

What is a Demo CD?

The Demo CD is a way for you to showcase yourself to employers who use voice talent. These include Ad Agencies, Program producers, Industrial clients, Casting Directors, etc. They listen, like what they hear, hire you and hopefully provide steady employment paying lots of money.

So it's important to get it done well and get it out there.

It will probably cost the price of a few college credits, but can pay you back fairly fast. The program you are attending and the items covered in the "Questions to ask / Things to know about" section should help you navigate through the process of dealing with the people who make demo CDs.

They can be called Producers, or Production Houses; Recording, Production, and Sound Studios, even someone you know who works at a radio station and is capable of sneaking you in after midnight.

The main thing is that they and you know how to produce a good demo.

As different people have particular needs for their project, be sure to ask the right questions before booking your session.

The studios will want to know what finished length you're shooting for. A full demo will usually run no more than four minutes and typically two minutes or less. (The people listening have a very short attention span. It's an MTV world.)

The multiple 30 or 60 second long scripts you're voicing are generally not on the CD in their entirety, but edited to include only the best sounding parts, just 3 to 20 seconds long.

This is not a hard and fast rule, but common practice today in that "less is more". Narration demos are a little longer, to allow the idea, direction and flow to soak-in. Remember too that the lengthier and more complicated the material you produce, the higher the studio costs are.

It's even OK to simply produce the very short pieces that make up your demo.

But, if you're not that experienced, you may be unable to pull it off credibly and end up with a shortage of good material to edit together. That's an individual's decision.

The AFTRA Talent Guide web site free listing requires a version no longer than one minute. Be sure to tell the studio you want this version too. Check out the web site at www.thetalentguide.com; information at www.aftrapgh.com, click on "Talent Guide".

Some people like a CD containing complete spots

with the individual tracks and descriptions listed on the back of the CD case.

This lets the listener pick and choose, or just hit play and listen from the beginning.

Again, it's up to you.

Production Studios- Questions to ask / Things to know about

- Have they done successful voice demos in the past?
- Any examples I can listen to? Any satisfied customers I can talk to?
- Will they have an experienced director or recording engineer at the session to give you artistic advice as needed?
- Can they supply any necessary background music and sound effects?
- Do they have any scripts (spots & narration) or other support material available? Do I need to develop and bring in my own scripts?
- Can I get their copy ahead of time to work on it?
- Get a feel for the location and kind of working environment, and decide if it's suitable. Typically you get what you pay for. *(Or, don't pay for!)* Is it OK if you need to bring other people or things in with you?
- What is the time frame for completion?
- The costs for the session.

Is there a package price available, or is it based on pre hour used?
How much time do I get for the basic fee? If I need more, how much does that run?

OK to bring in some spots I've already done & on what media? *(No cassettes please!)*

The cost to produce the 60 second demo version for use on the AFTRA Talent Guide web site. *(The listing is FREE for the time being, so jump on this opportunity while it lasts! check out the site at www.thetalentguide.com, information at www.aftrapgh.com click on "Talent Guide".)*

You may want different demos- Commercial / Narration / Character Voice / Combination.
Ask for their time/cost estimate or package quotation for these.

If you want to record enough material now, you may be able to have them save the takes and edit together these specialty demos later when your budget permits.

Ask the price of other elements-
Music, sound effects.

Time needed for listening, editing, and revisions now or later.

Original session material data back up or archiving.

- Duplication: How many CDs do I get and what is the charge for additional CDs?
Any quantity discounts?

Are the CD cases included?

Are they standard or the slim type?

(You probably want the standard type- they have a space in the back & spine for a one-piece wrap around printed insert. Plus, sturdier construction which tends to survive the mailing process.)

- Graphic design & labeling costs. (May be included.)
- Will you keep the master on file in case I need more demos in the future?
- Payment methods. Cash, check, credit card. How much is due when?

This list of questions and issues is not intended to frighten you from going ahead.
In fact, most studios will automatically include many of the elements that go into the production process and finished CD.

But the more you know the less likely you are to be caught off guard if a question or concern arises.