephgirardheadshots.com>  
Bjoern Kommerell: <https://bkheadshots.com>  
Anthony Mongiello:  
<https://www.anthonymongiello.com>  
David Zaugh:  
<https://www.zaughphotography.com>

Equity  
T (dialling from the US): +44 207 379 6000  
E: LA@equity.org.uk  
Twitter: EquityUK  
Instagram: equityuk  
Facebook: EquityUK

LA Network  
E: los-angeles-network@equity.org.uk  
Twitter: @equityukla  
Instagram: @equityukla  
Facebook: EquityUKwestcoast

This guide was created by members of Equity's

LA network:  
Conrad Cecil  
Lara Clear  
Karin Collison  
Darren Darnborough  
Ellie Fox  
Jan Geris  
Alexander Hathaway  
Denise Hoey  
Tom P Ingram  
Mark Prendergast  
Victoria Summer  
Troy Titus-Adams

### Contacts



GUILD HOUSE, UPPER ST MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON WC2H 9EG