

TWILIGHT LEXICON - CASTING Q&A

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By Casting Director [Lana Veenker](#)

Ever since the press release went out that we were casting several of the roles in the upcoming "Twilight" movie, our email and MySpace inboxes have been bombarded with messages from fans who want to know how they can get involved in future projects. Since it's impossible for us to answer all the mail we get and still run a casting company, I offered to answer some of the questions here for you faithful Twilight Lexicon readers. Check back periodically for updates!

Q: Is it possible to be in one of the films you are casting, if I have no acting experience or training?

A: In order to be considered for a speaking part, you need to have professional experience and, in most cases, a talent agent. For the lead roles, the producers also want actors with name recognition, although this is not usually required for the smaller parts.

Of course, there are always exceptions. Gabe Nevins was 15 years old and had no experience at all when we cast him as Alex in Gus Van Sant's "Paranoid Park". He went to the casting call in search of extra work and instead landed the leading role.

Many factors contributed to Gabe's success, though. We needed a teenager with exceptional skateboarding skills, young enough to portray Alex's innocence, but mature enough to handle the size of the role. Gus asked for someone unpolished and believable and that's exactly who Gabe was. At each audition, he came in just being himself and that was the role he was cast to play.

On the other hand, we met several untrained teenagers in our search for the perfect Jacob Black in "Twilight," and even though many of them were the right type, the producers opted for the more skilled and experienced Taylor Lautner. The role of Jacob is a very challenging one and it would have been a big risk to put it in the hands of someone untested. I am excited to see how Taylor does...especially if there are sequels!

Q: What about working as an extra?

A: Yes, this is one thing you can do without acting experience. Keep in mind that you can only work as an extra in the region where you live, so if there's a movie you want to be in and it's shooting halfway across the world, you need to either move there or have a place to stay for a few weeks. No one wants to hire an extra who lives far away from the shooting location and no one will pay for your travel. Also, you need to be able to legally work in the country where the

film is shooting. They won't hire you without a valid work permit or proof of citizenship. Unfortunately, those are the breaks!

If there's an extras casting company near to where you live, sign up to be in their database. That way, when they have a project and need background players, they will have your information. If you fit the specs, you just may get a phone call. Note that you should never have to pay a large initiation fee or buy expensive photos to be an extra. Most offices will take a quick digital snapshot of you or will accept a JPEG that you provide.

Photo Tip: Your photo should look like you on a good day, but it should NOT be a glamour shot. Producers and directors want to see what you really look like, and they will not be afraid to send you home if you show up on the set and look significantly different from your photo! This just happened to a very disappointed extra on a Charlize Theron movie we were casting, so beware. If your weight or hair (including facial hair) changes substantially, be sure to update the photos you have on file with the extras company.

If you get hired to work as an extra, don't go on set until you check out our free Set Glossary and Extras Protocol Checklist on our extras casting [MySpace page](#) (on the blog). This will help make sure you don't commit any huge faux pas while on the set of your favorite movie. It's important to be a pro at all times, if you ever want to be asked to work again. Have fun and break a leg!

Lana Veenker is a member of the Casting Society of America and the International Network of Casting Directors. Her online course, "[Marketing Tools for Actors](#)," is offered in over 1400 colleges and universities worldwide, and she has several books for aspiring actors in the works.