

AFTRA MEMBERSHIP

For more info, check the AFTRA website here: www.aftra.com

Founded in 1937, as AFRA (Radio Artists) represents approximately 70,000 professional actors and news broadcasters, about 40,000 of which are also SAG members (referred to as dual-card holders).

AFTRA is traditionally known for live television such as variety shows and soap operas, and for radio and news broadcasters. They still cover those areas, along with almost all radio commercials, interactive games, audio books, etc. Today, AFTRA has moved into claiming jurisdiction on various television series including most of those on Disney and Nickelodeon. As a result, many young performers will find themselves having to join BOTH SAG and AFTRA eventually.

When to Join

On most AFTRA sets, there will be AFTRA paperwork provided to you. Do not sign it if you are not SURE you want to join. You certainly don't need to join at your first job (the Taft Hartley period applies to AFTRA too...you get 30 days). Usually this paperwork entails signing over your whole paycheck, and future paychecks until your initiation fee is paid off. Do not do this unless you are truly ready to join!

Like SAG, the trick is to time your AFTRA membership if you can. There is no need to join before it is necessary since AFTRA provides no hiring advantage to its members, and practically no specific services for young performers.

For many young performers, the AFTRA dues will outweigh the pay they receive, even over years. Unless you have a regular role on a cable show, or are on a soap opera (consistent income), you may very well end up paying more to AFTRA than you take home in wages.

How to Join

Joining AFTRA is easy....just pay the dues! No work required. Anyone can join.

Cost of Membership

Initiation fee (one time) as of 11/1/09: \$1600 plus the semi-annual basic dues payment of about \$70.00

Ongoing: The base dues of around \$70 are paid twice a year, in May and November. You will owe that amount plus .743% of your earnings.

How to Leave

Kids grow up and do other things! There are two ways to leave the union, and they are available for very different purposes:

Honorary Withdrawal: This is for actors who are no longer seeking work, such as a child actor who is leaving to go to college. This is a perfectly acceptable, HONORABLE way to leave the union. You will no longer need to pay the base dues, but you will owe them on residuals you receive. To do this, you simply write a letter to AFTRA requesting honorary withdrawal status. If you want to re-join at a later date, it's no problem.

Financial Core: This is a very anti-union action and you need to understand the weight of this decision.

For more on Financial Core, please read all these articles on our website:

<http://www.bizparentz.org/thebizness/unionfinancialcore.html>

WARNING: if you child decides to leave the business, do NOT just stop paying AFTRA dues. If your child ever wants to pursue acting again, you are setting them up for a big bill since they may have to pay initiation fees all over again! Do it the right way...it's just a letter to request Honorary Withdrawal status.
