

# How to Become a Movie or TV Extra

Submitted by [IHeartCelebs](#) [1] on July 6, 2015 - 10:14pm

The next time that you sit down to watch your favorite television show or movie, pay special attention to the people in the background behind the stars. Those people are extras, and they receive payment and free food for walking around and acting behind major stars. Productions like Titanic and other larger films used thousands of extras, but even smaller films and shows need extras most days. Once you learn how to become an extra, you can start making some extra cash and see yourself on the big or small screen.

## Know What to Expect

Though working as an actor might sound glamorous, working as an extra might be less fun. Extras often spend hours standing around in the background and helping the director and assistant director set up lighting and figure out different shots. It can take hours of hard work to film just a few minutes of a TV show, and you might spend more time sitting or standing than you do actually working. Most productions have craft service available, which lets you grab drinks, snacks and meals for free while working.

## Read Trade Publications

A simple way to find work as an extra is through trade publications, especially if you live in or around a popular filming location. Though most think that productions primarily shoot in Los Angeles or New York City, you'll also find plenty of work in Toronto, Miami and even Wilmington, North Carolina. Trade publications include casting calls in the back that show you what casting directors look for and the types of jobs available. The listings should also include details about how to apply for an extra position and the pay rate of each job.

## Find a Talent Agent

There is a difference between an extra and a professional extra. A traditional extra is someone who occasionally works but may hold down a full-time job, while a professional extra works solely as an extra. If you want to become a professional extra, you typically need to work with a talent agent. Most agents ask that you submit a resume and a current head shot, and some may require a full body shot as well. A talent agent can help you find higher paying jobs and find more work. Keep in mind that agents take a percentage of your income. Check [Jason Hanold on Facebook](#) [2] and other sites to see how other extras find work.

## Become a SAG Member

Once you become a professional extra, you can apply for membership in the Screen Actors Guild and become a SAG approved extra. SAG extras receive something called scale, which refers to the amount that extras make. This can equate to several hundred dollars for just a day's work. If you receive a line in the production, your salary will go up. SAG asks that all potential members complete an application package and submit some type of proof as to the film and television work they did in the recent past.

Many famous celebrities like Brad Pitt started out as extras before becoming big stars. Even if you don't have stars in your eyes, you can still become an extra. Film and television actors receive paychecks for appearing in the background of shows and movies, and some work professionally as extras.

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### Links:

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