

BW

Bonnie J. Wallace

8 Questions to Ask a Potential Agent Before You Sign (and 4 to Ask Yourself)



Bonnie J. Wallace

8 Questions to Ask a Potential Agent Before You Sign (and 4 to Ask Yourself)

1) How would you pitch me?

- a. This tells you a lot about how the agent sees you in terms of type. Do they see you as a lead? As the quirky best friend? This is useful because it tells you if you are on the same page or not. Maybe the agent understands more than you do about what kind of “type” you are for casting. Or maybe they really do NOT see you for who you are! Finally, if they can’t easily say how they would pitch you, this is not a good sign.

2) If the agent represents actors for both commercial and theatrical, for which category do they see more work?

- a. (Hint: it’s probably commercial in a smaller market). But it’s good to hear what they have to say about your market and the work they see, as it can give you a reality check on what may be available.

3) If you are in a major market like LA or NY, is this agent theatrical or commercial?

- a. A commercial agent will not get you auditions for TV or film—only for commercials and print. Most agents in larger markets specialize in one or the other, and you want to be sure you are signing with one who can send you out for the kind of work you want! Many actors have both kinds of agents.

4) Who is your most successful client? What kind of work have they done?

- a. This gives you a sense of where the agent is on the food chain. If their biggest client is someone whose projects you’ve never heard of, this agent may not have the clout to get you into better auditions.
- b. Sometimes agents and managers ride the reputations of actors who have long ago slowed down. Don’t be dazzled by someone because they represent a star from decades ago. You need representation that is getting their clients work NOW!

5) For the major market agents: does your client list include at least a couple of *currently* successful actors?

- a. Hopefully there is at least one whose Star Meter is below 10,000 on [IMDbPro](#) (get the one month free trial if you need to check this). If not, are there at least a couple below 20,000? If still no, they may not have enough clout to get your child into the better auditions.

6) Are you franchised with SAG-AFTRA?

- a. All Union members' talent agents must be franchised by the Union or affiliated with the ATA. (Affiliation with the Association of Talent Agents). This protects you. Look their status up [HERE for AFTRA](#) and [HERE for SAG](#), or [HERE for the ATA](#). Even if you don't belong to SAG-AFTRA yet, if you intend to, you need a franchised agent.

7) Are you licensed by the state?

- a. Legitimate agents are licensed and bonded by the state in which they operate. If an agent is not licensed (and you can [look it up HERE](#)) do not sign with them. Period.

8) “Can I have my lawyer look this over before I sign?”

- a. 100% of the time the answer to this question should be “Yes! Of course.” If you hear anything else—including any sort of push or urgency—stop. Do not sign, and keep looking. You absolutely have the right and responsibility to have an attorney review a legal contract, and a rep that has problems with this will cause problems for you. This is especially important for managers, who are not licensed or regulated by the state, and whose contracts are often less standard than those of talent agencies.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

1. What does the rest of your team think?

If you already have a team started (for example your agent if you are looking for a manager, or vice versa... or your entertainment lawyer, if you are starting from scratch. You do need an entertainment lawyer to review a contract, so at the minimum you should have one you're ready to call). It is critical that the members of your child's team respect each other and can work together. The last thing you and your child need is a team that has no trust or can't play well together.

2. **Is this person really the right fit for you? Do you feel comfortable with them? Always listen to your gut instinct.**

3. **What is their reputation in the industry?**

This can be very difficult to discover, as no one wants to speak badly of others in the industry. However, you can often read between the lines. People may let you know indirectly that you might want to keep looking. Ask around, and dig a bit with Google.

4. **Did you seek them out because of their great reputation, or who they represent? Or did they stop you and your child in a shopping mall?**

You should keep walking 99.9% of the time that you are stopped in a shopping mall/other public place by someone who wants to represent your child. The better agents and managers never seek out clients this way.

Take your time in this process. While it can be one of the most challenging parts of the journey, it is also one of the most important. These relationships can be easy to get into and hard to get out of, so you want to do it thoughtfully and with your eyes open.

Your odds of getting a better agent typically increase the longer you wait to get one, because you will be bringing more credits, training, and experience to the relationship. An actor with some credits, training and experience is more likely to get a decent agent than an actor with fewer of these things.



Want more support and experienced guidance in helping your child to become a performer? I'd be happy to talk with you one-on-one.

[Click here to schedule a private consultation with me.](#)

Or email: bonnie@bonniejwallace.com.