



Deep Dive 2: Performance Power-Up: Mastering the Script

Moving Beyond Reading: How to Act, Interpret, and Land the Job

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You've conquered the gear. Your audio is clean, crisp, and ready for primetime. But a great microphone only amplifies what you give it. The next, and arguably most critical step is mastering the performance. In the voiceover world, we don't just *read* words; we convey emotion, establish trust, and tell a story—all within a matter of seconds.

This guide is about turning a cold, flat script into a warm, compelling performance that clients will book again and again.

The Art of the Cold Read: Scanning the Script in 60 Seconds

When a client sends you an audition or a paid script, you have mere moments to grasp its core purpose. Before you open your mouth, scan the script for these three crucial elements:

1. The Goal (What are they selling?)

Is the client trying to sell a product, educate an employee, or entertain an audience?

- **Commercial:** Goal is to drive action (buy, click, visit). **Tone:** Urgent, energetic, enthusiastic.
- **Corporate/Narration:** Goal is to inform and build trust. **Tone:** Measured, authoritative, credible.
- **E-Learning:** Goal is to hold attention and teach. **Tone:** Friendly, encouraging, clear.

2. The Audience (Who are you talking to?)

This determines your **delivery style**. Are you talking to:

- **A friend?** (Conversational, intimate, slightly lower energy.)
- **A classroom?** (Measured, slightly higher projection, clear articulation.)
- **A boardroom?** (Authoritative, serious, deliberate pacing.)
- **Yourself?** (Internal monologue for video game characters or certain commercial reads.)

3. The Tone and Emotional Arc

How does the speaker feel? Every script has a journey. Does it start with a problem ("Tired of slow internet?") and end with a solution ("Try Gigafast today!")? Identify the emotional low point and the high point to build your performance around that arc.

Pro Tip: Always read the client or project notes first! They often contain the exact direction you need.



Direction Decoded: What Clients *Really* Mean

One of the biggest hurdles for new voice artists is translating abstract client feedback into concrete vocal performance changes. Here is a cheat sheet for common director notes:

Client Direction	What They <i>Really</i> Mean	How to Adjust Your Performance
"Make it warmer / More intimate."	Sound less like you're reading and more like you're confiding.	Drop your pitch slightly. Lower the volume and lean in closer to the microphone (subtly). Add a slight smile.
"Give me less read / More conversational."	Stop performing the script and start talking to someone.	Use contractions (it's instead of it is). Vary your pace —don't keep a steady rhythm.
"Boost the energy / Make it pop."	The delivery is flat or sounds boring.	Increase your pace. Emphasize consonants (T, K, P). Stand up and use physical gestures to energise your voice. I stand up for all my performances!! Audiobook, Corporate, Promotions...Everything!!!
"It's too corporate / Dial it back."	You sound too formal or stiff.	Focus on natural breathing. Use more vocal fry (the rough, low sound we naturally use when relaxed) and relax your posture.

Practical Skill: Slating Always provide a slate—a simple read of your name and the take number—at the beginning of your recording (e.g., "Simon Lewington, Take One"). This is professional, aids the client's editing, and shows you can follow basic instructions.



Pace, Pause, and Punch: Your Three Performance Weapons

The difference between a beginner and a professional often comes down to their control over time and emphasis.

1. Pace (Tempo)

Pace controls the listener's anxiety or relaxation:

- **Faster Pace:** Used for urgency, excitement, or complex lists (e.g., fast-talking medication disclaimers).
- **Slower Pace:** Used for authority, gravity, or emotional depth (e.g., insurance, luxury brands, serious news).

2. Pause (Silence is a Tool)

A pause is just as important as a word. Use it to:

- **Create Intrigue:** (*"Did you know... [pause] ...your biggest secret is stored in the cloud?"*)
- **Signal a Change:** (*"We launched the new product, [pause] and everything changed."*)
- **Allow Absorption:** Use a short pause after a key statistic or complex piece of data so the listener can absorb it.

3. Punch (Emphasis)

"Punching" is the act of giving a word or phrase extra vocal weight without simply shouting. This usually involves:

- **Raising the pitch slightly** on the word.
- **Slightly increasing the volume.**
- **Slowing down** the word just before and speeding up after it.
- *Example:* "It's not just **good** internet, it's **Gigafast** internet."



Developing Your Signature Sound

Every successful voice artist has a signature. It doesn't mean you can only do one voice, but it means you know what you are **best** at. This is your niche.

- **The Trustworthy Friend:** Warm, friendly, conversational. Great for local commercials and health products. (This aligns well with my "friendly" and "Yorkshire/North East" characteristics.)
- **The Professional Authority:** Clear, crisp, articulate, measured. Perfect for corporate narration and explainer videos. (This aligns with my "authoritative" and "smooth" characteristics.)
- **The Quirky Character:** High-energy, unique inflections, broad accents. Great for gaming and animation. (This aligns with my experience and slightly quirky Tom Jones impression for "video game characters.")

Action Item: Identify which of your natural voices gets the best reaction. Practice reading scripts in that style until it feels like breathing.

Conclusion: Practice and Preparation are Your Agents

You now understand the importance of interpreting scripts, translating client feedback, and using pacing to your advantage. These are the skills that turn an amateur reader into a booking professional.

However, all this practice and preparation means nothing if you don't know how to package and sell it. You need the final puzzle piece: **the business strategy**.

Ready to move beyond practice and learn how to actually *make money* from these skills?

Stay tuned to www.simonlewington.com for Deep Dive 3, where we tackle "The Business of the Booth: Demos and Money," covering everything from building a compelling demo reel to finding work and setting professional rates!