



**MASTERING  
THE ONE-MINUTE  
MONOLOGUE**

***COACH CLAY BANKS***

Mastering the One-Minute Monologue  
© 2016 by Clay Banks

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## INTRO

### **Why every actor needs a great monologue...**

You would think it would be common knowledge by now that the monologue is the best way to show people who you are as an actor. However, that is all too often *not* the case. The whole point of a monologue performance is to **showcase** YOU in your **best light**. It's putting your best foot forward. Or in other words **“piercing with your sharpest point.”**

Monologues *are* and most likely *always will be crucial* tools in the actor's toolbox.

So why do so many actors fail to come prepared to those critical auditions and opportunities without that polished performance piece that could literally make or break their chances of landing the role? It makes no sense!

Here's a common scenario: You're in an audition room for that **HUGE dream role** and the casting director asks you if you've got a monologue.

**Option A:** You calmly ask, “Comedy or Drama?” You nail it. You land the role.

**Option B:** The cold, deadly grip of fear takes over your soul. You stare back at them blankly and make some lame excuse for why you don't have one. Epic fail.

What kind of actor do you want to be? What kind of actor are you *now*?

If your answer is Option A (actors who know their sh\*\*), CONGRATULATIONS! You've come to the right place.

In Mastering The One-Minute Monologue, we'll show you the *step-by-step process* to nailing your monologue and WINNING THAT ROOM. So let's do this thing!



## CHAPTER 1

### Choosing the Best Monologue for YOU...

Far too often actors are doing hours of memorizing and painstaking emotional work on something that is *entirely wrong for them*.

**THANKFULLY**, you don't have to be one of *those* actors!

Performing the wrong monologue is like taking an expensive trip to an amazing location and packing the wrong clothes. It sorta spoils the entire trip! But don't worry; we're going to be spending this entire chapter making sure you **PACK CORRECTLY**.

In Chapter 2 we're going to dig into the essentials of great character work, but first we must prepare.

Please understand that it's the actor's responsibility (that means *YOUR* responsibility) to locate just the right material for you. Then you must dig deep in order to create a stellar monologue performance that makes you shine.

You **MUST**:

1. **Know what roles in which you're likely to be cast. These are your *characters*.**
2. **Develop a character who's strong, believable and—of course—*interesting*.**
3. **Read and research monologues to pick the best piece for that character, OR have a professional writer create one made just for you.**
4. **Edit down that piece so you can deliver the goods in one minute.**

You **MUST NOT**:

1. **Choose a piece everyone has heard 100 times. "*To be or not to be...*"!**
2. **Choose a piece made famous by a huge star (avoid Oscar winners).**
3. **Choose a piece for a character you would *never* play in a real project.**
4. **Choose a piece that's too short or long. One minute is usually enough!**

When choosing the right monologue, here are the main things to consider:

## **FIT**

Would you (as your character) be considered in a **casting session** for this scene (the monologue in question)? Do you fit the **physical and emotional requirements** for this character? Would you **actually like to be cast** in this role? Does it **resonate** with you? Can you **relate** to this character **on a personal level**?

If the answers to all of these questions are a resounding “YES,” then you might have a great monologue on your hands!

If you’re really struggling with the piece, ask yourself these *really tough questions*:

Do you have the skills as an actor to pull off this piece ? Are you out of your emotional depth? How much time do you have to devote to this performance? Do you really get it?

If you’re shaky on these answers, you should probably pick something that you *can* pull off with confidence. Then put that especially difficult and risky piece in the archives as something you’re growing into rather than something you need to have ready in a few days for that big audition. It’s the smart thing to do.

## **RANGE**

Does the piece **go somewhere**? Does it take you from **one place to another**? Does your character **go through** something? If so, **what**? Has your character **changed** because of this experience? Can you tell a story with an **emotional peak** in just one minute?

## **Assignments:**

1. Take some time to analyze your **TYPE**. Ask 5 complete strangers to tell you 5 things they notice about you right away without them knowing you at all. Do the same thing with 5 friends or family members. Then compare and assess the results.
2. Write down your biggest *assets* and biggest *weaknesses*. Have your friends do the same. What characters have similar items on their lists? What’s your **sharpest point**?
3. Write down 1-3 characters you could play *realistically* & create their entire worlds. (Pinterest is a great way to do this!)
4. Read, read, read & read! Research monologue books, plays, films, songs, blogs and literature for that perfect signature piece. Then *work it* with the exercises in this book.
5. Test and analyze your performance with this monologue choice to see if it’s a good fit.



## CHAPTER 2

### Creating a Strong Character...

As with everything of **QUALITY**, it's a process of building layer upon layer of understanding. In your case, you're laying the foundation of the character's inner life.

#### **YOU HAVE TO DO THE WORK!**

Any actor who takes this work seriously will be in a position to win because *specificity breeds interest, and you win the room by being interesting!* We want you to win that room SO MUCH we've included these character analysis worksheets. You can use this information for every character you get to develop from this point forward! Cool? Good! Now, GET TO IT!

#### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET** [Fill out each box for every character you play]

PHYSIOLOGY	SOCIOLOGY	PSYCHOLOGY
1. Age	1. Social Class	1. Sexual Standards
2. Sex	2. Education	2. Sex Life
3. Posture	3. Family	3. Morals, Ethics
4. Deformities, Abnormalities	4. Occupation	4. Temperament
5. Physical Center	5. Religion	5. Obsessions
6. Habits	6. Nationality	6. Ambitions, Desires
7. Height	7. Social Status	7. Neuroses
8. Weight	8. Hobbies	8. Intelligence, I.Q.
9. Stature/Backbone	9. Economic Class	9. Disposition
10. Type	10. Public/Private	10. Outlook

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### **ANSWER *APPLICABLE* QUESTIONS BELOW IN FIRST PERSON AS THE CHARACTER:**

1. What's your full name? What's the significance of the name the author has given you?
2. What's your marital status and/or history? How do you feel about that?
3. What's your medical history? How is your health right now? Where's it headed?
4. What's your greatest weakness and strength? Do these change during the story? How?
5. What's your general outlook on life? Your attitude about the world? Are you in control of it?
6. What are the things in your life that are most important? (List in order of priority)
7. What do you say about the other characters in the script? What do they say about you?
8. How much detail does the author give you about your character in the script? As you fill in the blanks, honor writer's intent.
9. How do *you feel about each of the characters* at the beginning of the story? How do these feelings change throughout the story and why? What do you think about that?
10. How do *the other characters feel about you* at the beginning of the story? How do these feelings change throughout the story and why? What do you think about that?
11. If you were *a color*, what color would you be? A painting? *Historical figure*? *Animal*? *Food*? *Automobile*? *State*? *Country*? *Holiday*? *Etc*?
12. What single physical gesture would best summarize your character?
13. What experience in your own life (as an actor) can you draw on in the creation of your character?
14. IF you were your character, what circumstances would have to happen to you in order to be in the particular situation of the story? IF you were your character what would you do? (Answer this question as an actor.)
15. In what ways do you change throughout the story? Do you like/agree with these changes?
16. Other than yourself, who are the most important people in your life? Who's the *most* important person?



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17. What is your general response to other people? (Extrovert, introvert, etc.)
18. What are your dreams for the future? What do you see yourself doing ten years from now? Are you content with your life now? Where/what are your frustrations and joys?
19. What is your emotional climate? How do you respond to emotional stimuli?
20. What is the author's purpose for you in the story? How do you advance the story/scene?
21. What are your objectives unit by unit (scene, beat, moment, etc.)? What are your obstacles? What is your super objective? Minor objectives? What **aren't** you telling anyone?
22. Make a list of adjectives to describe yourself. Then go deeper with them.
23. What is the environment of the story/scene and how does it affect you? What would you change?
24. Create a complete imaginary background/biography for your character leading up to the beginning of the story.
25. Describe what you're doing when you're not on set during the course of the story/scene.
26. Create an inner monologue (thoughts, reactions, subtext) for your character for the entire action of the scene/story.

**Do this for every character and you'll be miles ahead of the competition!**

Is it a lot of work? **Heck yes!** This work separates the pros from the hopefuls.

So now you should have:

- The right outfit (your signature monologue that will win the room).
- A character who fills the outfit beautifully (because you've done the work).

Now, let's take your audience on that **journey** they're *dying* to take with you!



## CHAPTER 3

### **Building Arc, Creating Moments**

We as an audience want you to take us into your character's world. We want to go on an *emotional journey* with you. However, the journey must be interesting. Consider the below:

- We should go through whatever your character is going through *at that moment*. We as the audience want to go with you!
- We should know where you came from.
- We should be interested in where you're about to go next.

If the character and your choices are weak, the monologue performance is going to fall flat. So, **be bold, make strong choices, and take some chances.**

In order to make sense, your piece needs to have a ***beginning, middle, and end.***

When characters are fleshed out and solid and you know exactly who **they** are in **your** skin, the monologue will *come to life and grab our attention!!* It will be REAL!

From the beginning of your performance to the end, you can't break character. You must *sustain* that journey throughout the performance!

We've described performing as your character like putting on an outfit. Some outfits are *easier to put on* than others. Some have more *layers* than others. Once you're **in** and you're **wearing** the outfit, it has an **effect** on you. It **changes** you. Depending on the exact combination and dynamic of the clothing pieces, it can **transport** you, making you feel and think differently. In many cases *anything is possible!*

REMEMBER, the people in that room **want you to be great.** They **want to believe.** They truly **want to take that journey** with you! Remember that.

## MOMENTS

The monologue you're looking at should allow for several moments. Your piece should have at least one great moment—minimum! If you're building up to a *single* climactic moment, it needs to be a *powerful* one.

That may sound simple, but it's not. Monologue performances lay flat more times than not. One way to ensure an impact is by creating a moment *before* you go on stage! You can elevate yourself above the wannabees by clarifying "**The Moment Before.**"

- What **takes place** in the story right before you start the monologue?
- What's **said** right before you speak?
- What are your **physical and emotional states** before you begin?
- What effect does your **environment** have on your performance?

So now that you're crystal clear on your moment before, how do you **know** where the *remaining* moments are within your piece? Moments can come into play anywhere.

You have to dig them out—like *buried treasure*—by asking the right questions:

- Where can you get new and surprising information about the existing story?
- What words can you pack with extra meaning and subtext? (relationship)
- What lines tell the most about your character?
- Where does physical movement come into play?
- Where are the laugh lines? (if applicable)
- Where's the climax?
- Where's the silence? (if applicable)
- Are you asking a question and expecting an answer?
- If so, did you get the answer you wanted?
- Where do you put the nail in the coffin? (the poignant moment)

Bring your character and story to life by taking the necessary time, digging deep into your piece, and carving out the **moments**.

Strong moments will make the audience remember you for all the right reasons.

And that's exactly what you want.



## CHAPTER 4

### Emotion and Impact...

As we've mentioned, the monologue performance needs to allow for an emotional journey. It makes no difference whether it's a comedic or dramatic journey, it simply needs to travel.

The piece needs to be *effective*—meaning it needs to have an *effect* on your audience.

- How does it make us feel, think, react?
- What do you want your monologue to *do*?
- What choices are you making to see that it does just that?

Unless you're doing something extremely witty, comedic, or outrageous, you don't really want your monologue to just ride along the top. Don't play just one note. Don't just spew out the writer's words without *substance* beneath them. This is the *perfect* vehicle to bring your most compelling characters to life. Capitalize on every opportunity to make an impact.

### DON'T BE GLIB!

The audience can tell when you're faking it and when you're being sincere. If you want to actually *move* your audience, you need to work from the inner recesses of your being. Think about and answer these questions:

- Do your words *mean* something? (pack the significant nouns)
- Do you really care *deeply* about what you're saying? (strong connection)
- What's the *subtext* underneath the words? (your intention)
- How high are the *stakes*? (what's the risk?)
- Can you *leave it all on the stage floor* with this piece? (What does it cost you?)
- Or—to use a bodybuilding reference—Are you *burning calories* up there? (effort)

When it comes to impact, it's all about THE EDIT. Toss the lines that aren't dazzling you. If it doesn't grab YOU, it probably won't grab anyone else.



## CHAPTER 5

### **Pulling it all together...**

Let's recap with a few questions you should have fleshed out by now:

- Are your talents able to come through your character in your chosen piece?
- Does your monologue allow for your best assets to be showcased?
- Are you able to create and nail the moments?
- Does your performance make an impact?

If you're not answering yes to all of these questions, you're either not working with enough concentrated effort or your material isn't right for you. If you're not hitting the mark, work with a skilled coach. If your material is wrong, DUMP IT! Then keep looking.

You must be certain your monologue showcases *your* unique qualities and not just the writer's material. Make sure you're wearing the words and not the other way around.

This is YOUR moment. MAKE IT COUNT!

### **PRACTICE**

Once you've found a few pieces that seem to work for you, practice them again and again. Then make the necessary adjustments until you can knock them out of the park every time.

Just in case you were wondering, executing a killer monologue performance **isn't** going to happen overnight through osmosis! *You have to work it. And work it. And work it even more!* And when you're done, work it some **more!**

Sure, there are cases where an actor just gets up, wings something and slays it. But that's the *exception* not the rule!

## COACHING

You can only do so much of this on your own. Without coaching you're likely to get stuck in *subjective* pitfalls.

At certain points along the way, it's crucial to get with a coach and into an acting studio (like [CBSI](#)) so you can get a professional, *objective* eye on the scene.

A good coach can:

- See things that you can't.
- Keep you from freaking out.
- Build your confidence.
- Help you make adjustments.
- Tell you what's working in your favor and what's not.
- Give you an edge over the competition.

Studying with a coach will solidify and ground your work. And the better you know your monologue and tweak your performance, the less likely you are to be overly nervous.

Ultimately, the audience needs to experience the moments you're creating as the character—not an *actor trying* to do something. This is not the time for *just winging it!* It's execution time!

## DON'T TRAIN ON HIRING GROUND!

When you're in that casting office and they ask for a monologue, if you haven't done the work in advance, you've just blown an opportunity to 'wow' the people you want to impress.

- If you don't have your character down...
- If you don't own your piece...
- If you're just playing on the surface...
- ...we (the audience) are going to have a difficult time staying with you.

BUT...

- If you **DO** own your performance, we'll maintain the "suspension of disbelief" and **LOVE YOU** for taking us on a great ride!

Plan your work and work your plan!

In your monologue work, if you put more into it than you're expecting to get out of it, you inevitably *will succeed!* You will WIN THAT ROOM!

**IN SUMMARY...**

If you're expecting great things to come from your monologue performance and you're only doing mediocre work, you're still dreaming! Either that or you're so incredibly brilliant at your craft that you can do it in your sleep.

And if that's the case, what are you doing reading this book?

You should be polishing your Oscars!

At the end of this work, when you go into that room, you want to be more than *ready*.

You want to be as comfortable with your *character* (and your chosen piece) as you are with *yourself*. For some of you, you have to become *even more* comfortable with your character than you are with yourself!

Performing a **monologue** is just one thing. This thing should not be taken for granted.

It's important to keep in mind that any time you perform a monologue, ALL EYES AND EARS ARE ON *YOU!* There's no way around it. There's no place to hide.

It's the **ACTOR'S MOMENT**.

If you want to hone your craft in a precise and concise way, there's no better form to master than the monologue.

If you want to take that form to the next level, test your skills against other actors and enter a contest (like our contest [HERE](#)).

If you're in the Los Angeles area, you can grab a seat in one of our free workshops [HERE](#).

Our [CBSI actors](#) spend 8 weeks perfecting a new monologue every year.

Now YOU have the tools to Master The One-Minute Monologue.

Master the monologue. Master your craft.

Now get out there and WIN THAT ROOM!

## **ABOUT CLAY BANKS**

Head Coach, Owner and Founder of CBSI

Clay Banks' career began in New York back in the 70's when his father introduced him to an 8mm movie camera and flatbed editor (yes, he cut movies with a razor blade). He then spent two years at a technical school studying professional photography and after graduating he enrolled into college where he studied filmmaking, acting, theatre, and psychology.

Clay's life took an interesting turn after his college years when he:

- Landed a job with MacMillan Publishers (Fortune 500).
- Was promoted all the way up to Assistant to The President and National Instructor/Motivational Speaker.
- Became one of eight members (out of thousands) appointed to The President's Advisory Council.
- Studied under some of the world's greatest communicators.
- Made millions of dollars for the company.
- Earned award after award for outstanding achievements.

In 1992 he left the corporate world and moved to California. Over the next ten years, Clay got back to his artist roots by entering the entertainment industry. Alongside a successful acting career, he also taught and directed hundreds of actors, produced and directed numerous live shows, and became the Improv Director of The World Famous Comedy Store.

Clay has worked as an actor with numerous stars, performed with members of Who's Line Is It Anyway, and appeared in over one hundred TV commercials. He's worked on A-level movies and landed the recurring role of Lt. Richardson in the action TV series 'LA Heat'. As a filmmaker, Clay produced and directed "The Azusa Street Project," a hit documentary film that's been enjoying worldwide success for over a decade.

Having retired from acting in 2008, Clay founded Clay Banks Studio International (CBSI), a Hollywood-based acting studio where he teaches his powerful on-camera technique, *The Process*.

Banks is a recurring Master Coach at SAG-AFTRA Union Headquarters, conducts a Master Class Audition Series every year at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, and is a published Industry Expert for Backstage Magazine.

Coach Banks recently founded CBSI Corporate, where he works with TedTalk presenters, public speakers, lawyers, politicians, and contestants for The Voice and America's Got Talent.

Coach, Director, Producer, Writer, Motivator, Clay Banks is truly a gifted and passionate mentor, making it his goal to assist others in reaching their own goals.