

## Rock Your Logline

All right, beautiful. Let's pick up where the MP3 left off: Let's get into the \*how\* of rocking your logline. Remember, you don't have to have one, but if you've ever felt stuck when someone asks how they might best cast you or what you're best at as an actor, developing a personal logline is going to do nothing but help you.

It'll drive your focus when you're submitting on breakdowns. It'll sing in the background as you pitch yourself or your projects. It'll guide you as you create content to showcase your bullseye to the buyers. It's handy stuff!

Sure, you're "allowed" to just go ahead and click submit *every* time you see your gender, ethnicity, and age range mentioned in the online breakdowns, but isn't it far better use of your energy, your optimism over whether you're going to hear from casting, and your *focus* to submit only when the role is absolutely within your brand?

I'm not going to rehash all the homework from the **SMFA Essentials on Your Bullseye**, so please revisit that awesome module to get clear on the words that make up your brand. Pull out your "type cloud" generated at [wordle.net](#) or [tagxedo.com](#) to see the visual representation of all those surveys you've done to get to this point. Next, revisit the results of the "interview your bookings" homework from that same module.

The words from these exercises will be at the core of your homework for creating your logline.

Remember, there is no one \*right\* way to come upon your logline. One actor I worked with actually took a line from the character description from the breakdown for a project I was casting because, when I called him in to read for the role, he said it was such a great fit for exactly what he bullseyes as an actor (and it was; that's why I called him in for that audition). There may be words and phrases in previous breakdowns on which you've submitted that would be great starting points for your logline. Perhaps character descriptions of the roles you take on in your acting classes will be fodder for logline material.

Mark Atteberry says that going through your old yearbooks from school can illuminate your best "typing" words, so if you've got these relics handy, maybe take a trip down memory lane to see if you get some ideas for your logline. Take a look at your "about me" blurbs in your various social networking profiles. What are you saying about yourself? When friends talk about you, what words consistently come up? What types of stories do you most love to tell, as an actor? There's a thru-line to all of this. There's a commonality to every bit of your work and to who you are at your core.

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Look beyond where each of the characters you've played are dissimilar. Find what characteristics they share. Examine their thru-line and begin the following bit of homework.

List the most-repeated words and phrases from the above excavation (your work from the **SMFA Essentials** module on **Your Bullseye**, interviewing your bookings, visiting your social networking "about me" statements, your old yearbooks, those characters you gravitate toward).

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If I were to ask you a "fun fact" about you—not related to the entertainment industry—what would you share?

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If you were not pursuing a living as an actor, what would be your passion? (This is not to torture you about a survival job you hate; this is to open you up to the space your non-storytelling self occupies. Are you a teacher? A chef? A politician? A doctor? An athlete? A member of the clergy? A technician? A painter?) What are some qualities about this profession that make it intriguing to you?

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Of all the roles you've played—in class, on stage, on camera—which has been your favorite? What "type" words would describe that character?

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Whose stories do you *\*most\** want to help tell? Aaron Sorkin's, Ang Lee's, Anthony Zuiker's, Bernie Su's, Billy Ray's, Christopher Guest's, Chuck Lorre's, Dan Harmon's, David O. Russell's, Diablo Cody's, Dick Wolf's, James Cameron's, Jessica Bendinger's, JJ Abrams', Joss Whedon's, Judd Apatow's, Kathryn Bigelow's, Lena Dunham's, M. Night Shyamalan's, Martin Scorsese's, Matthew Weiner's, Michael Bay's, Quentin Tarantino's, Robert Rodriguez's, Ron Howard's, Ryan Murphy's, Shonda Rhimes', Spike Lee's, Steven Soderbergh's, Steven Spielberg's, Taylor Hackford's, William Shakespeare's, your own?

And why? What are the characteristics of these storytellers' work that aligns with your passion for performing? Please limit yourself to three! I know... this one is hard.

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Finally, I want you to go back through all the blanks above, highlight words and phrases that are repeated (or that are synonyms of one another). If you need to use a tool like [visualthesaurus.com](http://visualthesaurus.com) to help see the connections, go for it! What six words or phrases are the most frequently repeated (or strongest *\*pulls\** for you, emotionally) in the blanks above?

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These words—or, again, ones similar to them, found at the Visual Thesaurus—are the basis of your logline. If you have anything *\*too\** cliché in your phrases (girl next door, loveable loser, quirky best friend, creepy bad guy), really work to discover alternatives that have more texture to them, so your audience doesn't gloss over thinking, "Ah, another one of these types."

I'm not going to give you any sort of "fill in the blank" setup for the framework of a logline because there is no ONE way to do a logline. Mine is a sentence. It involves words like "dreams" and "helping others" as well as "figure out," which is what all of my teaching—filled with analogies and folksy sayings—is about. Others have loglines that are sentence fragments. Or even full paragraphs. Of course, brief is better, because you don't want to lose folks while you ramble on.

Using some of the words from your homework above, try a few presentations of a logline: short, long, concise, rambling, fragments, stories, all of it. I'm not asking you to get it right, right now. Your assignment at this point is to just start the process. Redo, rework, refine. This *\*should\** take time. When it's done right, it's the logline you'll use for years—if not decades. Give this the time it deserves. Write a few versions up. Sleep on it. Revisit the homework from the first item. Re-listen

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to the MP3. Let this marinate. Edit your various loglines. Note which words exist in every version of your logline. Those are the keepers.

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Consider the words you use to set up those "keepers." For example, if you're talking about how straightforward or no-nonsense you are, a logline that's heavy on the adverbs and compound phrases belies that truth, now doesn't it? The words you choose to use as delivery devices for your brand's logline are just as essential as the "keepers" themselves.

Let's go back to my logline. I chose to make it active: "I'm *\*living\** my dreams..." rather than making it more ethereal or primarily focused on the work that I do. I chose to include that there is work involved, should you come to me for help living your dream: "...by helping others *\*figure out how\* to...*" rather than making it seem as though I have some magic recipe that changes lives. (Some say that I do, but the truth is, if the recipient of any of my life's work isn't buckling down and putting in the heavy lifting, there will be no results.)

Consider the words you're choosing to support your "keepers" and, again, visit the Visual Thesaurus if you're feeling stuck. Consider the order in which you introduce the elements that make up your logline. Pay attention to the rhythm of the syllables, use of alliteration, etc. Or, better yet, get right on top of this homework and submit drafts of your logline as a part of this month's Q&A (hurry, hurry, hurry) to get some feedback in the next MP3!

The goal is not to have you overthink this, but to make *\*mindful\** choices so that your logline becomes not only a part of your soundtrack but also a song others hum along to when they think about you.

Rehearse your various versions of your logline in the mirror, into your webcam, at low-stakes gatherings, with friends, at the *SMFA* message boards. Keep doing this. Keep, keep, keep doing this! The goal is to have your logline at the ready, so it's something you can pull out without a thought, in any conversation or networking situation. Deliver it with confidence, as confidence is castable! Your logline is closer to done than you might have thought, when we started this module. Hooray!

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As always, please submit your questions for our follow-up MP3 immediately, so we can get you covered before we wrap up this month's interactive module! We're excited to hear what questions you may have about your logline in progress. Let us help you tweak it and get you rockin' for real. Send your email to: [ninjaassistant@cricketfeet.com](mailto:ninjaassistant@cricketfeet.com) with the subject line: **Rock Your Logline Question**, so we can easily get you in the queue to help out with your questions, before we head into next month's awesome interactive **SMFA Essentials** module. Hooray!

I really hope you're feeling more excited and inspired by your creative career every day, beautiful people! Next month's interactive module is called **Show Bible Mastery**. Your show bible is your career's cast of characters, the map of your style of storytelling, and the best predictor of the intersection you'll have with the buyers who most need to know you exist. Let's take managing your industry contacts to the next level!

We are ridiculously lucky to have a life in which we get to live our dreams, every day. Being blissed out, confident, and capable of achieving your every goal along the way is totally do-able. Unless you're SURE it's impossible, folks, every little dream you hear whispering to you is absolutely, totally attainable. The *Self-Management for Actors* principles **work**. **Bonnie Gillespie is living her dreams by helping others figure out how to live theirs.** She casts SAG-AFTRA indie projects such as the zombie smash hit *BITE ME*, which made the leap from web to TV with **Lionsgate** in 2012. Bonnie's weekly column, **The Actors Voice**, runs at Actors Access and her podcast, **The Work**, is available on iTunes. Her books include *Casting Qs: A Collection of Casting Director Interviews*, *Acting Qs: Conversations with Working Actors*, *SMFA: The Ninja Within*, and *Self-Management for Actors: Getting Down to (Show) Business*, which has been named one of **The Top Ten Best Books on Acting Ever Written** and featured at the Tom Cruise actor resource blog. Bonnie regularly facilitates seminars based on this top-selling book and has traveled internationally—to demystify the casting process and the business side of pursuing an artistic career—as a guest instructor at colleges, universities, actors' unions, and private acting studios. Bonnie has been featured on *Good Morning America*, *BBC Breakfast*, UTV-Ireland, ARD-1 Germany, *Sunrise* Australia, CBC Radio One, BBC Radio 5, E! Online, and in the *LA Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. To hop on Bonnie's mailing list, visit [BonnieGillespie.com](#).



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