

# THE UNOFFICIAL RULES OF IMPROV

**1.) DON'T DENY** - When performing improvisation it is key that the performers keep the flow of the scene going. When one participant denies an idea, often by saying no, the flow of the scene has hit a major road block and the actors will need to work very hard to re-establish information. A good example of this is when someone enters a scene and calls another participant a certain name, and that person responds by saying 'no, that's not my name, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. This immediately gets the scene off to the wrong foot and the actors have to rectify this situation before any scene building can be accomplished.

**2.) SHOW DON'T TELL** - It is very common for improv talent to tell the audience what they are doing instead of just doing it or using proper mime skills. This uses up valuable time on stage that could be used for developing the scene and getting from the beginning to the middle to a suitable ending. Encourage students to develop their mime skills so that the audience knows what they are doing without having to be told. This will also help deter inexperienced talents from being so focussed on using props in their scenes.

**3.) DON'T FORGET THE ENDING** - It is common for scenes in improv to do very well until the end, where they fizzle out or just plain die. This is because the actors on stage are so focussed on going for the quick joke or establishing too much information that they forget that the scene must also end. To combat this have performers get into groups and work out scenes discussing the major elements first and then performing them. This will cue their minds to look for the right moment to end the scene and avoid any awkward conclusions.

**4.) THE BASICS** - Improv is a form of theatre, but what is often most overlooked is the basics of theatre: projection, stage presence, blocking and positioning are very important. Stage presence comes with time and practice, it can only be taught so much. With time it will improve. Blocking and positioning go hand in hand and are key to avoid physical distractions during the performance. Again, practice and experience are the key to overcoming this obstacle. Projection, however, is something that must be worked on and stressed from the very beginning. If an actor cannot be heard the overall effectiveness is compromised and the message or point of the scene is lost. Work from day one on projection, practice breathing techniques and really stress how vital this skill is. After all, a scene can only be appreciated if it is heard.



## Improv Workshop Contingency Programme



# CLASSROOM IMPROVISATION EXERCISES

## **The Warm-Up:**

Unlimited participants can take part, but only two start. Those who start are moved into a physical starting position by a volunteer. This position inspires them to start the scene. Other participants say 'freeze' when they see a position they like and then take the place of the actor of their choice. The scene then continues, hopefully going in a different direction. This continues until the game is ended.

## **Questions Anyone?:**

Divide the participants into two equal teams. One person from each team will converse speaking only in questions. If one person fails to speak only questions or gets redundant the next person on the team takes over until the scene is complete. Timing the game often leads to the competitive spirit.

## **Now I Know My A, B, C's:**

This scene can be done with only two actors or as many as you like, but the more the people the harder it gets. This game is great for listening skills. You start off by getting a suggestion of a letter of the alphabet. That is the starting point. The key to the game is that each phrase delivered by a participant must start with consecutive letters of the alphabet. Start with the suggested letter and work your way all the way around and back to the starting point. A suggestion of a situation is also required to shape the scene.

## **Being Wordy:**

This game requires three participants. Each participant is assigned the number of words they are required to use in each sentence spoken during their scene. Use 1 word, 2 words, 3 words to keep things simple and ask for a suggestion of a dangerous situation to give the scene real excitement. Move up to more words as their skills progress.

## **Stand, Sit, Lie Down:**

Three participants create this scene where the stipulation is that someone must be standing, someone must be sitting and someone must be lying down at all times during the scene. Use a chair or two, unless a couch or something comparable is available, for props to make things more interesting. A situation is also required to give this scene shape, something suitable for the scene's constraints.

## **Expert:**

Three people are chosen to play the expert and one other is the interviewer. The three people playing the expert must speak as one person: speaking very slowly all together at the same time. The audience suggests a topic for them to be experts on and the interviewer asks questions on that topic. You can also welcome the audience to ask questions as well.

## **Fill in the Blank:**

This is a great scene to get shy people involved with little chance of embarrassment. In this game three people are selected as pillars and are positioned on stage. All they do is stand there throughout the scene and when another performer taps them on the shoulder they simply fill in the blank. The information they give must be used and will help form the scene as the other actors work with the given information.

## **Press Conference:**

This is a guessing game. One participant leaves the room while the rest of the group decides who that person is (same gender). They can be a person from history, a character from a book or movie. The participant comes back into the room and holds a 'press conference' fielding questions from the rest of the group. The questions should start of vague, but not misleading, and get more suggestive until the participant can guess who they are successfully.