

10 Reasons You Are Not Getting Cast on Reality TV

By Rachel Reilly

A practical guide to making your next audition clearer and more memorable

You know you would be great on reality TV. So why does your application feel like it disappears into the universe? Before you film another take, let's look at what your audition actually shows about you.

I'm Rachel Reilly, a Big Brother winner, three-time Amazing Race finalist, host, producer, and casting professional. I've spent more than 16 years in reality television, both in front of the camera and behind the scenes. My advice starts here: give people something specific to remember about you.

This guide covers ten audition habits that can make your story harder to see. Each section includes a fictional example and a small exercise you can use today. You do not need to become a louder version of someone else. You need to make your own personality easier to understand.

A little reality check The title is a hook, not a diagnosis. A strong applicant can still miss out because of show fit, eligibility, timing, or the mix of people a production needs. These exercises help you improve what you can control; they cannot guarantee a callback or a spot on a show.

How to use this guide Read it once, choose the two habits you recognize most, and revise one answer before you refilm your whole audition. All sample answers are invented for illustration, not claims about actual casting decisions.

1 You are giving information instead of stories

"I'm competitive, outgoing, and a mom." Those are facts and labels. They do not show what you do when you care about something. A small, true story can reveal more than a list of adjectives.

A vague answer "I'm competitive."

A more specific answer "Our family game night needed a rule against me studying everyone's strategy before we started. My husband called it cheating. I called it preparation."

Try this Pick one quality you want to show. Describe a real moment when it showed up: what happened, what you did, and how someone reacted. Keep it short enough that the point is easy to follow.

2 You are telling casting what you think they want to hear

If your answer could come from almost anyone who watches the show, it may hide what makes you different. Do not borrow a personality from the last season. Explain your actual motivation, even if it is less glamorous.

A vague answer "I'll do whatever it takes to win."

A more specific answer "I say I can separate friendship from strategy, but I still feel guilty when I beat my sister at cards. That is the part I would have to work through."

Try this Answer "Why this show, and why now?" without using the words journey, dream, or biggest fan. Give one specific reason you want the experience at this point in your life.

3 You are performing instead of being yourself

Energy is useful when it belongs to you. Forced catchphrases, invented rivalries, and pretending you never get nervous can make an audition feel disconnected from the person underneath. If you are naturally quieter, your humor or strong opinions can still carry an answer.

A vague answer “I’m the villain. Everyone should fear me.”

A more specific answer “I hate being told what to do, but I also desperately want people to like me. You can imagine how well that goes when someone corrects me.”

Try this Record a voice memo telling a friend about something that annoyed or delighted you this week. Listen for your natural rhythm, humor, and opinions. Bring that energy into one audition answer.

4 Your answers are too polished

Preparation helps. A script memorized word for word can make you sound as if you are reading your own press release. You want enough structure to stay clear and enough room to react like a person.

A vague answer “I thrive in dynamic environments and embrace challenges.”

A more specific answer “My plan usually lasts until somebody changes the rules. Then I get frustrated, complain for thirty seconds, and figure out another way.”

Try this Write three bullet points for an answer rather than a paragraph. Film two versions in your own words. Choose the one where your meaning is clearest, not the one with zero verbal stumbles.

5 You have not figured out your point of view

Your job title and hometown describe your life. Your point of view tells us how you interpret it. What do you care about? What gets under your skin? What do you believe that your friends argue with you about?

A vague answer “I’m a teacher from a small town.”

A more specific answer “I’m a teacher, so I can tell when someone has not listened to a word I said. Adults are worse than my students because they think they are hiding it.”

Try this Complete “My friends always argue with me about...” and “I get unusually passionate about...” Choose a genuine answer and explain the reason behind it.

6 You are trying to be likable instead of memorable

You can be kind and still have opinions. If you agree with every question and avoid every awkward detail, an interviewer may learn very little about you. You do not need to manufacture conflict; let your real preferences and contradictions show.

A vague answer “I get along with everyone.”

A more specific answer “I love hosting people, but when someone rearranges my kitchen I become a completely different woman. Enjoy the dinner. Leave my cabinets alone.”

Try this Name one thing you love, one thing you cannot stand, and one contradiction about yourself. Add a real example to the answer that feels most revealing.

7 Your audition starts too slowly

Long greetings, apologies, and a tour of your résumé can delay the part that makes someone curious. Start with a specific detail that matters to your story, then give the context. Always follow the application's required prompts and time limits.

A vague answer “Hi, my name is Alex, and I've been thinking about applying for a really long time...”

A more specific answer “I plan every family vacation down to the minute. Last year my family staged a rebellion on day two. I still think my itinerary was excellent.”

Try this Watch the opening of your tape. Find the first moment where your personality becomes clear. If the instructions allow it, move that moment earlier and trim the warm-up.

8 You are not giving enough detail to picture the moment

A “usable moment” does not have to be a dramatic confession. It can be a clear story with an action, a reaction, and a consequence. Abstract answers make it harder to imagine how you behave around other people.

A vague answer “I'm good at handling conflict.”

A more specific answer “My roommate ate the dessert I saved for my birthday. I labeled every shelf in the refrigerator. We eventually talked, but first there was a very organized cold war.”

Try this Tell one story using four prompts: what I wanted, what got in the way, what I did, and what happened next. Use details you are comfortable sharing. Leave out other people's private information.

9 You do not understand your own story

A life history is not automatically a clear audition answer. Help someone understand what matters to you now and why the experience would mean something. Ordinary life can have real stakes; you do not need to invent hardship or disclose trauma.

A vague answer “I’ve always wanted to be on TV.”

A more specific answer “I spend so much time organizing everyone else’s life that I keep postponing anything that is just for me. Applying is the first thing I’ve done about that.”

Try this Write three sentences: what my life looks like now, what I want to change or test, and why I am applying now. Be honest about what the show can and cannot change.

10 You are not showing how you respond to other people

A compelling individual still has to fit a particular show. Help an interviewer see your behavior in a group: who you trust, how you react to pressure, and what happens when someone challenges you. Different formats need different things.

A vague answer “I have a huge personality.”

A more specific answer “I become the organizer in any group. If someone else takes charge, I say I’m relieved—and then quietly check every decision they make.”

Try this Describe a real group disagreement. What role did you take? What did someone else do that changed your reaction? Connect that behavior to the format you are applying for without pretending you know its casting decisions.

Before You Hit Submit

You do not have to fix ten things at once. Start with the answer that sounds least like you and make it more specific. Then use this checklist before sending your application.

- ☐ I checked the official application instructions, eligibility requirements, deadline, and video length.
- ☐ I answered the actual questions instead of recycling an unrelated tape.
- ☐ My opening gives a specific reason to keep listening.
- ☐ I replaced vague labels with at least one true story.
- ☐ My motivation explains why I want this experience now.
- ☐ My opinions and reactions sound like me.
- ☐ I can be heard clearly, my face is visible, and my background is not distracting.
- ☐ I removed private information about other people and anything I am not comfortable sharing.
- ☐ I checked that my contact details, links, and uploaded files work.
- ☐ I submitted through the show's official application channel.

Your 15 Minute Audition Reset

Minutes 1–5: Choose a quality you keep naming without showing. Write down a true story that demonstrates it. Minutes 6–10: Record an answer using that story and three bullet points. Minutes 11–15: Watch it back. Can someone understand what you wanted, how you acted, and why it matters? Revise once, then check the show's instructions.

Here is what I want you to remember: you do not need a perfect life to have an interesting story. Give yourself permission to be specific, have an opinion, and let people meet the person behind the application.

— Rachel

Keep learning Find Rachel on Instagram at @RachelEReillyVillegas and at RachelsReality.com for more reality TV content.

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