WHAT IS A MONOLOGUE?

From the Greek: monologos – speaking alone (mono = alone, logos = speech/word)

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A monologue is spoken text which:

• is presented by a single character.
• is written in the first person.
• can be comedic or dramatic.
• reveals something: the character’s inner thoughts, emotions, secrets, a story, or the answer to a question.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MONOLOGUE AND A SOLILOQUY?

A soliloquy is a speech which a character makes to him or herself while alone on stage – they are thinking aloud. The most famous soliloquy is Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” speech from Shakespeare’s The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. In contrast, a character who delivers a monologue is communicating either with the audience or with another character.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD MONOLOGUE?

There are many factors to consider when writing a monologue. The three key elements are: • A need to speak. The character is speaking for a reason – they have a need to share, a need to reveal, a need to explain. “I need to tell you about my dad.”

• A specific character voice. Capturing how a character talks is essential to creating a captivating monologue. What type of language do they use? At what pace do they speak? How do they convey their story? Do they speak in run-on sentences, or in fits and starts? “You sit down, you hear? I got somethin’ to tell ya!”

• A journey. A monologue is a mini-play, so it must have a beginning, a middle, and an end – but don’t limit your concept of “a journey” to something physical. An emotional journey for a character can be just as impactful – where is the character emotionally at the beginning of the monologue, and where do they end up? From “I need to tell you about my dad,” to “That’s why I will never marry you.”

EXCERPT FROM The Monologue Everything Ebook
9 Elements of a Great Monologue:

Follow these winning strategies when choosing one.

1. Select an entertaining one.

No one in the industry wants to watch an actor working really hard to impress them with their "acting" especially if the piece is boring or mediocre. Choose a monologue you love doing so we will love watching you.

2. Find one that "fits you like a glove" so we believe you.

Know your type and range as far as being cast. Make sure the part is age-appropriate and physically accurate. It’s agonizing to watch a 25-year-old try to be 45 or a guy from Minnesota try to be an Italian Mafioso from Brooklyn or a plain Jane try to be a femme fatale. A monologue is the time to show who you are, not add layers of dialects, character traits, a limp, or something outrageous to impress. Avoid props unless it is so essential to the scene that it won’t work without one. If they can’t tell you are acting, that’s good acting.

3. Choose one that is serio-comedic—not just comedic or dramatic.

Show us some change in emotion but keep us laughing. Serio-comedic monologues are my favorite choices. Start with a piece that is funny, quirky, and gets people to laugh and then "turn the screw." Hit them with something that’s heartbreaking or touching. They’re already in your corner and you’ve won them over! Be compelling to get them involved in liking you, loving you, and hiring you!

4. Work on one that has an "arc" or storyline.

Avoid the "Johnny One-Note" monologues that show one emotion throughout. Boring. Tedious. There is nothing worse than watching someone rant and rave angrily at the audience for four minutes. We all love to hear stories with twists and turns. Bring us along with you.

5. Keep it short.

Every agent I’ve ever met made up their minds about an actor in less than 10 seconds. After two minutes they change their mind and it goes the other way. Stay within their attention span, and you’ll have more success.

6. Find one with an element of surprise.
If the audience is three steps ahead of you, they get bored very fast. Shift gears suddenly and change your mood or voice. Find a way to keep us on the edge of our seats, wondering what will happen next. Everyone loves to be pleasantly surprised.

7. Choose one that is not full of foul language or rude sexual innuendos.

The exception here is unless it is essential to the character, who in spite of the language is funny or quirky. But be careful. Well-written monologues like that are few and far between, and most actors aren't clever enough to pull them off. You run the risk of alienating everyone within earshot, and then looking like a mediocre actor on top of it. Choose good writing over something flashy to impress.

8. Discover one that shows you're a winner.

When you leave the room, what will they think of you? What was your lasting impression? Will they cast you? Call you back or shrug? Most importantly, don't choose to play a loser, someone who whines, or is a victim. Everyone loves to watch feisty characters. They don't like to watch losers. Leave them thinking you are amazingly courageous—a pirate, a rebel, a survivor!

9. Avoid a recognizable one that a movie star did really well.

You'll be compared to that star and you won't win. Those monologues are done badly with actors who simply lack the personality, not talent, to pull it off. Don't go there. You are not Matt Damon or Angelina Jolie. Find a likeable character and do the monologue your way. Then you'll be a winner!

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