
Breakaway Camp Theatre Sports



Breakaway Theatre Sports Book

Breakaway Kids Camps

Our mission is to provide a fun environment where relationships are built and the gospel is shared so that lives are changed eternally.

Breakaway Kids Camps are Interdenominational Christian Holiday Camps for Kids located 2 hours south of Sydney, NSW. Australia.

The camps are held at Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre - Ryans Lane Fitzroy Falls, NSW Australia, during the January School Holidays. There is a Junior Camp for Primary Schoolers (Years 3-6) and a Senior Camp for High Schoolers (Years 7-12). There are also Summer and Winter Camps for Underprivileged Children. We aim to provide opportunities for young people to develop mentally, physically, socially and spiritually in a healthy natural environment.

The camp team consist of Christian men and women who relate well to young people and who care for their well-being. They give their time on a voluntary basis

Introduction

Welcome to the Breakaway Kids Camps Theatre Sports Book. This Manual has been put together so that you can be better prepared for Breakaway Camps and more aware of your roles and responsibilities. It has lots of ideas for what to do and how to do it.

Theatre Sports are an excellent way to engender creativity in kids. All of Gods children are creative. Everyone loves a good storyteller. Theatre sports allow each one of us to be creative in a fun, forgiving environment.

Some of these games can be pulled out of your back pocket whenever there is a break in programming or whenever we are all milling around waiting for the next person to tell us what to do. Some other games can be put together for a fun night of entertainment.

But remember, that drama and theatre games are best run with flamboyance, enthusiasm and excitement. Always encourage the kids to participate. Don't let despair or shame overcome anyone whose act did not go as well as planned.

Principles of Gaming

Games are for the enjoyment of all. Therefore "involvement" of all is vital for the success of a game. Games are best when there is no winner or loser - Only competitors having fun.

As a team leader, it is important to hype up your team even if they are coming last. Your team is the best No matter what. While team unity and enthusiasm is important, do not put down individuals in opposing teams. Encourage those who are not athletic. And give the quiet members of your team positions of importance in the games. Share the captaincy or goalkeepers' position around.

Some games result in team points resulting in winners and losers. This serves to engender competitiveness but may also serve negatively for some children. Some children may consider themselves "losers." Do not allow this attitude to foster. Give such a child an achievable activity to win.

It's always best if the person leading the game is running a game they know well or enjoy. This way their enthusiasm and energy passes onto the kids who are playing. Never be afraid to ask for help from other leaders who may know the game better or have more experience than you.

I have divided this book into two sections: -

- 1) A list of theatre sports categories and the theatre sports games that fit into each category
- 2) The list of theatre sports games

Enjoy,

- Andrew Barrs (andrew@breakawaycamp.org.au) -

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Theatre Sports Game Categories

1) Acceptance

These are exercises to teach Accepting.

Accepting Circle	Open Offer	Pass Catch	Six Episodes
Sound Circle	Yes Lets	Tug O War	

2) Association

These are exercises that train fast-thinking. You will find that a lot of the exercises in this category are variations on the traditional Free Association game. Others train fast thinking in other ways, and a few even focus on dissociation. You can use the latter to make the point that association is easy and natural.

Alliterations	Dissociation	Gibberish Dictionary	Patterns
Animalistics	FLIP (see Copycat)	Introducing Association	Props
Association Jump	Family Portraits	Jump	Space Jump
Become	Firing Squad	Just Gibberish	Surprise Movement
Blind Association Circle	Free Association Circle	Last Letter	Translate Gibberish
Blind Freeze	Free Association	Malapropism	Walk-over Association
Clap Snap Association	Free Association Lines	Name 6 Circle	What are you doing
Copycat	Freeze Tag	Open Offer	What would he be if
			Word Ball

3) Audience Participation

These are games in which the audience participates to some extent. Evidently, in just about any improv show there we use audience suggestions, so to some extent each game should be in this category. Instead, we've listed only games in which during the game, the audience is involved. See also Ask-for for examples of what you can ask the audience.

Alphabet Game	Only Questions	Rhymes	Survivor
Day in the Life	Pockets	Story Story Die	The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice
Last Letter Scene	Puppets	Sung Story Die	Zulu(2)
No P			

4) Characters

The focus of these games and exercises is on building characters.

Aerobics	Fast Food Laban	Jump	Split Screen
Animalistics	Fast Food Stanislawski	Old Job New Job	Story To A Chair
Animals	Front Desk	Opposite Characters	The Bag
Coming Home	Hitch Hiker	Opposites	Three Line Solo
Ding Characters	Imitate	Solo Doors	Voices From Heaven
Emotions Characters			You're Fired

5) Concentration

These exercises train basic concentration skills. Also take a look at the category Look and Listen: the games in that category are particularly for training players to be attentive to what other players do: listening and awareness skills.

Accepting Circle	Cross Circle	Mexican Name Wave	Shootout
Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves	Digits	Mirror	Shriner's Warm-up
Alliteration Introduction	Distorting Mirror	Move and Speak	Simon Says
Alliterations	Elephant	Name Game	Sitting Standing Lying
Alphabet Circle	Emotional Mirror	No Doubles 1-10	SloMo Tag
Bappety Boo (see Bippety Bop)	Fruit Basket	Non Sequitor	Statues
Barney	Fuzzy Ducky	One Duck	Survivor
Bear of Poitiers (see Catch'em)	Give and Take	One Two Three Four	Synchro Clap
Big Booty	Group Environment	Pass Clap	The Magnet
Bippety Bop(2)	Group Freeze	Pass Yes	Turning Circle
Bippety Bop	Group Mirror (see Mirror)	Peruvian Ball Game	Walking by Numbers
Catch'em	Kitty in the Corner	Receiver Right Clap	What Has Changed
Clap Snap Stamp	Ksss	Seven Up	Zapping
Concentration Circle	Letter Number Name		

6) Continuation

These are games that consist of continuations of the previous scene. See also Scene Replay. In many cases one will ask the audience how to continue the scene See Ask-for for examples.

Actor Switch (see Simple Continuation)	Continuing Emotions	Hat Continuation	Switcheroo
Bermuda Triangle	Continuing Styles	Simple Continuation	Understudy

7) Die

These are games in which the audience decides to 'throw out' players by yelling 'Die' when a player doesn't stick to the rules of the game, or does not manage to get the task/game done properly. After a die the game either ends or the player is replaced by another one.

Alphabet Game	Only Questions	Sung Story Die	The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice
Last Letter Scene	Rhymes	Survivor	Zulu(2)
No P	Story Story Die		

8) Endowment

Endowment is attributing other players with physical, emotional or other characteristics, or getting other players to do something, or to behave in a particular way.

Card Status	He Said She Said	LOW (see LCD)	Silly Stinky Sexy
Chain Murder (see LCD)	He Said While She	Party Quirks	The Party
Dating Game	Hijacker	Press Conference	Who Where Why Am I
Double Endowment	LCD	Rebel without a Clue	

9) Energy

These games are meant to get the blood pumping through those veins. These can be used as a Warm-up, or to get the class moving again at the end of a long day.

Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves	Fusillade	Pass Clap	Synchro Clap
Bear of Poitiers (see Catch'em)	Jeepers Peepers	Popcorn	The Scream
Bunny	Killer Bunny	Primal Screams	Three Noses
Catch'em	Ksss	Shootout	Whoosh
Energy 1-10	Man Overboard	Supernova	Zip Zap Zoop
Exaggeration Circle	My Fault		

10) Environment

These are games that teach players how to build an environment, as part of a Platform. By environment we mean defining where we are, and placing (mimed) props we in that location. When working with groups new to improv, you may want to teach environment first, and then move on to Platform, by extending the where by incorporating the Who (and the Why).

Coming Home	Group Environment	Object Morphing	Solo Doors
Doors	Human Props	Real Estate Broker	Three Line Environment
Front Desk	Move and Speak		

11) Exercise

This is rehearsal and workshop stuff. Most of the games and exercises listed here would probably not be used in front of an audience.

Some exercises train particular aspects, others are just plain silly and might just as well be used by girl scouts on a rainy day...

Accepting Circle	Distorting Mirror	King Game	Receiver Right Clap
Advancing and Expanding	Doors	Last Letter	Reverse Chair Dance
Aerobics	Double Opening	Letter Number Name	Rock Paper Scissors
Airplane (see Blind Lead)	Duck Duck Goose	Line Mirror	Scorpion
Alien Tiger Cow	Elephant	Lost Friend	Screamers (see Scorpion)
Alliances (see Excluding)	Emotional Mirror	Machines	Sculptors
Alliteration Introduction	Emotions Characters	Make More Interesting	Seven Up
Alliterations	Energy 1-10	Man Overboard	Shriner's Warm-up
Alphabet Circle	Exaggeration Circle	Mantra	Simon Says
And Then (see What Happens Next)	Excluding	Mantra Introduction	Sitting Standing Lying
Animalistics	FLIP (see Copycat)	Master Servant Disaster	Six Episodes
Animals	Fast Food Laban	Mexican Name Wave	Slide Show

Artist Model Clay	Fast Food Stanislawski	Mirror	Slomo Samurai
Association Jump	Flock Dance	Move and Speak	Solo Doors
Back Dancing	Follow the Leader	My Fault	Sound Circle
Bappety Boo (see Bippety Bop)	Follow your Nose	Name 6 Circle	Squeezer
Barney	Foot Soldiers	Name Game	Statues
Bear of Poitiers (see Catch'em)	Free Association Circle	Name Volley	Story To A Chair
Become	Free Association	No Doubles 1-10	Supernova
Bippety Bop(2)	Free Association Lines	Non Sequitor	Surprise Movement
Bippety Bop	Free Falling	Object Morphing	Survivor
Blind Association Circle	Freeze Tag	Objects	Swedish Sculptors
Blind Freeze	Front Desk	Obstacle Course	Synchro Clap
Blind Harold	Fruit Basket	One Line Scene	The Bag
Blind Hunt (see Scorpion)	Fusillade	One Mouth	The Magnet
Blind Lead	Fuzzy Ducky	One Two Three Four	Three Line Environment
Blind Stalker (see Scorpion)	Gibberish Dictionary	Only Questions	Three Line Solo
Body Hide	Give and Take	Open Offer	Three Noses
Boris	Greetings	Open Your Hand	Three Sentence Story
Bunny	Group Environment	Opposite Characters	Translate Gibberish
Catch'em	Group Freeze	Opposites	Tug-O-War
Circle of Knots	Group Mirror (see Mirror)	Other Choice (see Ding)	Vampire Game
Clap Snap Association	Group Order	Pass Ball	Voices From Heaven
Columbian Hypnosis	Hands (see Squeezer)	Pass Catch	Walking by Numbers
Coming Home	Haunted House	Pass Clap	Walk-over Association
Concentration Circle	He Said She Said	Patterns	Warehouse
Copycat	He Said While She	Peruvian Ball Game	What are you doing
Cross Circle	Hello (see Greetings)	Pivot (see Disc(1))	What Happens Next
Death and Retriever	Hitch Hiker	Poison Arms	What Has Changed
Digits (see No Doubles 1-10)	Honey Walk	Popcorn	What would she be if
Ding Characters	Human Props	Presents	Word at a Time Letter
Ding	Imitate	Primal Screams	Word at a Time Story
Disc(1)	Introducing Association	Queen Game	Word Ball
Disc(2)	Jump	Rash	Yes Lets
Dissociation	Just Gibberish	Real Estate Broker	You're Fired
Distance Game	Killer Bunny		

12) Experts

This is a series of games in which experts about some subject are interviewed. The topic for the interview is often provided by the audience (see Ask-for).

Gibberish Expert	Translation for the Deaf		
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13) Format

These are show formats. Here you will find Long Form formats, and formats that consist of series of shorter games.

BarPro	French Braid	Improv Match	Tapestry
Cut	Gorilla Theatre	Micetro	Theatre sports
Five Four Three Two One	Harold	Soap (see Cut)	Triptych

14) Gibberish

Gibberish is nonsense-language. Scenes in Gibberish are done in a non-existing language. When doing gibberish scenes, remember that you can speak different kinds of gibberish languages. Try experimenting with Japanese, French, Swedish, Zulu, German, and so on.

Chain Murder (see LCD)	Gibberish Dictionary (see Translate Gibberish)	LCD	Subtitles
Emotional Mirror	Gibberish Expert	LOW (see LCD)	Translate Gibberish
Foreign Movie	Just Gibberish	Non Sequitor	

15) Group

These exercises help the players work together as a group. You'd certainly use these early on in a series of workshops, but repeating these, even with a well established group, never does any harm. See also Trust.

Airplane (see Blind Lead)	Death and Retriever	Line Mirror	Six Episodes
Alien Tiger Cow	Duck Duck Goose	Machines	Slide Show
Alliances (see Excluding)	Energy 1-10	Massage	Solitaire
And Then (see What Happens Next)	Excluding	Millipede	Squeezer

Artist Model Clay	Family Portraits	Objects	Swedish Sculptors
Association Jump	Follow the Leader	Obstacle Course	The Magnet
Back Dancing	Group Environment	One Mouth	Tossing
Blind Lead	Group Order	Popcorn	Tug-O-War
Blind Line Up	Hands (see Squeezer)	Rash	What Happens Next
Body Hide	Heave Ho	Reverse Chair Dance	Word at a Time Story
Circle of Knots	Hot Spot	Rock Paper Scissors	Yes Lets
Circle Sitting	Human Props	Sculptors	Yes Lets Or Rather Not

16) Introduction

These exercises are intended to get everybody acquainted and to learn each other's names. Use these early on in a workshop, if players don't know each other. See also Group and Trust.

Aerobics	Flock Dance	Lost Friend (see Greetings)	Reverse Chair Dance
Alliteration Introduction	Greetings	Massage	Shootout
Blind Line Up	Hello (see Greetings)	Name Game	Shriner's Warm-up
Body Hide	Letter Number Name	Name Volley	Three Noses
Cross Circle			

17) Limitations

In these games the physicality or verbosity of the players or the scene is defined or limited.

Actor's Nightmare	Dry Cleaning Bag of Death	One Line Scene	The Bat
Ahab and the Whale (see Three Rules)	Emotional Quadrants	Only Questions	Three Rules
Blindfolded Scene	Exit Game (see Walkout)	Oracle	Timeline
Blind Harold	Helping Hands	Ping Pong	Touch to Talk
Bucket of Death	Hesitation	Pivot	Verses
Card Status	Last Letter Scene	Playbook	Walkout
Crabtrees Conundrum	Last Line	Pockets	Without Sound
Death in a Minute	Location	Rhymes	Without Words
Disc(1)	Marshmallow Mania	Scene in the Dark	Word at a Time Expert
Disc(2)	Mousetraps	Sideways	Word at a Time Scene
Distance Game	Move and Speak	Sitting Standing Lying	Word at a Time Song
Double Opening	No P	Split Screen	You're Fired

18) Long Form

These are formats for longer improvised scenes, or even series of scenes. We are not going to have a philosophical discussion here, but not everyone will agree that all these are really long form formats. The Harold for example is basically a series of connected scenes intertwined with improv games. Some will argue that because of the games, this is not long form. Others again will state that any format that consists of different story lines that are not really strongly connected (e.g. Triple Play) is not really long form. We do not particularly care (well as a matter of fact we do, but that's another story), so we just list what some folks would consider long form. Your mileage may vary or course.

Armando	Feature Film	Location	Sybil
At The Oscars	Five Four Three Two One	Montage	Tapestry
Balladeer(2)	French Braid	Moon River	Telltales
Blind Harold	Goon River	Soap	The Bat
Cut	Goon River	Spoon River	Triple Play
Deconstruction	Harold	Spork River	Triptych
Doo Wop(2)	La Ronde		

19) Look and Listen

These exercises train listening and looking skills. Since Improv is a group thing, it's important for players to be aware what is going on, what others are saying and doing, so these exercises train players on this.

Aerobics	Digits	No Doubles 1-10	Survivor
Blind Association Circle	Double Endowment	Rebel without a Clue	Walking by Numbers
Blind Harold	Double Opening	Scene in the Dark	What Has Changed
Card Status	Hijacker		

20) Narration

In these games and exercises, the focus is on Storytelling.

And Then	Let's Not	Six Episodes	Voices From Heaven
Boris	Master Servant Disaster	Slide Show	What Happens Next

Double Endowment	Movie Review	Story Story Die	Word at a Time Letter
Double Opening	Name the Monster	Three Sentence Story	Word at a Time Story
Guest Game	Only Questions	Typewriter	Yes Lets Or Rather Not
Just Gibberish	Rhymes		

21) Performance

These are games you'd use for performance.

Actor's Nightmare	Dry Cleaning Bag of Death	Marshmallow Mania	Spork River
Actor Switch	Dubbed Movie	Montage	Spork Centre
Ahab and the Whale	Emotion Replay	Moon River	Story Story Die
Alphabet Game	Emotional Quadrants	Mousetraps	Stunt Double
Alter Ego (see Asides)	Evil Twin	Move and Speak	Style Replay
Animalistics	Exit Game (see Walkout)	No P	Subtitles
Armando	FLIP (see Copycat)	Old Job New Job	Sung Story Die
Asides	Famous Last Words	One Eighty Five	Survivor
At The Oscars (see Feature Film)	Fast Forward	One Mouth	Switcheroo
Audience Warm-ups	Feature Film	Only Questions	Sybil
Backwards Scene (see Scene Replay)	Foreign Movie	Oracle	The Bat
Balladeer(2)	Freeze Tag	Other Choice (see Ding)	The Gerbil
Balladeer	French Braid	Party Quirks	The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice
Bartender	Fusillade	Ping Pong	The Party
Bermuda Triangle	Game-O-Matic	Playbook	Three Melodies
Black Box	Gibberish Expert	Pockets	Three Rules
Blindfolded Scene	Goon River	Press Conference	Through the Ages
Blind Freeze	Goon River	Props	Timed Scenes
Blind Harold	Guest Game	Protest Song	Timeline
Blind Musical	Harold	Puppets	Touch to Talk
Boris	Hat Continuation	Rebel without a Clue	Translation for the Deaf
Bucket of Death	He Said While	Repair Shop	Triple Play
Cards	Helping Hands	Reverse Trivial Pursuit	Trivial Pursuit
Card Status	He Said She Said	Rewind	TV News
Chain Murder (see LCD)	Hesitation	Rhymes	Typewriter
Consciences (see Asides)	Hijacker	Rituals	Understudy
Continuing Emotions	Historical Replay	Scene in the Dark	Verses
Continuing Styles	Hitch Hiker	Scene Replay	Voices From Heaven
Copycat	Human Props	Scene To Music	Walkout
Crabtrees Conundrum	Jeopardy	Sideways	Who Where Why Am I
Dating Game	Just Gibberish	Silly Stinky Sexy	Without Sound
Day in the Life	LOW (see LCD)	Simple Continuation	Without Words
Death in a Minute	La Ronde	Sitting Standing Lying	Word at a Time Expert
Deconstruction	Last Letter Scene	Slide Show	Word at a Time Scene
Ding	Last Line	SloMo World Champion	Word at a Time Song
Directors Cut (see Fast Forward)	LCD	Sounds Like a Song	World's Worst
Doo Wop(2)	Little Voice	Space Jump	You're Fired
Doo Wop	Location	Speck (see Little Voice)	Zapping
Do Ron Ron	Lounge Singer	Split Screen	Zulu(1)
Double Endowment	Machines	Spoon River	Zulu(2)

22) Singsong

These are games that involve music or songs. Improvising song on-stage is actually not as difficult as it may seem, and it's usually a killer for the audience.

In this section you will find various stuff: ideas for songs, workshop methods to teach players how to improvise songs, ideas for dancing along with music, and suggestions for improv musicians. The latter may be a bit controversial: the musician should really be an improviser as well, and be allowed to improvise. However, not all groups have access to talented musicians that are able to improvise, so for the not-so gifted here (grin) we provide some ideas for chord progressions one can sing to.

Balladeer(2)	Doo Wop(2)	Lounge Singer	Sung Story Die
Balladeer	Doo Wop	Protest Song	Three Melodies
Bartender	Do Ron Ron	Scene To Music	Word at a Time Song
Blind Musical	Hot Spot	Sounds Like a Song	

23) Spontaneity

These games help you blank your mind, and train players to acknowledge the things they subconsciously think.

Barney	Mantra	Other Choice (see Ding)	Surprise Movement
Become	Mantra Introduction	Pass Catch	Translate Gibberish
Ding	Name the Monster	Presents	Warehouse
Gibberish Dictionary	Open Your Hand	Sound Circle	

24) Timed

These are games that are somehow timed. See Timed Scenes for suggestions.

Backwards Scene	Historical Replay	Style Replay	Timed Scenes
Emotion Replay (see Scene Replay)	Scene Replay	Through the Ages	

25) Trust

These exercises are great for the group to build trust. You would use these early on in a workshop to teach the players to rely on each other. It's part of the team building; see also Introduction and Group.

Airplane (see Blind Lead)	Body Hide	Haunted House	Screamers (see Scorpion)
Back Dancing	Circle Sitting	Heave Ho	Solitaire
Blind Hunt (see Scorpion)	Columbian Hypnosis	Massage	Swedish Sculptors
Blind Stalker (see Scorpion)	Death and Retriever	Mousetraps	The Magnet
Blindfolded Scene	Fingertips	Obstacle Course	Tossing
Blind Lead	Free Falling	Scorpion	Vampire Game

26) Verbal wit

These games usually do not develop into scenes, and quite often turn into (or deteriorate into) series of one-liners. Can still be fun, if played well, but it's not exactly improvised theatre.

Alphabet Game	One Eighty Five	The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice	Zulu(1)
Famous Last Words	Reverse Trivial Pursuit	Trivial Pursuit	Zulu(2)
Jeopardy	Rhymes	World's Worst	

27) Warm-up

These games are meant to get everybody in a cheery mood, establish trust between the players, and sharpen concentration. Apart from that, most have no performance value, and are rarely used to teach any particular skill. Most of these games would just as well work to entertain the kids on a rainy day at the girl scouts.

You'd use these games at the start of a rehearsal, or as part of the preparation for a show.

Accepting Circle	Eights	Kitty in the Corner	Presents
Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves	Elephant	Ksss	Primal Screams
Alien Tiger Cow	Emotional Mirror	Last Letter	Rash
Alliterations	Energy 1-10	Letter Number Name	Receiver Right Clap
Alphabet Circle	Exaggeration Circle	Lost Friend	Rock Paper Scissors
Association Jump	Family Portraits	Malapropism	Seven Up
Audience Warm-ups	Firing Squad	Man Overboard	Shootout
Bappety Boo (see Bippety Bop)	Flock Dance	Massage	Shriner's Warm-up
Barney	Follow your Nose	Mexican Name Wave	SloMo Samurai
Bear of Poitiers (see Catch'em)	Foot Soldiers	Millipede	SloMo Tag
Big Booty	Free Association Circle	Mirror	Sound Circle
Bippety Bop(2)	Free Association	Name Game	Squeezer
Bippety Bop	Freeze Tag	No Doubles 1-10	Stretching
Blind Freeze	Fruit Basket	Non Sequitor	Supernova
Blind Line Up	Fuzzy Ducky	Objects	Synchro Clap
Bunny	Greetings	One Duck	The Scream
Catch'em	Group Mirror (see Mirror)	One Two Three Four	Three Noses
Circle Sitting	Group Order	Pass Ball	Turning Circle
Clap Snap Association	Hands (see Squeezer)	Pass Catch	Walking by Numbers
Clap Snap Stamp	Hello (see Greetings)	Pass Clap	What are you doing
Concentration Circle	Honey Walk	Pass Yes	Whoosh
Cross Circle	Hot Spot	Patterns	Word Ball
Digits (see No Doubles 1-10)	Jeepers Peepers	Play Tag	Yes Lets

Dissociation	Jump	Poison Arms	Zip Zap Zoop
Duck Duck Goose	Killer Bunny	Popcorn	

Theatre Sports Games

Accepting Circle

Game

Get everyone in a big circle. One player starts by making a little gesture, perhaps with a little sound. His or his neighbour then tries and does exactly the same. And so on. Although we expect the gesture/sound not to change, it will.

Notes

Watch for movements that suddenly change left/right arm or leg. This is not really supposed to happen, but it will. Once happened, it should be accepted by the next player. Also watch/listen for little moans or sighs that players might make before or after their turn. These should also be taken over by the next player.

Actor's Nightmare

Game

This one is played by 2 players, one of which gets their lines on paper (like a script). The other player should justify whatever the scripted player says.

Notes

You can use existing plays for this, but also lines from comics. Whoever gets the script should not forget to play/act. Only his lines are defined, not what he does, or how he does the lines.

Aerobics

Game

This is a fun observation game. Place all players in a line. The first player starts walking around the room, walking a large circle. The second player starts following the first one, and tries to move like the first player. After a few rounds, the first player goes to the back of the line, and the third player starts following and imitating the second one.

Notes

Tell players to be themselves; don't try and walk around funny (it's not the Ministry of Silly Walks after all).

Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves

Game

Excellent warm-up. Everyone in a circle. We are going to establish a rhythm, by saying, all together 'Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves'. Keep repeating this. One person starts making a gesture to this rhythm, say, tapping your head with your left hand. When the sentence is repeated, the player next to his takes over this gesture, while the first one starts a completely different new gesture. Third time the sentence is done, player three does the first gesture, player two does the second gesture and player one invents a new one again. And so on. This is also a concentration game, though it's not really difficult. All one has to do is watch the previous player, and next time, take over his gesture. When you're watching what everyone else is doing you're going to get lost though.

Alien Tiger Cow

Game

Fun game to warm up and to teach players some *Chivalry*. Everyone in a circle. There are 3 things a player can be: An alien: hold your index fingers up next to your head, as little antenna's and say 'Bleeb bleeb', bending inwards into the circle; A cow: bend forward, hold your right hand on your tummy and go 'Moooo' A tiger: push your right hand forward, imitating a claw and roar. On your sign, every

player decides to become one of the three. The idea is for everyone to become the same, which obviously won't be the case, the first time. We re-do this until everyone is in sync.

Variations

Invent your own animals (or things) and let players become juke boxes, birds, whatever. Play 'majority wins': animals/things that are most in the minority drop out.

Alliteration Introduction

Game

Excellent game for players to get to know each other's names. Everyone in a circle. A player starts the game by introducing himself by making a gesture, and alliterating to his name, e.g. "I'm Wonderful Wendy" or "I'm Smart Steve". The next player point to the first, repeats the previous player's name, attribute and gesture, and does something similar about himself. And so on. Game ends with the first player having to do each other player's gesture, repeating their names and attributes.

Alliterations

Game

You will need a tennis ball or a towel tied in a knot for this one. Everyone sitting or standing in a circle. You give one person the ball, and ask him to name as many words as possible that start with a 'P' (or any other letter), in the time it takes for the ball to get passed along the circle. Doubles don't count, obviously.

Notes

Tell players not to watch the ball go round when they're 'it.' They'll just panic and freeze. Tell them to try this with closed eyes.

Variations

Pair up the players and use a stopwatch. Ask the left players on the left to name as many words as possible starting with a 't', and ask their partners to count, for 15 or 20 seconds. Then switch.

Alphabet Circle

Game

Great warm-up game to sharpen concentration. Everyone in a circle. One player starts by throwing an 'A' to another player. That player throws as fast as possible a 'B' to someone else. And so on. If you work with a large group, you can divide them into 2 circles, call them Team Gold and Team Silver, and time how fast they can get to 'Z'.

Variations

Any player has the option to change the sequence from A-Z to 1-10 and vice versa. Time it. Or change to 1-10

Alphabet Game

Game

This is a scene consisting of 26 lines of dialog. The first line starts with a given letter (say 'R'). The reply to that line must start with a 'S', and so on, until the whole alphabet has been covered. After 'Z' comes 'A'. Players that hesitate, or use the wrong letter 'Die', and are replaced by another player. The replacement needs to take over the character of the player he replaces.

Notes

Urge players not to 'stick' to the game. If you can't think of a good sentence to advance the story, it's better to just 'die' than to screw up the story (see *Chivalry*).

Animalistics

Game

Ask the audience for animals. Players play a scene, in which the characters are based on these animals.

Notes

Players do not 'become' the animals; they only take over characteristics of the animals. Characteristics may be physical, vocal or *Status* based. For example, 'chicken' might inspire a player to a cowardly character, moving about jerkily.

Animals

Game

Make sure you have an even number of players. Give everyone an animal, but make sure that there are 2 of each, and that nobody knows which other player is which animal. Then give a number of activities, which the animals perform. Try: -

Eating. Eating when you're really hungry
Drinking. Drinking when you're really thirsty
Lovemaking
Grooming
Fighting
Sleeping

At the end, ask the players to find the other animal of their kind. Ask the others if they found out who was which animal.

Variations

Let 2 players be humans.

Armando

Game

This is a long form, named after its creator, Chicago Improv teacher and player Armando Diaz. The format starts with a storytelling-style monologue, based on an audience suggestion. After the monologue, players play scenes inspired by the monologue, and the monologue may even continue, later on in the performance.

Artist Model Clay

Game

3 players. One is a lump of clay Behind his is a second player who is a model. Model takes a pose, which the 'clay' is not supposed to see. The third player becomes the artist, who will model the clay after the model. The artist is not supposed to touch the clay, can't speak and it not allowed to show the clay what to do or to become. When done, let the model inspect the artwork and see if details fit.

Variations

Limit the time the artist has to build to statue.

Asides

Game

A scene is played, which any player can stop at any time by yelling freeze. At that point, the player steps out of the scene, and tells the audience what his character is really thinking, after which the scene continues. The other characters of course are not supposed to know what players are thinking, but the players do, and should use this.

Notes

Players can use this to reveal their hidden motives. Other players can play into this, or purposely ignore this knowledge. Gimmick: characters may actually have other things on their minds than what's going on in the scene. E.g. a driver stopped by a cop may be thinking about the groceries his wife told him to get at the supermarket.

Variations

The thoughts of the players can also be provided by players off-stage.

Ask-for Continued

Keyword

Here are more ideas for Ask-for's (Continued from *Ask-for*). If you're tired of asking the same old stuff over and over again, buy a summary history book (you know - Something like "History of the 19th Century" A book that summarizes the historical highlights of every year within a century), ask for a page number and pick anything off that page. You'll get plenty of different locations, characters, objects (the invention of the light bulb) and so on.

Instead of asking for something specific, you can also just start talking they mention as a scene starter. Asking for that much information may even be necessary for games like *Day in the Life*. Be creative with the actual use of suggestions in a scene. Classic example is using the location 'Bathroom' only to step through the mirror into a kind of Alice in Wonderland location. Instead of just asking for suggestions before a scene, why not ask the audience to write down suggestions on slips of paper before the performance? Put these in a hat and just draw suggestions before the scene. Or stick them on a dartboard and have an audience pick the suggestion by 'darting' it.

Ask-for

Keyword

Question asked of the audience to get some input to steer a scene. See *Audience Participation*. Here are some 'classic questions':

- Can I have a non-geographical location?
- Please give me an occupation, a hobby?
- Can I have a room in a building?
- Can I have a title for a book/a song?
- Please give me an emotion?
- A genre of film/literature/theatre/song?
- A relationship between 2 people?
- An item you would find in the kitchen/garage/attic?
- A problem that needs to be solved?
- An important moment in history?
- An era? A year?
- A mode of transportation?
- A foreign country? (See *Gibberish*)
- An animal? (See *Animalistics*)
- If you want to be a little more original try things like
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What is this? (Open your hands or arms as if you hold something)
- Give me a place where you have been lost
- Why was my spouse limping this morning?
- Give me a place you would not want to be alone at night
- What would be a nasty/annoying habit?
- Give me a place where you would likely meet unusual people?
- What would you never want to hear from your 4 year old daughter?
- Can I have a state of mind?
- What was the best birthday present you ever got?
- If I kissed you now how would that feel?
- What are the things your spouse does to drive you crazy?
- Can I have a non-green vegetable?
- What is a tradition in your family?

What is the opposite of green (or any other colour)?
Give me something you would want but would never buy yourself
Can you give me an annoying personal habit?
What would the eleventh commandment be?
Can I have an excuse for not having sex?
Where would you (never) want to go on vacation?
What would be a poor choice of venue for a first date?
Can I have a problem that a repairman can fix?
What would be your grandfather's hobby?
Give me an occupation what involves (no) risk of physical harm?
What do you have in your basement/attic/boot of your car?
What would be a lousy excuse for not getting a speeding ticket?

Association Jump

Game

This is physical association game. All plays mill about the room. At any time, trainer yells a player's name. That player 'jumps' into a frozen position. Trainer can (but does not have to) side coach by shouting 'directions' (see *Fast Food Laban*) like 'horizontal', 'up', 'down', 'sideways', 'big', 'small', 'light', 'heavy'.

The other players watch our subject jump into a position, and then build around that player, inspired by whatever the frozen position our subject jumped into. The end result is a still scene.

Tip: precede this exercise by *Jump*.

Audience Warm-ups

Game

Often an improvised show starts with an audience warm-up. Here are some suggestions:

- Do a Mexican wave (audience making fluent waves with their hands above their head).
- Have the pianist/keyboard man make all kinds of sounds and have the audience imitate them
- Ask the audience to stand up and do some physical warm-up. Have them shake their arms and legs.
- Have the audience introduce themselves to strangers, tell a secret their spouse/partner doesn't know about to a stranger, have them hug a stranger
- Do an interview with the audience, where the MC is one character (say, a headmaster) and all of the audience another (say a naughty child). The audience needs to reply to the interview in one voice (all saying the same at the same time See *One Mouth*). Not an easy one, and if the audience does not feel like doing this it really sucks. When it works it's a real thrill.
- Divide the audience in 3 or 4 groups, and give each group a sound. Rehearse the sound with each group. Then tell a silly story, and use these sounds as sound effects. (We saw a pretty gruesome one in which one group was a car (roar), another a dog (bark) and the third group got a kind of splashing sound. The poor dog got run over by the car... not exactly nice but the audience had fun with it)
- Do a cheering competition between the men and the women.
- Rehearse different kinds of applause (from the 'polite' applause when a scene sucks, over an 'ooh' applause for a touching scene, to a wild roar for a hilarious scene). Have them rehearse voting for a team by cheering the team name (if that's your format). Rehearse a 'Die' (see *Die*) if I you're going to be playing scenes in which the audience can decide to throw a player out of the game.
- Give the men and the women a different sound and play with that. Tell them they are members of a wild tribe, the women go 'Ugh' when you raise your left hand and the man go 'Hagawaga' when you raise your right hand.

Back Dancing

Game

Played in pairs. Actors stand back to back, and dance on different kinds of music. Back must stay in touch at all times.

Balladeer(2)

Game

This is like the short form version *Balladeer*, but now as soon as the balladeer stops singing or finishes the song, the characters start playing and talking independently. When their scene is done the balladeer starts a new song, and so forth.

Balladeer

Game

One player is the balladeer, who starts singing a ballad about an audience suggestion. The other players actually play what the balladeer sings about, in slow motion.

This is actually group story-building, as the players are inspired by what the balladeer sings (obviously) but also, their actions can/should inspire the balladeer.

Notes

You're not limited to ballads, of course. The same *Handle* can be used for a *Long Form* structure:

Barney

Game

Silly warm-up game. Everyone in a circle, one person as a 'caller' in the middle. Caller yells a letter to one of the players; that player must come up with a name of a person, an object or a service that can be sold, and a location, all starting with the letter given. Example would be 'B' which leads to "Barney sells Bread in Bulgaria". Anything goes, as long as it comes out right away; if not the player becomes caller.

BarPro

Game

The (slightly negative sounding) name is attributed to *Keith Johnstone* and refers to shows consisting of short games, played in small rooms, like bars and tiny comedy clubs.

In this simple format, a limited number of players (4-6) play improv games, introduced, and usually directed by an MC. In certain troupes the players take turns MC-ing and/or directing.

There are usually no judges, no score boards and no prizes to be won. Suggestions are taken from the audience, drawn out of a hat or provided by the MC.

Due to the lack of space, there are usually no props or attributes, except for perhaps a coat hanger with clothes and a couple of hats; players typically mime their props.

As far as we know the name BarPro is not copyrighted.

Bartender

Game

Ask for a silly problem. Player 1 goes into a bar and explains his woes to the bartender in a song. The bartender then fixes the problem in another song.

See also *Three Melodies*.

Become

Game

This one can be played with all players at a time, or you can ask the group to watch as players come up with different ideas on how to do this. Ask the players to become: -

- A jar of mayonnaise
- A pack of cigarettes
- Dentures

At first, this will probably not lead to much. Add side coaching's, like:

- You are a jar of mayonnaise. Opened or not? Full or empty? Fresh or not? Show it.
- You are a pack of smokes. Empty or full? Filter cigarettes or not? Where are you? In someone's pocket or on a shelf in a shop? Show it.
- You are a flower. What kind of flower? Blooming or not? In a vase or in a field? What colour? Freshly picked or not? A present to a lover or at a funeral?
- You are water. Still or not? In a glass? A jar, a puddle, a lake or an ocean? Fresh or dirty?
- You are stone, air, sand, fire.
- You are blue, red, green. You are a clock. Big Ben or grandfather clock? Working or not. Is your time right or not? A watch? Who is wearing you? A nun or a pimp? How could you show that?
- You are French fries. McDonalds or Wendy's? Hot or cold? Any ketchup? On a plate or in a cardboard box? Eaten or not? Yummy or yuck?

After a while, players should be able to come up with the side coaching's for themselves. Encourage the players to try out different kind of stuff, see what they come up with.

Big Booty

Game

Everyone in a circle. One player is Big Booty. The others, going clockwise, are numbered: 1, 2, 3 and so on. Now Big Booty establishes a 4-beat rhythm, saying Big Booty, Big Booty, Big Booty (followed by a rest) Repeat this until everyone got the rhythm. The game then goes as follows: Big Booty passes the buck to someone else, saying Big Booty to 7 (say) (this takes 2 beats, one for saying 'Big Booty' and one for saying 'to 7'). Number 7 then passes in 2 beats to, say number 2, saying '7 to 2'. It then continues until someone makes a mistake: if and when that happens everyone says (in 2 beats) 'Oh Shit', after which we repeat Big Booty Big Booty Big Booty (+ rest on 4th beat), twice. After that, the player that made the mistake becomes Big Booty, and everyone's number changes. New Big Booty starts the game again.

Bippety Bop(2)

Game

This is a variation on *Bippety Bop*: all players in a circle, one player in the middle who is 'it'. This player picks a player in the circle and yells 'bippety-bippety-bop' at his. If he manages to get to 'bop' before he can say 'bop', he becomes 'it'.

Other possibilities are:

Just say 'bop' if anyone else reacts, that person becomes 'it'

Say 'Elephant', after which 3 players build the elephant: the player picked does the trunk (hold nose and squeeze your other arm through) and his neighbours do the ears. If any of the 3 players screws up or does not react he or she becomes it.

Say 'mixer': the player in the middle becomes a mixer, holding arms up in the air, sort of horizontally, while his neighbours position themselves under his hands, and turn around their axis

Say 'toaster': the player in the middle becomes a slice of bread, and his neighbours become the toaster, by 'building' the toaster with their arms around the bread. The slice of bread pops up and down too when done!

Feel free to invent other objects (suggestions can be found under *Bippety Bop*).

Bippety Bop

Game

Silly warm-up to get the blood flowing. All players in a circle, one player in the middle. The player in the middle closes his eyes, holds right hand pointing in front of him, and spins around. When done spinning, open your eyes and say, as fast as you can 'Bippety Bippety Bop'.

The player you're pointing to, and his 2 neighbours, need to build an elephant in less than the time the middle player needs to say 'Bippety Bippety Bop'. An elephant consists of a trunk, made by the middle player, by holding your nose with one hand, and extending your other arm through the arm that holds the hand that holds the nose (does this make any sense?). The neighbouring players each form a big ear, using both arms. Don't forget to attach the ears to the elephant's head.

Any player that cannot get his/his part done by the time the middle player does 'Bippety Bippety Bop' becomes 'it' and takes place in the middle of the circle.

Variations

You can really invent any object or create to replace the elephant. Try

- a car, with 2 wheels and a set of wind screen wipers
- a cow, with an udder and 2 horns
- a washing machine, with 2 players building a 'box' with both arms, and the middle player waving his arms in a circle in front of his. All go 'rumble rumble'
- a bunny, with 2 paws (middle player) and 2 rabbit ears (neighbours)

Black Box

Game

This one is played by 2 players. One holds a (mimed) black box, which has 3 buttons, one of which is red. These buttons control a player; one button might be the 'jerk your leg' button. The exact functions of each button are not defined.

The other player enters and asks if he can play with the box. Player 1 agrees, but adds something like "Whatever you do, don't push the red button".

Player 2 begins to play with the buttons, controlling player 1. Then, we slowly work up to the use of the dreaded red button, which will make player 1 do something not-so-obvious. This can be anything, but it should not be preconceived. The red button might become a Mood swing button, a Start Screaming, Start Giggling, Sing Opera, or Switch-to *Gibberish* button.

Blind Association Circle

Game

This one starts just like *Free Association Circle*: players in a circle, establish a rhythm, and freely associate on previous player's word. As this is going on, the trainer will tap all players gently on the shoulder, at 3 times:

First tap: players close their eyes but continue the free association, sticking to the rhythm

Second tap: everyone starts walking around (carefully!), eyes still closed. Players have to recognize the voice of their ex-neighbour in the circle to know when it's their turn.

Third tap: all players, still eyes closed, and still associating, try to reconstruct the circle.

Exercise is over when everyone is in a circle again. Trainer should keep an eye on players to make sure they don't run into things. It helps if there's not too much clutter around, of course.

Blindfolded Scene

Game

Players are blindfolded and then play a scene.

Variations

Have the players play barefoot and have mousetraps on the stage. Not very nice but we've seen it done.

Blind Freeze

Game

This one is just like *Freeze Tag*, but here the MC calls Freeze, and calls in another player. If you're not using an MC, any player might call Freeze and call in any other player.

Many groups find this game more exciting than *Freeze Tag*, as players don't know when they get pushed in the game, and hence are less prepared, and crazier, more exciting stuff tends to happen.

Blind Harold

Game

This is really a listening exercise, though it has been performed as a *Long Form* for audiences. Basically, this is a *Harold*, played with all players sitting down with their eyes closed. For a performance one would turn all the lights off in the theatre.

Blind Lead

Game

One player is blindfolded, and the room is filled with obstacles (put a couple of chairs everywhere, leave all kinds of junk on the floor). The idea is that the rest of the group will lead the blindfolded player through the room, by talking.

Also known as *Airplane*. A helpful reader offered us an explanation for the name 'Airplane': The blindfolded (or just eyes closed) is led through a maze composed of furniture and the other actors. He is an "Airplane" lost in the fog being talked down by the "Air Traffic Controller", who must remain in his/his "Tower". Standing on a chair/rehearsal block lends visibility for the controller. The airplane also only has a limited amount of fuel left (1-3 minutes, whatever) to reach a safe landing (arriving at the Tower). The airplane is also allowed two "brushes"-limited contact with an obstacle. The third brush or a direct hit or stepping on something directly causes a "crash". They may step around, over or under the obstacles. Also, the airplane can only fly forward. It can turn in any direction, however.

The directions must be given from the pilot's point of view; a good exercise for fledgling directors. You can also destroy all the trust you've built up in your class by completely clearing the deck and torturing the Pilot. Believe us, someone will suggest it.

Blind Line Up

Game

This one is like *Group Order*, except that everyone keeps their eyes closed, and no talking is allowed while the group lines up.

Notes

This is more a group exercise than *Group Order* (which is more about agreement), so initially you probably want to take it easy on the silly stuff, like line up by order of mental health...

Always interesting to see what strategies the group comes up with. You can't really use alphabetical order if the group does not really know each other.

Blind Musical

Game

This is like a musical version of *Pockets*: ask the audience to write simple sentences on slips of paper. Hand each player 2 or 3 slips (they're not allowed to read them yet). Play a scene or series of scenes.

Players draw slips of paper at random, and every time they do, they start a song that starts with the sentence on the slip.

Try to integrate the info on the slips into the story, of course!

Variations

Leave the slips of paper on the stage for players to pick up.

Body Hide

Game

Excellent exercise to get to know each other, and to learn to trust and touch each other. 5 volunteers. 4 of these must try and hide the fifth person, using nothing but their bodies. The other students stand around the group and try and see pieces of the fifth's clothes, shoes, skin.

It's great fun for the other students to watch and try and find uncovered pieces of person. Don't tell them they go next, with one person less.

Variations

Try this game with less and less 'hiders'. If the task becomes impossible, tell them they can use parts of walls. Using a corner is easiest, of course, but let them figure that out themselves.

Boris

Game

2 players play an interrogation scene. One is the interrogator, the other is a suspect. The interrogator randomly throws unconnected elements to the suspect, who needs to incorporate these and get himself into (even more) trouble.

And then we have Boris, who is a nasty, huge, but invisible thug assisting the interrogator. Every time the interrogator does not like the suspect's answers (and also when the suspect does not incriminate himself enough), the interrogator calls on Boris to torture the suspect, prodding him to confess or incriminate him even further.

Notes

we do not establish the crime beforehand the suspect mimes being tortured by Boris the investigator can tell Boris what to do (break his leg), but it is more fun to leave the choice of torture up to the suspect if the torture does not go far enough to the investigator's taste, he can always call in Boris' evil twin brother, Igor (also invisible) as a gag, the suspect can also incriminate Boris (who can turn out to be a witness/accomplice to the crime).

Bunny

Game

Extremely silly game, to pump up the energy. Get everyone in a circle. One player becomes the body of a bunny This is done by holding both arms in front of your chest, elbows touching your rib cage, and letting hands hang. His 2 neighbours become the 'ears' of the bunny, by waving a hand next to the middle player's ears. All 3 say 'bunny bunny bunny' together, until the middle player 'throws' a 'bunny' to another player in the circle. This player becomes the bunny body, and his neighbours get to do the ears.

Play this game at a high speed. Mumbling 'bunny bunny' en masse gives a nice energy boost.

Variations

Play in slow motion. Hilarious!

Alternatively, you can really invent any object or create or replace the bunny, as long as you invent a sound along with it. Try: -

- A car, with 2 wheels and a set of wind screen wipers, going 'vroom vroom'

- A cow, with an udder and 2 horns, going 'moo moo'
- A washing machine, with 2 players building a 'box' with both arms, and the middle player waving his arms in a circle in front of his. All go 'rumble rumble'
- An elephant, with 2 big ears and a trunk, making an elephant sound (if you don't know what an elephant sounds like, just invent a sound).

Cards

Game

Ask the audience to write short sentences on cards. Give 2 players 3 cards, which they put in their pockets. Then they play a scene. At any point in time, instead of saying whatever they think they might say, they take a card, and read what's on the card. Whatever is said should be justified.

Card Status

Game

Excellent *Status* game. 4 players. Ask an audience member to pick 4 cards out of a deck, and attach a card to each player's forehead, so that players can see each other's card, but not their own. Use a rubber band or a piece of string for that.

The idea is to play a scene, in which the status order of the characters is defined by the cards. Evidently, players don't know their own status, so the other players will have to endow them.

Notes

Set up a location where status is important. Examples would be a Royal Palace or a highly organized bureaucracy (the White House?).

Catch'em

Game

One player is 'it' and stands at one end of the room, facing the wall. The other players at the other end of the room. Players need to try and get to the player who is 'it' without 'it' seeing them move.

The player who is 'it' can turn around at any time. At that point everybody else needs to freeze.

Anyone who is caught moving is out.

Circle of Knots

Game

Form a circle, holding hands. Then, any player can start moving about, making knots in the circle. Do this gently, and keep holding hands.

Variations

Try a line instead of a circle

Try with eyes closed or blindfolded

Circle Sitting

Game

Have everyone stand in a circle, really close to each other, facing inwards. Then ask everyone to make a quarter turn left. Make everyone stand even closer to each other. When ask the whole group to sit down. If everyone is really close, they will end up sitting on one another's knees, and the whole construction supports itself.

If well done it's even possible to make the circle walk. Indicate which foot to start with ;-)

Clap Snap Association

Game

This one is like a *Free Association Circle*, except that the rhythm is more explicit. Here's how to do the rhythm: each beat consists of 4 phases:

Slap both hands on your thighs

Clap your hands

Snap your left hand fingers

Snap your right hand fingers

With every right hand snap, a word should be thrown to your neighbour. Once the rhythm is established, you can leave out the snaps. That'll make things more understandable.

Variations

You can use this for both *Last Letter* games or *Free Association Circle*.

Try this with two circles. Have one circle associate freely, and another circle on *Last Letter*.

Whenever a player misses a beat he should switch circles.

Notes

If you do this with 2 circles, you will probably find that the rhythms for both circles synchronize.

Clap Snap Stamp

Game

All players in pairs, facing each other. We're going to count from one to three, each player one number at a time, and we keep repeating this. So player number one would go one, three, two, one, three, and so on.

Once they get this, we replace the 'one' with a 'snap' (snap your fingers).

Once everyone is into that, we replace the 'two' as well, with a hand-clap.

Finally, we replace the 'three' as well, with a stamp of the right foot. Play at high speed!

Columbian Hypnosis

Game

Played in pairs. One player holds his open hand, fingers upward, about 2-3 inches from his partner's face. He then starts moving his hand about slowly, while his partner tried to keep his face at exactly the same distance from his hand, like his hand is pulling or pushing his face about.

Switch sides and partners after a couple of minutes.

Notes

This is really also an exercise for the hypnotized, as he needs to ensure that his partner is able to follow his.

Variations

Use both hands.

Coming Home

Game

Ask players to think of someone they know. Then ask them to play how that person would come home from work. Players need to pay attention to: -

The environment: what does that person's house look like? Is it neat and tidy or is it a mess? Big house or small apartment?

What does he do? Does the character change clothes or showers or has a beer first? Does he eat? If so, what? Microwave dinner, carryout, pizza delivery or cornflakes?

What mood is that character in?

How was work today?

Variations

You can come up with other situations in which characters enter a location.

Concentration Circle

Game

Place all players in a circle and number them sequentially, starting with a random player. The players then establish a rhythm, for example by swinging their left hands up and down. Have player 1 start; when his arm is up he shouts/throws a number. The player with that number needs to throw another number at the next beat.

Players that fail (if they did not recognize their own number) or that break the rhythm become the last player in the circle, and that changes the numbers for a bunch of players. Restart with player one.

Continuing Emotions

Game

A 'neutral' scene is started, and is then interrupted (frozen) several times by the MC. The scene is then continued but all characters switch to an emotion provided by the audience.

Continuing Styles

Game

A 'neutral' scene is started. This scene gets interrupted several times by the MC, and then continued in a film/ literature/ drama/ TV-program style provided by the audience.

The platform and the story need to continue flawlessly.

Copycat

Game

Copycat goes like a verbal *Freeze Tag*. A scene is started. At any time, a player at the side can step forward (the playing players hold off for a moment) and repeats a line that was said in the scene. Whoever originally said that line, steps aside, and the remaining players start a new scene starting with the line that was repeated.

Variations

Feel free to actually continue the ongoing scene rather than to start a completely new one. Feel free to replace all the players instead of just the player who said the last line.

Rather than just stepping in and repeating a line, you might want to call 'FLIP' (or freeze). This variation is known as *FLIP*.

Crabtrees Conundrum

Game

This game is taking from Mrs. Crabtree from South Park. 2 players start a scene and every now and then a player will say "What'd You Say?" And the other player must come up with a completely different phrase that rhymes with the one just said.

For instance - Christine, I think you are as sick as a dog!! What'd you say? I said I think we should go for a jog, it's a really nice day... And so forth.

Cross Circle

Game

Perfect game to learn each other's names. Everyone in a circle. One person (A) starts by calling another person's name (B). At that point, A starts walking towards B. Before A gets to B, B needs to call another name (C), so B frees his spot in the circle, for A to take. C then needs to call yet another name and start walking, so B can take C's spot.

Variations

Instead of calling names, players can pick another player by making eye contact (and nodding to acknowledge that eye contact has been made). This demands a lot of concentration.

You can have more than one cycle going, if the group is big enough.

Cut

Game

This *Long Form* game is played with 6 to 15 players. 2 players start a scene, perhaps based on an audience suggestion. In the middle of the scene, any other player can call 'Cut', and start another scene, dragging one or more other players in the scene.

All scenes are interrupted this way, and the idea is that all scenes come together in one story. Cut scenes can be continued later. Usually, every player sticks to one character.

This game can be played with or without a director.

Variations

Usually, we decide on a category before the start of this game. Possible categories are: -

Soap series, like *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Dallas*, *East Enders*

Hospital drama, like *E.R.*

Cop drama, like *Hill Street Blues*

Romantic Comedy, like *The Love Boat*

Crime series or murder mysteries

Dating Game

Game

This is played like a *Blind Date* show. One player leaves the stage, and the audience provides endowments for the 3 others. Examples might be No. 1 is stupid, No. 2 is a serial killer and No. 3 thinks he's a macho. 4th player gets to ask 3 questions, and each of the others answers it. After the questions player 4 should guess what the endowments were.

Day in the Life

Game

The MC picks a member of the audience and interviews this person about their average (work) day.

Questions asked may include "What is your job?", "Where do you live, with who?", "What are your hobbies?", "How do you get to work?", "Who are your colleagues?", and more. The players then improvise a day in the life of this audience member, based on the elements provided by the interview.

Death and Retriever

Game

This one is like *Scorpion*, but in this version killed players are not 'out', but can be revived. Everyone eyes closed, one player becomes the killer (tap him on the shoulder) and another one becomes the retriever. The retriever gets a towel or a scarf around his neck.

Dead players scream when they are killed, keep their eyes closed and stand still. When the retriever bumps into someone that does not move (a dead body) he can revive the dead by rubbing them with the towel.

When the retriever gets killed, he screams and stops moving. When another living person bumps into the retriever (recognized by the scarf), the retriever is revived, and the one that revived the retriever becomes the new retriever.

Play till everyone is dead or bored.

Death in a Minute

Game

2 or 3 players play a 1 minute scene, in which one player must die.

Notes

Tell players to take risks. Why not just drop dead after 5 seconds and leave it up to the other player to justify the death.

Deconstruction

Game

This is a *Long Form* format. It starts with one rather long scene, which is followed by other, probably shorter, scenes that somehow connect to the first scene. Possible connections are:

Characters return

Characters or situations mentioned in the first scene appear in the subsequent scenes

Subsequent scenes take place in the same environment as the first scene

The reason why the first scene should be fairly long is that it should provide enough information for other scenes to build on. The name 'Deconstruction' can be interpreted as "Take a first scene, and then deconstruct it by using characters, locations, situations, played or referred to, and play/re-use those in further scenes".

Ding Characters

Game

This is like *Ding*: players play a scene. When a bell is rung, they both need to drop into a completely different character, but the scene continues.

This exercise is unlikely to lead to good scenes, but it's a great help to teach players to drop into clear and varied characters instantly.

Ding

Game

A scene is played. Whenever the MC ring a bell (or yells 'Ding'), the player that is doing something/saying something needs to say/do something else.

Notes

Doing 'something else' is quite often interpreted as doing/saying the opposite of what you did before. One can be more creative, e.g. repeat what was said in a different emotion. If you use this as an

exercise on *Spontaneity* the trainer can 'Ding' quite often (very frustrating for the players, but they will come up with stuff they never would have thought of before). Disadvantage of this is that the story/characters tend to get lost. Use sparingly for performance.

Disc(1)

Game

Tell the players to imagine the stage is a disc, only supported right in the centre of the stage. We are going to play a scene, in which the disc needs to be balanced at all times. Anytime a player moves, or a new player enters, the others need to rebalance the disc, and every move needs to be justified.

Disc(2)

Game

Imagine the stage is a large disc, supported in the middle. The goal is to keep the disc balanced. Game starts with a player entering the disc; he is the leader. As soon as the leader stops milling about on the disc, another player must jump in and restore the balance. The new player becomes the new leader, and the previous leader becomes a follower.

As soon as the balance is restored, the leader can start walking around; the other player stays where he is. As soon as the leader stops again, the follower(s) move and restore the balance. After that, the leader becomes one of the followers, and a new leader jumps in.

The group of followers may split into groups of equal size, and restore the balance that way. Keep in mind that followers don't start moving until the leader stops.

Dissociation

Game

This game can be done individually, or you can have one player do it in front of the class. Players say as many words that have nothing to do with each other, until they start associating. Restart as soon as you've got an association.

Example: cat, deodorizer, house, green, grass. Here we restart, because grass is obviously an association on green.

Notes

You can use this game to show that association is natural, and that it is actually difficult not to associate. See also *Malapropism*.

Distance Game

Game

Two players stand a few feet apart facing each other and have the most boring 4-line interchange possible. They then each secretly pick a specific distance they want to be from the other person and repeat the interchange while maintaining the distance. The maintaining of distance automatically seems to affect people's emotional commitment and inflection. The key is to have a specific distance in mind down to the inch. If one person picks 1 foot but the other picks a foot and a half. You will see some interesting conflict because of that extra half a foot.

Variations

Play a scene where the players are connected by a stick, a piece of rope or wood. You can even use a match stick.

Distorting Mirror

Game

This is a variation of the classic *Mirror* exercise. Played in pairs, one player is designated as the mirror. This mirror distorts the image; perhaps it blows everything up, makes everything wider, taller, smaller, narrower, prettier, uglier.

Doors

Game

Excellent introductory exercise for building environments and *Platform*. All players in 2 rows. 2 facing players play the exercise, the others watch.

Player 1 sets a (part of a) platform by miming a door. As soon as player 2 has an idea about where player 1 might be, player 2 steps into the scene and offers a line of dialog, expressing where we are.

Player 2 answers player 1, acknowledging player 1's offer. This ends the scene.

The audience should know after these 2 lines of dialog where the players are, and who they are, or what their relationship is to one another.

Notes

'Doors' can be anything that separates one physical location from another. Players can mime real doors, but also gates, curtains, you name it. Encourage players to try out as many types of 'doors' as possible. Use sound to enhance the platform, e.g. a door in a submarine makes a different kind of noise than an elevator door.

See also *3 Line Environment*.

Doo Wop(2)

Game

This is another structured long form. Get a topic, line up the players, and start improvising a song around the theme, usually without using a piano player (it would get too structured and cluttered if you so). Use the suggestion to improvise instruments (or their sound) with. Players can offer bits of *Narrative* by singing over the 'music'. Once the narrative patterns are clean, any player can step out of the song and start a scene based on what was established.

When the scene is done the 'music' resumes till someone else starts a scene. Nice if the scenes start to connect, or if characters from different scenes meet and interact.

Notes

This is a bit like a *Harold* but without the games. Or like a *French Braid* where the glue between the scenes is the song.

Doo Wop

Game

This is another structured song format, sung as a 1950's doo-wop. It can be structured in various ways.

Here's one in 5 beats: ask for an object. Then: -

Lead singer sings verse about the object

All sing Chorus, in the style of I love my (object)

Verse 2: explain how you found your object

(All) chorus on how you love your object

Verse 3: That fateful night ... explain how you lost your beloved object. This can be done as a parlendo (i.e. you speak to the music, rather than sing)

(Bridge) Explain how bad you miss your object

(All) chorus on how you miss your object

Verse 4: explain how your replaced your object by a new (or other) one

(All) chorus on how you love your new object (finale!)

Feel free to drop e.g. the first of second chorus if you feel it drags you down. Feel free to modulate after the bridge, or not.

Notes

Here's a possible chord progression:

Verse: C Am Dm G7 (3 times) C Fm6 C G7

Bridge: G7# Am# (3 times) D7# G7 Ab7 (modulate to Db)

Chorus: C C/E F G (3 times) C Dm7b5 C

Do Ron Ron

Game

4 players sing a song about a subject, given by the audience, on the tune of Do Ron Ron.

Variations

Invent your own choreography and have the players dance as they sing.

Double Endowment

Game

Another great game to train listening skills. Pick a place where a scene will be played, and 2 players. Tell each player what they need to get the other player to do, without the other player knowing this. Players are not allowed to explicitly tell the other player what to do.

Example: an arena in ancient Rome. Player 1 needs player 2 to taste the sand in the arena, and player 2 needs to get player 1 to tie a knot in a lion's tail.

Notes

Works best is players take risks. If they do the 'wrong' thing the audience will probably just laugh, and that should be enough to signal the player he's going the wrong way.

Double Opening

Game

2 players each make a (strong) opening sentence, at the same time. After that, adhering to both openings, find the scene that makes sense for both.

Variations

Do the same, but have both players react to each other's opening simultaneously. Then have the original players react to the reaction simultaneously. Rather difficult, but teaches the importance of listening to one another.

Dry Cleaning Bag of Death

Game

We need three or four players. During the scene, one player is always off-stage, with his head inside a dry cleaning bag, slowly suffocating. He is not allowed out of the bag until some other player finds a way to exit the scene and 'liberate' the suffocating player. New player puts his head into the bag until freed by another player, and first liberated player finds a way to justify his entrance into the scene.

Variations

Use a bucket of water instead of a dry cleaning bag.

Dubbed Movie

Game

2 or more actors play a scene, but they don't speak, although they can move their mouths as if they are speaking. 2 or more players sit in front of the action, and provide the speech.

The effect is (or should be) like watching a dubbed movie.

Duck Duck Goose

Game

Invent a name for a non-existing but simple children's game. As soon as you call out the name, all players start to play the game. They can use sounds and gibberish, but no real language.

See if the group can come to playing along the same rules.

Variations

Just have the group start playing the game, and afterwards have the group come up with the name.

Eights

Game

Excellent game to warm up those muscles. Everybody scatter around, stand up relaxedly. Ask the players to make an '8' movement with their left big toe, then their left foot, then whole left leg. Repeat with right toe/foot/leg. Repeat with left index finger, left hand, left lower arm, left arm. Repeat with right hand/finger/arm. Try both arms. In opposite directions.

Make 8-shaped movements with your pelvis. Try horizontally and vertically. Try changing direction. Ditto for left shoulder, right shoulder, both shoulders. Ditto for your head.

End exercise by making eights simultaneously with as many parts of your body as possible.

Elephant

Game

This one is like an extended version of *Bippety Bop*. Start with 3 things:

An Elephant, consisting of a trunk, made by the middle player, by holding your nose with one hand, and extending your other arm through the arm that holds the hand that holds the nose (does this make any sense?). The neighbouring players each form a big ear, using both arms. Don't forget to attach the ears to the elephant's head. Make an elephant sound.

A palm tree: the middle player is the tree, his neighbours become the waving leaves of the tree. Make windy noise

A car: the middle player holds the steering wheel, the neighbours do the wheels. Make car engine noise.

One player in the middle. Point to a person and yell Elephant (or Palm Tree, or whatever was agreed). Then choose another player and yell something else. Do this at high speed.

Now for the extension: when someone makes a mistake, look at what the person does, and add that to the list of possibilities. For example, someone might be waving their arms incorrectly in front of them, trying to build the trunk of the elephant. If the group thinks this resembles, say, a swimmer, we decide on adding a swimmer to the list of options. Say the middle player does the arms and his neighbour do the legs.

Repeat until you have so many options that everyone goes wrong...

Emotional Mirror

Game

Players in pairs, facing each other. One starts talking in gibberish, with a specific emotion (angry, happy, in love, you name it). The other instantly copies the emotion of the first player, and speaks in his own gibberish. No need to try and copy the other player's gibberish, and both players keep talking, no pausing allowed. After about 10 seconds, the second player changes emotion, and the first one immediately follows his.

Emotional Quadrants

Game

Divide the scene in 4 quadrants, and allocate 4 different emotions to each quadrant. Players play a scene, but need to take on the emotion of the quadrant they are in.

Notes

Encourage players to move about, in order to force changes of emotions. Don't forget to justify emotion changes.

Emotions Characters

Game

Players in pairs, arms loosely hanging (not folded, not stuck in pant pockets). Players look at each other with pity. No words or sounds allowed, and no use of hands.

Ask everyone to change partners. Players are asked to look at each other lustfully.

Change partners again. Players are asked to look at each other joyfully.

Then yell any of the three emotions. Players need to find back the partner with which they did that emotion and do it again. Repeat this several times. Then ask players to walk around the room. When they meet one of their 3 partners, they return to the look that went with that partner. In between partners they stay neutral.

You can try more or different emotions, of course.

Energy 1-10

Game

Everyone in a big circle, squatting down. We will count 1 to 10, all together, moving up, with increasing energy level. 1 is hardly audible, 10 is as loud as possible, everyone standing straight, hands reaching up.

It's important to watch each other, to ensure we're all at the same energy level. Also make sure that the increase in energy is nicely gradual.

Evil Twin

Game

4 players. 2 will play a scene. The other players are the other's evil twins. At any point, the 'twins' can shout 'freeze' after which they tag out their twin, and continue the scene and do something evil.

After that, they move out again, and the original twin brother needs to justify the evil, correct or repair the damage done and continue the scene.

Notes

Great setups for this game are things like first dates, or meeting your in-laws for the very first time.

Exaggeration Circle

Game

All players in a circle, or a long line. One player starts a little gesture, with or without a little sound.. The next player takes it over and makes it bigger. The last player does the whole thing to the extreme.

Notes

Make sure the players stick to the original gesture/sound, and don't just do their own thing. We should be able to see the movement grow organically.

Excluding

Game

4 players play a scene, in which one of the players gets excluded.

Notes

This is a group exercise, in the sense that players should be sensing where the majority of the group is going (see *Alien Tiger Cow*).

Tell players not to be afraid of 'being nasty' Be extreme in your exclusion (that makes it easier, also for the player that is excluded See *Mr. Nice Guy*). Whoever gets excluded should gladly accept this and react accordingly.

Excluded players can go to extremes to be re-included - hilariously funny if even this is thoroughly ignored by the others.

Variations

Let the exclusion evolve; allow a player that got excluded to get 2 others to join him and exclude the fourth one. This only works if the excluded player first allows himself to be excluded (a little *Chivalry* here).

Family Portraits

Game

Fun game to get everyone to work together. Players are going to 'build' family portraits. Ask for e.g.

Family of accountants, bean counters

Family of fat/skinny people

Family of Pop Stars

Family of snakes, rats, cats

Family of garden tools

Tell the players you will want to see who's who in the family. We also want to see who gets along with who, who's the black sheep of the family, and so on. This only works if players watch each other closely.

Famous Last Words

Game

MC asks the audience for famous (living or dead) people, or characters in movies, cartoons or songs. Players line up and invent 'famous last words' for the subjects given by the audience.

Fast Food Laban

Game

Laban was a movement theorist, and this exercise is based on (a simplified form of some of) his ideas. Take 3 categories:

Timing: Sudden or Sustained

Weight: Heavy or Light

Space: Direct or Indirect

Then try and make characters that behave/speak following combinations of the 3 categories:

Punching: sudden / heavy / direct

Slashing: sudden / heavy / indirect

Wringing: sustained / heavy / indirect

Stroking: sustained / light / indirect

Dabbing: sudden / light / direct

Smoothing: sustained / light / direct

Pushing: sustained / heavy / direct

Notes

The attributes go with the characters, not necessarily with the actual performer's body. A heavysset person may move about delicately.

Variations

You can introduce this in a fairly simple way, by asking the players to move about the room, according to directions or orientations:

Be a 'horizontal' or 'vertical' person

Be downward, or upward

Be light or heavy

Then experiment with these: be suddenly light (bird taking off from a tree) or continuously light (be a cloud).

You can do this using different kinds of music. What direction / weight / movement does a certain song or theme inspire?

Then try to experiment with characters: who or what would be vertical person be (a general?).

What/how would be continuously light person be (stoned?). Suddenly light (flirty?). See also *Fast Food Stanislawski*.

Fast Food Stanislawski

Game

Have 2 players perform a scene, perhaps give them a title or a location, but also give them a subtext for their character. Subtexts might be:

You want to seduce the other

You are a nerd

You like to make people laugh

You want to impress others

You are a nasty person

You try to be ordinary

You are an optimist/pessimist

You will never find a girlfriend/boyfriend

Notes

If you are using this in a workshop it might be a good idea to ask the players how one would behave given a certain subtext. Stress that you are looking for *Truthfulness*. This is an excellent technique to

find a character. You can actually use this for performance. Just give yourself a subtext when you jump onto the stage and see what happens.

See also *Status*.

Origin

Described in *Improv for Storytellers*: the book contains an appendix on how to play for different subtexts.

Fast Forward

Game

For this handle we need a 'director', or the MC can take on this role. A scene is started. The director can at any point interrupt the scene, and fast-forward (or backward) to another point in time. The story is then continued in that time. This technique can create flash backs.

Feature Film

Game

This is a collection of scenes, all based around (the making of) a movie. One character we definitely have in this format is a Director, who can direct the players to re-play poorly played scene, and who can offer parts of the storyline or *Tilts* before they actually get played.

Apart from seeing the scenes from the movie itself, we can (but don't have to) see scenes of what is going on behind the scenes (so you can have a totally different sub-plot going on there, if you want).

Some groups also involve the guy that actually wrote the script (as in *Typewriter*).

Also known as *At The Oscars* where we start the performance with an Oscar nomination (or win) for the Director.

Fingertips

Game

Played in pairs. Players touch all ten fingers, and one player closes his eyes. The other player leads the blind player by his fingertips. Make sure you have some obstacles in the room to navigate around/over/under.

See also *Blind Lead* for a similar exercise.

Firing Squad

Game

This is an association game, sometimes used in workshops to 'punish' a silly or inattentive student. All players, except one, the victim, form a long line. The first player in the line throws any word to the victim, who responds as fast as he/she can with the first word that comes to mind. The next player in the line then throws another word, usually unrelated to the previous word, and again the victim needs to respond as fast as possible. Repeat till everyone has thrown a word.

Variations

This can be done as a continuation game: when done, the victim takes last place in the line, and the first player becomes the victim.

You can even have multiple victims walking the line at the same time. Make sure there is enough 'space' between the victims, otherwise, with the first hesitation, victims will start bumping into one another.

Five Four Three Two One

Game

This is a long format, origin unknown, and has resemblance to a *Harold*. 5-4-3-2-1 can be played with 4 to 12 players. In this format the audience provides 5 different themes, objects, emotions, locations or situations. Then, the game is played in 5 rounds.

In the first round 5 scenes are played, each based on one of the audience suggestions. These scenes are totally unrelated. After the first round the audience decides which of the 5 scenes seen should be discontinued.

In the second round, the 4 remaining scenes are continued, and links start to appear between these scenes. Again, after this, the audience decides which scene to dump. This continues until after 4 rounds there are only 2 scenes left. In the fifth round these scenes come together in one final scene. This format can be played with or without props and/or director(s).

Variations

This can also be played without dropping a scene line. In that case you'd probably use 3 rather than 5 scenes.

Flock Dance

Game

This is a physical warm-up. The group forms a pyramid: one player becomes the top, 2 players behind his, 3 players on a third line, and so on. The top player starts moving about the room (perhaps use music to guide the players). The second line follows the first player, and mimics his movements, and the third line follows the second line.

The top player can alternate however he wants (and can be guided with e.g. a change in the music).

The top player can even turn around, and face the second line. Confusion will be complete. Other variations can happen when the top player bumps into the last line, and takes over their movements.

Follow the Leader

Game

All but one in a circle, one player in the middle. The middle player closes his eyes, and the rest of the group quietly chooses a leader.

Middle player opens his eyes and tries to find the leader. The whole group follows the leader, in everything he does. As soon as the middle player finds out who the leader was the game is over.

This only works if movements are clear, not too fast, and if the group 'follows the leader' as fast and as precisely as possible.

Follow your Nose

Game

Silly physical warm-up. Have everybody mill around the room, and shout a body part. Players then start moving around as if they are led by that body part. Continue with another body part.

End the game on a really silly note by leading with e.g. your internal organs.

Foreign Movie

Game

2 players play a story in *Gibberish*, 2 others translate. The idea is to build the story together: the 'actors' give elements to the translators, and the translators can help steer the action for the 'actors'.

Free Association Circle

Game

Everyone in a circle and we establish a rhythm, by swinging a hand. Once a rhythm is established, one player starts by tossing a word to his neighbour, who associates on the word and tosses another word to his neighbour.

It's important to stay in the rhythm. Tell the players to just say 'banana' if they feel they can't think of a word, as long as the rhythms does not get broken. See also *Word Ball* and *Clap Snap Association*.

Variations

Try this in combination with *Last Letter*. See *Blind Association Circle* for another variation.

Free Association

Game

This is the classic association exercise. There are various ways of playing this (see Variations and see other games in the *Association* category).

The Basics

In a free association we will ask players to say the first thing they think about when hearing (or seeing, feeling, smelling or tasting) anything another player provides.

It should be stressed that anything is valid, as long as it is not preconceived: the association should be based on what the previous player has offered.

Variations

Here is a list of Free Association games:

Free Association Circle

Free Association Lines

Walk-over Association

Word Ball

Firing Squad

Free Association Lines

Game

Yet another way to play association games. Place all players on 2 lines, facing each other. One player starts walking to another player in the other line. Just before he gets to that other player, he throws his a word. The receiver starts crossing the line towards someone else, and the first player takes his place in the line. The receiver now becomes the thrower, throwing the first word he can think of to another player, who then starts walking, and so on.

Variations

Try with 2 or more walkers at the same time. Many players, especially new ones, tend to find it easier to freely associate when there are multiple walkers: they feel less 'on the spot' (as no-one is watching them in all the commotion) and they don't really have the time to get in their heads.

Can be combined with *Last Letter*

Free Falling

Game

Nice, but a bit dangerous exercise to build trust. In its simplest (and safest) form all players stand in a circle, one player in the middle. The player in the middle closes his eyes, slowly turns around, and then lets himself fall backwards (or forwards). The other players need to catch his.

Variations

Be careful with this: have one player stand on a chair or a table, the others in front of him. Player closes his eyes and lets himself fall, hopefully he will be caught by the others.

Freeze Tag

Game

2 actors start a scene. At any point in time another player can call Freeze. This player then tags out one of the 2 actors, and takes his place. Both players then start a new scene, justifying their positions.

Notes

The way this game is played quite often goes a bit against good improv, as many groups hardly take the time to develop a story line. If played this way, it's more a game of wit, and you would probably use it early in a show as an audience (and player) warm-up.

Alternatively, you can take your time and play every scene for several minutes, see what develops, and only at the end of each scene tag into another scene.

To avoid preconceptions, see *Blind Freeze*. See also *Space Jump* for an extension of this game.

French Braid

Game

This is a very simple format, which consists of a number of (unrelated) scenes that get interrupted, and then continues at a later point.

It is played as follows: 2 or more players start a scene. At any time, when another player or players enters the stage, the scene is interrupted (or fades out) and the new player(s) start a new scene.

This is repeated until all players have played.

Then the series is restarted with the first scene. This scene continues, or starts at a later point in time (or later in the story, like a *Fast Forward*). The scene gets interrupted again, and so forth.

The whole is repeated several times.

This is typically played without a director. The players decide when to interrupt an ongoing scene.

Players typically play one character.

Front Desk

Game

We play a scene, set in the lobby of a hotel. One or more players play the receptionist(s) and the others play guests arriving or checking out, bell boys, repairmen, you name it.

Players construct the environment together. As soon as a door, a plant, a desk or whatever is 'placed' by any player, all other players should respect it. See also *Group Environment*

Fruit Basket

Game

All players but one sitting a circle, one person in the middle. The person in the middle calls out a category or some descriptive that might apply to some or all of the other players. E.g. all women, all blondes. When called, if a player matches the description must leave his chair and find another chair. Person that doesn't find a chair becomes the next in the middle.

Fusillade

Game

Great exercise in fast thinking, but seen done in performance as well. Would be an excellent challenge for a theatre sports match!

All players line up in 2 lines, facing each other. MC or trainer yells a word/title, and next player in line gets 30 secs to do his or his thing, based on the suggestion. After 30 seconds new title/word is given and next player goes.

Fuzzy Ducky

Game

A Silly concentration game and great warm-up. All players in a circle. We will count numbers clockwise, except that:

Any number that is a multiple of 3, or contains a 3 (like 13) becomes 'Fuzzy'

Any number that is a multiple of 7 or contains a 7 (like 17) becomes 'Ducky'

Any number that is a multiple of 3 and 7 (like 21) or contains both 3 and 7 (like 73 and 37) becomes 'Fuzzy Ducky')

Any player that ends up muttering 'Duzzy Fucky' is put in front of the *Firing Squad*.

Game-O-Matic

Game

This is like 'invent-your-won-game': ask the audience for the name of a non-existing improv game, then invent the rules on the spot, and play it.

Kind of risky, but if the group has been playing short form improv games for quite a while, coming up with rules is easy.

Gibberish Expert

Game

One player is an expert on a subject, often provided by the audience. Furthermore, he's from a foreign country (perhaps also supplied by the audience). The expert gives a lecture in *Gibberish* and a second player translates.

Variations

Have the expert tell a story, instead of giving a lecture.

Give and Take

Game

This is a variation on *Walking by Numbers*: all players find a position the room. One person must always make sound and one person must walk. This can be the same person who is walking and making sound but it could be one person walking while a different person is making sound.

The focus can be given (i.e. a walker stops walking) or can be taken (i.e. someone else starts walking; the original walker must stop then). Feel free to try with multiple walkers.

Goon River

Game

This is a format that consists of monologues. The story is not played, but told. The players (typically 3 or 4) line up in front of the audience, Based on a single audience suggestion they all tell the same story, each as their own character in that story.

The play usually starts with every character introducing him or himself. The order in which characters speak is not really important, as long as they all speak.

After the introductions, things start to happen. Every character reflects on what is happening from their own perspective, and each character adds elements to the story.

Keep going (and make sure that every character keeps contributing) and *Reincorporating* as long as things stay interesting.

See also *Voices From Heaven* for a short form game version which is really based on the same handle.

Notes

This is a great way of exercising monologues!

Referring back to the work of Masters, many groups tend to end the format with the death of (one or more of) the character(s).

Gorilla Theatre

Game

This format is played with 3 experienced players, one MC and another player, dressed up as a Gorilla. The Gorilla is the prize to be won; the best player of the evening gets to spend a week with the Gorilla, and of course this is quite a privilege!

The Gorilla enters with last week's winning player (real or faked). The MC explains that the score for the evening will be counted by means of bananas; the player that ends up with most bananas at the end of the game wins another week with the Gorilla.

The audience is trained to 'vote' by yelling 'Banana' (for a good performance) or something else, like 'Die' or 'Forfeit' for a bad performance.

Each scene is then played by 2 players, and directed by the third. The beauty of it all is the fact that not the players are judged by the audience, but the director.

Players take turns directing, and after each game the audience either awards the director a banana, or a forfeit. Bananas are pinned on a scoreboard, or pinned onto the winning player's costume - cardboard bananas are preferable in the latter case.

A forfeit is like a punishment for a poorly directed scene. Possible forfeits might be calling your mom and explaining why you've been such a lousy director, or having to sing a song about your bad scene. A list of Gorilla forfeits can be found in the Lists section on *Improvland*.

The director gets to choose the scene or the game to be played. Perhaps a list of games to be played this night is on the stage, and directors can write their names next to the games they want to direct. The director directs the scene, gives players side-coaching's, can interrupt the scene, introduce tilts or make the players repeat (part of) the scene. To ensure that bad scenes don't drag on forever, or to prevent directors to play tons of 30-second scenes in order to improve their chances, certain troupes limit the amount of time for directing to like 20 minutes per player.

This format can be played with or without attributes and props. The Gorilla might even be used as a prop, or even as a player, although the Gorilla should not try and steal the show. The Gorilla is a player, so he too should be prepared to take risks, and he's supposed to be naughty.

This is a fairly advanced format, as the players not only need to play well, they also need enough insight to effectively direct scenes. This is also a rather nice format, as players are not rewarded; 2 players playing well together generate a banana for the director, and this way the format prevents competition between the players.

Greetings

Game

All players start milling about the room. You then ask them to greet each other, perhaps just by shaking hands. Players just shake hands, move on, and greet the next player they meet. Then ask the players to greet each other in a more specific way. Possibilities are:

- greet each other like you greet a long lost friend
- greet someone you don't really trust
- greet an ex-lover
- greet someone you really hate
- someone you have a secret crush on

- someone you had a one-night stand with
- someone that sold you a crappy used car
- someone with bad breath
- Greet someone like you are a cowboy, a soldier, a nanny, a Russian farmer,...

Group Environment

Game

This is a group exercise in building environments. One player starts by entering a 'space' through a 'door', and then leaves that space, through the same or through another door. Any doors placed remain where they are, and the characteristics of the door are not to change.

Then another player enters the same space, and places a mimed object in that space, either by physically placing the object (carrying, wheeling or pushing it into the space, or by just 'using' it, for example by hanging his coat over a chair. Second player leaves the room, either through one of the established doors, or by placing a new exit.

This continues until every player has done their thing. Each player needs to respect, and perhaps use all objects placed by previous players.

Notes

Watch for players *Gagging* Anyone placing a jukebox in what has clearly been defined as a church is just trying to be funny and screwing up the scene.

Group Freeze

Game

Everyone starts milling about the room. Any player may decide to stop walking at any time. As soon as one player stops walking, everyone needs to freeze in position. As soon as everyone is frozen, start walking again.

Obviously, the idea is for the group to freeze as quickly as possible.

Variations

Let all players make noises, hum, whistle as they mill about. The noisier, the more challenging the exercise becomes. See also *Walking by Numbers*.

Group Order

Game

Nice warm-up exercise to help the group function/agree as a whole. Everybody starts milling about the room. You then ask them to line up, according to various criteria.

Examples are:

- order by age
- order by weight
- order by shoe size
- order by mental health
- order by personal hygiene
- order by number of ex-lovers
- order by blue

Notes

Keep the silly criteria (order by blue) till the end. Usually, the players will start realizing that it doesn't really matter what the order is, as long as the group agrees on the order.

Criteria like mental health or personal hygiene are quite interesting to train on *Chivalry*.

See also *Blind Line Up*.

Guest Game

Game

In this game we play in scene in which one player is a guest, somewhere. We do not know who he is, or why he is visiting, or what his relation might be with the characters at the location. All other characters in the scene behave strangely or suspiciously, as if they have a secret. The idea is that by the end of the scene we understand their secret.

For example, a player might ring a doorbell at a house, ready to pick up his date. We never get to see the date, and all characters in the scene slowly provide hints as to what might have happened to the date. The game is over when e.g. we (the audience) discover that all occupants of the house have been hauling garbage bags out of the house, all containing body parts of the date... It need not always be gruesome, though...

Harold

Game

Harold is a long format, and consists of a number of sub-formats. It basically consists of 3 components:

- Scenes, with 2 to 4 players
- Games
- Monologues

The format starts with a suggestion from the audience. This could really be anything. Players will start associating around the suggestion, and then an opening game is played. In this game, a lot of associated elements round the audience suggestion are presented. The opening game might be a song, a monologue, or simply a group association based on the audience suggestion. The idea is to use the elements and themes that come up or about in the opening game in what follows.

Then follow 3 rounds of scenes, all based on the themes found in the opening game. Each round exists out of 3 scenes, all unrelated, but each loosely based on the themes and associations from the opening game. Since these themes originated for the same audience suggestion, the audience will (hopefully) feel some links between the scenes.

After the first round of 3 scenes, an improv game is played; this game is unrelated to the 3 scenes played before. Then, in the second round, each of the 3 previous scenes is continued, and more or less obvious links between the scenes start to emerge. This is again followed by an improv game, and then the 3 scenes are played into a conclusion.

It's quite possible that in the third round not every scene is continued; scenes may disappear or even merge with one another.

A Harold can be played with a decent number of players (up to 12 or so), players can act in multiple scenes, as the same or as different characters. A Harold can be played with or without props, with or without directors.

Whether one sticks to the 3 rounds or not is really not relevant; anything and any combination of games and loose scenes that finally more or less come together can be considered a Harold.

Hat Continuation

Game

Start a scene, and identify each of the characters by means of a hat. The MC will interrupt (freeze) the game from time to time, and switch the players' hats. After the switch each player becomes the character that previously wore his or his hat.

The story needs to continue and should make sense.

Notes

A gimmick is *Commenting* on the fact that characters 'jump' in space when the hats gets switched. Use sparingly.

Heave Ho

Game

This is like an extended version of *Tossing* to be played with 16+ players. All players but one form 2 lines, facing each other, and link hands to form a platform, which is used to heave the last player from one end of the line to the other.

Best to remove shoes, coins, and any other objects that might fall or hurt someone.

Helping Hands

Game

Scene played by 4 players, playing 2 characters. Each character consists of one player, who does the voice, holding his hands behind his back. Another player stands behind player 1, and provides the 'hands'.

The story should be a give and take between voices and hands.

Variations

Have 2 players provide the arms, one each.

He Said She Said

Game

Excellent game to show how *Endowment* works. 2 players; each player will state the action the other player must perform, followed by his own line.

Example:

1: "I want a divorce"

2: "She said, while grabbing a knife from the kitchen table." At this point player 1 needs to take a knife. Player 2 continues with his own line. "Sure Honey"

1: "He said, while turning to the sports page of the paper". Now, it's quite clear that player 2 should be paying more attention to the paper than to his wife. Player 1 continues with his own line. "You're not listening to me" and so on.

Players refer to each other as 'he' and 'she', and endow each other with the next action to take. This can be quite funny, if you endow your partner to do crazy or not-so-nice things to you (or to themselves, but that's would not be *Mr. Nice Guy*).

Variations

Can be done with 4 players: 2 provide the lines, and the 2 others provide the 'directions' Each director provides the action for one of the 2 talkers.

Can also be one with 3 players: one provides directions and both other players do their own dialogs.

Notes

Keep the action do-able and active. Making someone else 'think about something' is hard to play, and not very active.

Hesitation

Game

In this game a scene is played, in which at any time, any player may 'hesitate', and ask the audience for help. Anything provided by the audience must be justified and incorporated.

Examples:

James, hand me that... (Signs the audience for a word) -Lollypop.

Ah, I was sailing the 7 seas in my... Newspaper. Yes, Newspaper, finest vessel ever built by... (Martians)

Hijacker

Game

Excellent game to train listening skills. 4 players, one leaves the room. Pick a means of transportation, and an object. The idea is that player number 4 needs to guess the means of transportation, and then use the object to hijack the others. Finally pick a goal for the hijacker to achieve.

The players need to provide hints to the hijacker, but they cannot explicitly tell the hijacker what to do, with what or why.

Notes

Works best if players take risks. If they do the 'wrong' thing or use the wrong object the audience will probably just laugh, and that should be enough to signal the player he's going the wrong way.

Hitch Hiker

Game

Use 4 chairs to build the interior of a car. One player starts driving the car, and another player becomes a hitch hiker, hiking a ride. The hitch hiker character has a particular character tick or particular emotion, which the driver takes over.

Other hitch hikers join in, each with their own characteristics or emotions, taken over by the driver and the passengers in the car as the hiker joins. When the car is full, one of the players leaves the car to make room for the new guest.

Notes

Don't forget to justify leaving the car.

Honey Walk

Game

This is a group exercise. Tell the players they have an oxygen mask, and then talk them thru the exercise: players are to move about in successively thicker substances. Go from thin air, mist, warm water, oil, honey, Jell-O, wet cement to hard cement.

End the game by having them 'frozen' in cement and break out with a big bang.

Notes

Coach the players to imagine really moving about these substances. They should be able to 'feel' the mist between their fingers, the honey in their hair.

Hot Spot

Game

All players in a circle. One player steps into the circle and starts singing a known song. As soon as this player shows any signs of stopping (because he doesn't know the lines any more, gets tired or embarrassed) another player needs to step in and take over (singing a different song).

Notes

This exercise is not about improvising songs, but more of a group thing. Players need to know that the group will support them when they're out of breath. The idea is to keep singing.

Human Props

Game

Excellent exercise for building environments. Ask one player to start doing an activity that somehow defines (broadly) a location. E.g. when someone starts typing he might be in a (home) office. The other players then become the other objects in the environment.

Notes

Tell the first player he can start using the props built by other players in the environment (if he recognizes them). Tell players to go for the obvious: in just about any room you could be a plant, a door or a table, after all.

When done, ask the first player to name any 'object' built in the environment.

Variations

You can use this as a handle for a performance. When a player is asked to sit down, and there are no chairs on the scene, another player can become the chair for the first player to sit on. Other examples are ticking clocks in haunted houses, cabinets and closets, you name it.

Imitate

Game

This is an exercise for characters. 2 players will play a scene in a shop. The quality of the scene is irrelevant here, really; just get into the shop, order what you need, pay for it and off you go. Give us an object (a carrot) and we got a scene in a carrot shop. One player is designated as shopkeeper, and the other will play the customer.

The idea is to give the 'customer' a basis to build a character. He will enter the shop in that character, and the other player (the shopkeeper) tries to imitate the character as closely as possible. Use the following tricks as stepping stones for building characters:

Ask 'customer' to talk to you in different voices. Pick one of these and there he goes.

Ask the 'customer' to pull different kinds of faces. Pick one and there he goes.

Pick a body part (elbow). There he goes; taking the suggestion 'elbow' as inspiration for his character.

Pick an emotion and there he goes.

Ask his to move around a bit, dance and let his freeze. The position in which he is frozen is his inspiration for the customer character.

This is an exercise for both players, but what is exercised is different for both:

for the customer, the exercise is building a character out of a silly suggestion. Note that there are not good or bad characters; anything in the position/suggestion given to the player can be used as inspiration, even if the 'link' between the suggestion and the actual character is not obvious. The only goal is to come up with interesting, strong characters.

for the shopkeeper this is a listening/watching exercise. The idea is not for the shopkeeper to build a character based on the suggestion; it is for him to imitate as closely the character treats of the customer.

Introducing Association

Game

This little technique can be used to show a new group how natural associating really is. You can only do this with a new group that has not played any association games before.

Place all players in a circle. Ask one player to say a word, no matter which one. The player to his right then says no matter what word, and so on. Do not tell them they should try and 'associate'.

You (and hopefully the group) will notice that patterns of 'related' or 'associated' words emerge. Use this as an introduction to show how natural associating is to humans, and then proceed with the other association games.

Jeopardy

Game

This game is not unlike *Worlds Worst*: have the players close/cover their ears. Then ask the audience for questions and answers. Examples would be:

What is the colour of an American school bus? Yellow.

What is dyslexia? Not being able to make words out of letters.

Write down the answers, not the question.

Then give the players an answer and let them come up with questions that might be answered correctly by that answer. It's kind of like 'what would the worst/sillies/funniest question be that could have this answer?'

Jump

Game

This is at times a physical *Warm-up*, a physical association game, and a game for character work. The game is played individually but all players can do this simultaneously. All players mill about the room. At any point the trainer yells "Yes!", at which point all players 'jump' into a position. Trainer can (but does not have to) side coach by shouting 'direction' (see *Fast Food Laban*) like 'horizontal', 'up', 'down', 'sideways', 'big', 'small', 'light', 'heavy'.

The idea then is to let the position into one has jumped inspire the player to a character, a situation. The inspiration comes from associating the position with, uh, well, whatever comes to mind.

See also *Association Jump* for an extension of this exercise.

Just Gibberish

Game

Excellent exercise for players that suffer from chronic *Waffling*. Play a scene, completely in gibberish, no translations provided. The scene should be perfectly clear to the audience. We should be perfectly able to translate every gibberish sentence, and the story should make sense.

Notes

This will only work if the stories are extremely simple, and if the *Platform* is made clear right from the start.

Some players tend to do this as a scene without words, but that is not the idea of the exercise.

Killer Bunny

Game

This is like *Bunny* except that at any time, the middle bunny is allowed to lift his hands above his head, lunge to either right or left side and eat one of his own ears, after which the ear player would be out. However, any other player in the circle can prevent any ear from being chewed by yelling Die while bunny's arms are up in the air, in which case the middle bunny would be out. Silly, indeed.

King Game

Game

One player is the king or the queen. Other players are to try and pleas his/his Royal Highness. They do this by entering the room, and offering something. The queen either tells them to: -

Continue, in case he's interested.

Die, in case the queen is bored

Freeze, if the queen might be interested

Players that are allowed to continue may approach the queen and the queen may unfreeze frozen players at his discretion. The game is over when a player is close enough to actually touch the queen.

Notes

The queen can kill a player for any reason: he may not like the message, or he may not like the way the message is presented. The queen can give hints why he does not like the offer: "You know I don't drink coffee, so die!" The queen should be really difficult...

Kitty in the Corner

Game

Classic children's game. 4 to 6 players stand at corners of the playing area, one player in the middle. 2 players try to make eye contact, and then switch places, while the middle player tries to capture a corner.

The faster the pace, and the higher the stakes (make diagonal eye contacts!) the more fun.

Ksss

Game

Nice warm-up, easier to play than to explain. Players in pairs. Establish a beat (by slapping your thighs). Once beat is established every player has the choice between 4 different movements:

Move both hands up

Point both hands left

Point both hands right

Point both hands down

So, every beat goes like, slap, point, slap, point and so on. Except, when the 2 players happen to make the same movement (i.e. in the same direction) then after the next slap they both make a 5th movement: point both hands towards the other player, miming a gun, and say 'pssst'. Next beat they do what they want again.

La Ronde

Game

This is another *Long Form* format. The name is based on a novel by Arthur Schnitzler, called *Traunnovelle*, in which a series of characters sequentially bed each other, from first to last back to first.

The format is fairly simple: we play scenes in which at every scene switch, the 'oldest' character disappears and a new scene is played with the remaining character, and a new one. The form ends when the circle closes and the last and first characters do a scene. Obviously, there is no need for all characters to bed each other!

Switching scenes is done by tagging out (like in *Freeze Tag*). The idea is to see different aspects of a character, in different situations, interacting with different characters.

Last Letter

Game

This is an *Association* game, where instead of naming the first word you think of upon hearing a previous word, you name the first word you think of starting with the last letter of the previously heard word.

Variations

Try in combination with *Walk-over Association* or *Word Ball*.

Last Letter Scene

Game

A scene is played, in which every next line spoken needs to start with the last letter of the previous line.

Last Line

Game

Get a line (any line) from the audience. Players play a scene that concludes with the given line.

LCD

Game

This game is called Location, Career, Death (LCD). One player on stage, the others off stage. The audience provides a location, an occupation and an object, only known to the player on stage. Second player enters and a scene is played in gibberish.

Player one needs to communicate the location to player 2; as soon as player 2 thinks he's got it, his claps his hands and spins around. Then player 2 needs to guess the occupation; clap and spin when you think you got it. Finally, the object needs to be revealed. As soon as player 2 has the object, he needs to kill player 1 with it.

Then the next player comes on stage and the game recommences, until all players have played. Afterwards, line up the players and ask them where they think they were, what their occupation was and what the murder weapon was. Usually quite far off the original suggestion, much to the audience's amusement.

Variations

Use a bell, every 10 seconds or so; at the bell players need to clap and spin and proceed to the next step, even if they are not sure about the where, who and what. Kind of LCD on speed.

Let's Not

Game

Excellent game to train narrative skills, but a bit controversial. Play in pairs: start with a location (e.g. a beach). One player give the suggestions (e.g. let's find a talking crab). The other player either accepts the offer, and both play accordingly, or refuses the offer. When an offer is refused the first player needs to make a better offer.

Notes

This is a bit controversial in the sense that players may object to refusing offers; after all, we teach players to accept offers. Explain that the goal of this exercise is twofold:

Teach players to drop their own ideas (see *Chivalry*) and happily change course in their story

Teach players which offers are 'fun' and which ones are not. The player accepting or refusing the offers should accept any offer that 'feels good' or that advances the story, and only reject offers that don't sound like fun or don't seem to offer any potential for an interesting story.

See *Ding* and *Yes Lets Or Rather Not* for similar exercises.

Letter Number Name

Game

Warm-up game that's also good to get to know each other's names. Everyone in a big circle. You start by 'giving' your neighbour your name. Just lift your right arm and call your name to your neighbour. He does the same to his neighbour, and names run around the circle.

Then do the same with the letters of the alphabet. Give an 'a' to your neighbour, making a 'giving' gesture with your right hand. Your neighbour continues by passing a 'b' to his neighbour, and so on.

Ditto with the numbers 1 to 9. Use another gesture, e.g. pass the number by tipping your right foot in the direction of your neighbour.

When everyone's got this, try all of this at the same time. Start by passing your name, and as soon as the name thing has advanced 2 or 3 players across the circle, set a letter thing in motion, and then a number thing. If you have enough players, just mix and match.

Notes

Pay attention to how much gets lost. Does everything you set in motion eventually get back to you or not? You can coach players by saying they only need to pay attention to what their neighbour does, not what's going on elsewhere in the circle.

Variations

Feel free to pass other things, each with its own gesture. Possibilities are:

Months of the year;

Notes (like 'do', 're,' 'mi,'...)

Line Mirror

Game

This is an extension of the *Mirror* game. Have all players line up in two face-to face rows, about three feet apart, holding hands (within a row). All players can slowly start moving, but keep holding hands, and all movements get mirrored by the other row.

Variations

If you have enough players, form one long U-shaped row, so that the ends of the U face each other. The repeat the exercise as described above.

Little Voice

Game

One player plays a scene. The other player(s) play the voice(s) of objects in the environment in which the first player plays. Anything can have a voice. Examples:

a player walks in a forest and an ant starts talking to him

a player is in the bathroom and his toothbrush starts talking

Variations

You can script the text of the little voice, and have the player justify anything that is said. See *Actor's Nightmare*

Notes

Make sure players immediately make clear what exactly is doing the talking. Either the voice makes this clear, or the other player:

Oh my god, a talking duck with a machine gun!

Bet you've never seen a talking couch, have you?

Play *Name the Monster* in combination with this game.

Location

Game

Get a location (say the Post Office). The whole long form is played in one and the same Post Office. Different characters wander in and out, you can even do time shifts and playbacks, but the environment of the scene is limited to the location given.

Lounge Singer

Game

Ask for an unlikely place to find a lounge singer. One player does a solo song, Frank Sinatra style. You'll get something like "Welcome to the paediatrician's Office".

Great opener!

Machines

Game

MC/trainer comes up with a (real or invented) machine. The players make the machine; every player becomes a part of the machine. We want to see/hear the machine work.

Variations

Tell the players the machine goes into overdrive, until it explodes. Or tell the players the power's out, and the machine slowly grinds to a halt.

Make More Interesting

Game

Simple exercise, useful for players that are too verbal.

One player starts a scene. As soon as the trainer claps his hands, the player needs to make whatever he was doing more interesting, without advancing. If our player was opening a briefcase at the clap, he needs to make 'opening a briefcase' more interesting; he is not allowed to take something out of the briefcase, as that would be advancing; player needs to stick to 'opening the briefcase'.

Notes

Simple to explain but not so easy to play. When done well you move into the clownesque. Think about Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy or Mr. Bean.

Variations

At a second clap, allow the player to advance the scene.

Malapropism

Game

This game flexes your mind. Have the players walk about in the room, point to any object, and give it another name.

Notes

You can use this game for players that have difficulty with association: it shows that association is natural, and that it is actually difficult not to associate. See also *Dissociation*.

Man Overboard

Game

This is a nice elimination warm-up. Everyone spreads out in a staggered line, like in an aerobics class. Then someone calls one of the following:

'Land ahoy.' And everyone hops on one foot, doing a salute with one hand

'Hit the deck.' All down on the floor in a push-up position

'Octopus.' Make groups of 2, one person on hands and knees and someone else over him or his in the same position

'Man overboard' Groups of 2, one bending back and knees and the other on the first's back (piggy-back style)

'Two three four' All sit down and start rowing

Whoever is last - drops out. Repeat till all but one are out.

Mantra

Game

Let the players play a short scene. Then ask them to repeat the following mantra in their head, and replay the scene 'I'm so happy, I'm so happy'. In many cases, you will find that the whole scene becomes happier.

Variations

Try with other mantras, like 'I hate you', and see what the effect is. Let players choose a mantra, and then play a scene. See *Mantra Introduction* for more about mantras. See also *Improv for Storytellers* for a discussion on the use of Mantras.

Mantra Introduction

Game

Here's a way to make a point about blanking one's mind, subconscious thinking and spontaneity. Have all players sit down comfortably, if they want to close their eyes they can do so. Then ask them to blank their mind, to try and think about nothing at all. Let them do this for 2 minutes or so. While they do so, make sure to walk around, to make some minor noise (blow your nose, clear your throat, walk around) But don't overdo this. If you can hear cars drive by in the street, or other people in the building, or hear birds sing then you don't even have to make a noise.

Then ask the players who managed to think about absolutely nothing at all. Ask those who say they did whether they heard the birds, the cars, you clearing your throat. If they did, weren't they thinking about that, then?

Now ask the players to close their eyes, and to keep repeating the sound 'mihad' in their heads. Have them do this for about 3 minutes. Then ask them again who thought about nothing but 'mihad'.

If they are honest they should all admit they thought of all kinds of stuff.

The point is that our minds just never stop working. Even if you're trying to concentrate on a repeating sound in your head A Mantra Your mind will still wander.

We are all capable of thinking about several things at a time, some people can keep up to 7 lines of thought going in their minds. Who has never driven a car, being perfectly concentrated on the traffic, without thinking about work, the groceries, the kids?

You can use this exercise to show students they never need to be afraid of a brain freeze. Our brains manage to come up with so many things all the time If you let them.

Mantras are used as a technique for (Transcendental and other) meditation. The idea is to keep the most active part of your consciousness busy, and at the same time let unconscious processes and lines of thought surface. This is similar to what happens in our dreams, but it has been proven (we've been told) that these meditation techniques can be more relaxing or cleansing than sleep. Don't take our word for that, though.

Notes

You can choose any gobbledygook word for a mantra for this exercise, as long as it's not an existing word (don't use 'banana') or strongly resembles an existing word ('banano' wouldn't do either). That could trigger people to think about monkeys, or a jungle, or whatever.

Don't use 'mihad' if you're working with a class of Muslim fundamentalists; they might start thinking about a Jihad ;-)

See also *Mantra* for examples how you might use Mantras to play scenes.

Marshmallow Mania

Game

Play a scene in which the audience is not supposed to laugh. Any player who provokes a laugh, gets a piece of marshmallow in his/his mouth. Players are allowed to chew, but may not swallow.

See also *The Gerbil*.

Variations

Use grapes instead of marshmallow.

Massage

Game

Place all players in a circle. Have everyone put their hands on their right neighbour's shoulders and give 'em a shoulder massage. Turn directions after a minute or so.

Variations

Use some judgment to see what is appropriate; that will depend on the group/ the people you are working with. You can place players in pairs, and have everyone massage the other's temples, calves, etc.

Master Servant Disaster

Game

2 players, one is the master, the other is the servant. The master will ask the servant for something simple. The servant always blocks the question, and explains why this should not be possible. The master always accepts this, and asks for something else (which turns out to be impossible as well).

Every time the servant has to explain why this should not be possible, the situation gets worse, until the whole thing turns out to be a disaster.

An example:

Perkins, get me a glass of brandy.

Yes sir. Oh, sir, that won't be possible sir, we're out of brandy.

Well, get me a glass of whisky, then.

Yes sir. Ah, sir, um, we're out of whisky too, sir.

Oh? Well get me any kind of alcohol, then.

Ah sir, we're out of alcohol sir.

Perkins, have you been drinking again?

Well, the staff had a little party last night, sir.

I see. Well get me a glass of water from the kitchen then.

Yes sir. Ah, sir, the water pipes are bust sir, sorry.

Well, get me some water from the pond then.

Ah, yes, sir, uh, sorry sir, the pond is dry, sir.

And so on, until it turns out that the staff had a little party, accidentally set the kitchen on fire, used the water from the pond to fight the fire, and so on. Eventually, the only room still standing is the master's study, the rest of the castle has burnt down and all staff are dead. And all this for a perfectly logical explanation.

The idea is for the servant to connect all elements the master brings up, into one and the same disaster. In this respect this game resembles *Boris*.

Mexican Name Wave

Game

Players in a circle. Let them do a Mexican Wave: one player lifts both arms in the air, and down again. When his arms are totally up, his right neighbour starts doing the same, so a 'wave' of hands circles around the circle.

When they've got this, at the same time, pass your name around the circle, going the other way. Names are passed by pointing to your left neighbour and saying your name. Confusing, indeed!

Micetro

Game

Pronounce as 'Maestro'. Comparable to *Gorilla Theatre*, but a bit easier, and can be played with a fairly large number of players (up to 20), and 2 directors. The names of all players are on a big score board. The directors choose for every game the appropriate number of players, perhaps by fishing name tags out of a hat. The directors explain the game, perhaps ask the audience for suggestions, direct and correct the scene.

After each scene the audience decided, by cheering or applause how many points the scene should be awarded. Each player gets as many points as the scene he or he played in was awarded.

Once everyone has played in a scene, the players with the lowest score drop off, and the whole thing starts again. The directors ensure that (certainly with large groups of players) that there are more group-scenes at the start of the evening, and more 2-person scenes or even monologues toward the end of the evening.

This is a fun format that can be played with mixed bunches of experienced and not-so-experienced players. Since players are immediately judged, it is perfectly possible to pitch a start player after the first round. Since this system is basically somewhat unfair, and everybody knows this, no one should take elimination too personal (well, that's the idea anyway).

For beginners it's a nice format, as the directors will correct obvious blunders. And since all players in a scene get the same score, this format limits competition between players in a scene.

Millipede

Game

Great fun but be careful not to hurt each other. Make sure there are no objects along the walls of the room. All players in a circle, linking arms. Then move the circle to one of the walls, and 'squash' the circle, until it becomes 2 lines, one line of players with their backs to the wall, and another line in front of the first, players facing each other.

Have this whole construction wheel along the walls of the room at high speed. Tell players to be careful and not to make fists or they might slam into someone's face.

Mirror

Game

Players per 2, facing each other. They can move (arms, legs, eyebrows) slowly, and the other player will mirror them. This is a game of give and take No-one should be (continuously) leading. Keep movements slow.

Variations

Do this with the whole group: everyone in a big circle, and everybody mirrors everybody else. See also *Line Mirror*.

Montage

Game

This is just a name for the most generic form of *Long Form*: a Montage is just a series of scenes, connected or not.

Move and Speak

Game

Play a 2-player scene, in which no-one is allowed to talk unless they create a new object and a movement along with it. All created objects stay where they are, and moving a previously created object does not lead to permission to talk.

See *Touch to Talk* for a similar game.

Movie Review

Game

4-10 players. Ask the audience for a movie title. 2 players will do an interview: one will be the reviewer. As the movie is discussed, other players play parts of the movie.

My Fault

Game

You need 2 plastic bottles, each with a little bit of water (not too much or they'd be too heavy). Make sure your bottles are sturdy. Or everyone will get wet.

Have everyone walk around leisurely, and hand 2 players the bottles. The idea is to make eye contact with someone. As soon as a player has eye contact with a player with a bottle, the bottle is thrown. If at any point the bottle is dropped, both the thrower and the receiver lie down on the floor and shout 'My Fault' as loud as possible. Next, one of them picks up the bottle and the game continues.

Side coaching: tell the players to take risks, to try and make eye contact with a player at the other side of the room.

Variations

Tell the players the bottle is red hot, and they need to throw it as fast as possible, or they'll burn their hand.

The bottle becomes extremely light, or extremely heavy, and the players act accordingly.

Name 6 Circle

Game

You will need a tennis ball or a towel tied in a knot for this one. Everyone sitting or standing in a circle. You give one person the ball, and ask him to name at least 6 (or any other number, depending on the size of the circle), in the time it takes for the ball to get passed along the circle. Things to ask for might be: -

Sour tasting fruit
Foreign makes of cars
Names of seas
B-movies
Italian foods

Variations

Have one person in the middle of the circle. This person provides the category, and indicates how many replies are expected from a player in the circle. If that player does not live up to the challenge, he takes the place in the middle of the circle.

Notes

Tell players not to watch the ball go round when they're 'it.' They'll just panic and freeze. Try this with closed eyes.

Don't ask for 1940's Nobel Prize winners, or simply 'emotions'.

Name the Monster

Game

Play in pairs, one word at a time (see *Word at a Time Scene*). Choose a location (e.g. walk in the forest). Players must meet a monster, give it a name, and run away from it.

The 'monster' can be anything: an evil witch, a dragon, a frog with a machine gun, a smelly French cheese, anything.

Variations

Take this game a bit further, and ask the players not to run away from the monster, but do something. Fight it, beat it, get eaten (and continue in the monster's stomach or in heaven/hell), make friends with it, tame it, capture it, ride it, whatever.

Notes

The real goal of the exercise is to get used to explicitly naming the problem (the 'monster' in this case).

Use this game e.g. in combination with *Little Voice*, to teach players to actually name whatever is talking to them.

Name Volley

Game

Divide the class into 2 groups, maximum 6 players per group. We are going to play a mimed game of volleyball, in which every player, as they pass a ball, shouts the name of another player, who then needs to catch and pass the ball.

We want to be able to 'see' the ball at any point in time.

No Doubles 1-10

Game

Nice concentration game. Everyone in a circle. We will count from 1 to 10. Any player can start by saying '1'. Then any other player can say '2' and so on. If 2 players say a number at the same time we start all over again.

Non Sequitor

Game

Place players in pairs, let them hold a casual conversation about their work, the weather, anything. There will be 4 signals (hand clap or blow a whistle):

First signal: keep the conversation going, but behave strange, make bizarre gestures and jerky body movements

Second signal: keep the strange movements going, and continue the conversation in gibberish

Third signal: keep calm, but continue the conversation in gibberish

Fourth signal: stay calm and talk normal

No P

Game

Players play a scene (perhaps based on an audience suggestion) but they cannot use the letter 'P' (or any other letter). When a player uses a 'P', the audience screams 'Die' and the player is replaced by another on. The scene continues, and the new player needs to take over the character of the player he replaces.

Object Morphing

Game

Good exercise on object work: players in pairs. First player builds an object, as precise and careful as possible, then hands it over to the other. Second player accepts the object, being as truthful to what the first player built as possible. After having acknowledged this, player 2 starts morphing the object into something else. This can be done by bending, breaking, twisting, extending, shrinking, you name it. When the new object is complete it gets passed back to player 1, who accepts and then morphs it.

Variations

You can do this in a circle, passing and morphing objects around the circle.

Objects

Game

Divide the class in 2 groups. Give one group the name of an object, and they become, as a group, the object. Other group guesses.

Old Job New Job

Game

Play a scene with 2 players, and give them a job (or let the audience provide the job). Then tell them what job they had in a previous life.

The idea is that somehow in the scene players reflect their previous jobs in their actual life. The idea is not to 'play' the old job, but to show character traits of someone with the old job while performing the new job (are we making sense here?)

One Duck

Game

Everyone in a circle. We are going to say a pattern, one word per player, going clockwise. It goes like:

One Duck, two Legs, Quack

Two Ducks, four legs, Quack Quack

Three Ducks, six legs, Quack Quack Quack

And so on, till someone misses.

Variations

Try with an insect instead of a duck (6 legs per insect), or a spider (eight legs) and invent a sound the insect might make.

One Eighty Five

Game

Not really improv theatre but done by a quite a few troupes, and fun when done well. Get a term, e.g. 'Elephants'. The lines go like: -

185 elephants walk into a bar

The bartender says "Sorry but we don't serve elephants here"

(Witty line that's the reply of the elephants)

Players basically come up with an instant joke about 185 whatever's that enter the bar. As we said, not really theatre...

One Line Scene

Game

Play a one or two minute scene, where only one line of dialog can be spoken. Indicate to the players when they have, say, 20 seconds left.

This exercise teaches players what can be communicated using non-verbal communication. Things like, 'thank you', 'I love you', 'I appreciate this', 'I'm sorry' and so forth can all be communicated non-verbally.

One Mouth

Game

One player (or the MC) is going to interview all other players, but the group of other players are really one character. This character answers the questions, but all players provide the answer at the same time, as if the character is speaking out of many mouths simultaneously. The answers should make sense (at least grammatically) and should be clear. If one player starts answering a question by saying 'YYYY' no-one should try and turn that into a 'No'.

Notes

works best if everyone goes for the obvious and simple answers. Don't try to speak too fast, but take your time to let the answer organically grow. Coach players to take the lead if the answers are sagging, and to happily give up the lead as soon as they feel they got the lead. Move players that stubbornly always take the lead to another position in the group (at the back or at the ends).

Variations

You can try and use this as an audience warm-up, and try to get the audience to talk to the MC out of one mouth. This is suggested in *Improv for Storytellers*.

One Two Three Four

Game

Ok, this is harder to explain than it is to play. This game is a repetition of 4 movements:

- 1 : touch your head with both hands
- 2 : touch your shoulders with both hands
- 3 : touch your hips with both hands
- 4 : slap right foot with right hand

We repeat this 10 times, as follows:

Just say 1,2,3,4 No movements, do this twice

Touch your head (on '1' but don't say '1') and say 2,3,4. Repeat twice.

Touch head (on '1') touch shoulders (on '2', but don't say '1' or '2'). Follow by 3,4, spoken.

Repeat twice

Touch head, touch shoulders, touch hips (on the rhythm on 1,2,3, but don't say 1,2,3). Say '4'.

Repeat twice

Touch head, shoulders, hips, slap foot. Don't say anything but stay in the rhythm and repeat twice

Then just start all over again by saying 1,2,3,4 twice.

Increase tempo as you go along.

Only Questions

Game

A scene is played, in which any sentence used by the players must be a question. Players that use statements instead of questions are boo-ed out by the audience (audience yells 'Die') and are replaced by other players. New players need to take over the character of the players they replace.

Notes

Although questions are quite often frowned upon in improv (see *Questions* and *Wimping*), in this game the idea is to build a story. That implies that any question should be giving information, and should be (implicitly) advancing on the information already available. Evidently, the next player should implicitly accept any information that was given in the previous question(s).

Open Offer

Game

One player starts a scene by making an offer that is not 'complete', in the sense that it is vague enough not to define the who/what/where right away. Another player steps in and completes the *Platform*.

Notes

Although in performance we probably want to establish our *Platform* as early as possible, this game teaches players how to quickly build platforms as a group or a team.

Open Your Hand

Game

Let the players walk around the room leisurely. Then ask them to stop, open their hands, and let something fall out of the sky, right into their hands. Let them name the object in their hands, set it aside, move on and open their hands again.

Notes

Some people find this a bit of a scary game, as if they are afraid they are not going to come up with anything. Explain that there are no wrong answers.

Some players will complain that everything that falls out of the sky is a dead bird (or whatever). Explain to them that this is fine too. Most players, if reassured that they really can't go wrong, move on to other stuff after 10 dead birds or so.

Variations

You can tell players they can vary the way they extend their hands or hand. They can hold hands in front of them, above their head or close to the ground. See if different stuff shows up.

A slightly less difficult version of this game can be done by having players put their hands in their pockets and take something out. Make sure they all got pockets if you want to play this game. This version is slightly easier, as anything in their pockets, like dust, or the way the fabric feels, can trigger an idea; when holding your hands out there is very little to trigger an idea.

Opposite Characters

Game

This is basically the opposite to *Imitate*: for the shopkeeper, rather than imitating the customer's character, try and build a totally opposite character.

As a side coaching, point players to the following character traits:

Voice (loud/soft/harsh ? intonation?)

Status (high/low?)

Age? Occupation?

Way the body moves? (Take a look at *Fast Food Laban* for more on movement)

Note that this is also a looking/listening exercise for the shopkeeper!

Opposites

Game

Let the players walk around the room in silence. Ask them how they would classify themselves:

High or low *Status*
Loud or silent
Caring or careless
Strong or weak
Tall or small
Secure or insecure
Clumsy or perfect
Happy or sad
Introvert or extravert
Basically anything that would be a character trait

Then ask them to imagine they are exactly the opposite of all these character traits. Ask them to move about like such a character. Then play scenes in which the players 'become' the opposites of their own characters.

Pass Ball

Game

All players in a circle. Ask the players to pass a mimed ball to others (one ball at a time). Then side-coach: the ball becomes heavier, until it weighs a ton, or extremely light, extremely big (and light or heavy) or extremely small (and light or heavy).

We need to 'see' the ball's characteristics in the way it gets passed.

Pass Clap

Game

Classic warm-up. Everyone in a circle. One player starts by throwing a hand clap to his right neighbour, and the neighbour passes the clap to his right neighbour.

Play this till the clap really flows nicely around the circle. Then tell the group that players may decide to pass the clap back to the neighbour they got it from. Try it and notice how disruptive this can be.

Variations

Try these for variation:

When receiving a clap, first clap back to the sender, then turn to your neighbour to pass it on;

Pass claps either high (bending down) or high (above your head)

Combine both of the above.

Try clapping twice, three times or 4 times when you pass the clap. Make movement doing that (like clap 4 times, low to high as you pass the clap)

Try clapping (simultaneously) in pairs, 3 or even 4 players at a time.

See also *Synchro Clap*. See also *Pass Yes*.

Pass Yes

Game

This is a bit like *Pass Clap* and all its variations. One player starts by saying 'Yes' to his left-hand neighbour. Neighbour does the same, passing the 'Yes' to his left-hand neighbour. Or he decides to say

'No', after which it's his right-hand neighbours turn.

Try and pass the 'Yes' along the circle as fast as possible.

When everyone's got this. Do the same but with eyes closed.

Patterns

Game

This is a bit like *Free Association Circle*, except that players are not to freely associate on the previously heard word, but on the ensemble of what has been heard, thereby heightening it.

Example: grass, plant, flower, tree, forest, jungle. Restart as soon as you can heighten any more.

Peruvian Ball Game

Game

Everyone starts milling about the room, miming a particular kind of ball. It can be light or heavy, have a texture, whatever, as long as it is particular. At the trainer's sign, everyone passes their ball to someone else. This is done a couple of times, after which everyone tries to find back his or his ball.

Play Tag

Game

Just play tag. Excellent physical warm-up. Tell players to take risks, see how close you can get/stay to the tagger without being caught.

See *SloMo Tag* for an exercise to follow this one.

Pockets

Game

Before the show, ask the audience to write simple sentences on slips of paper. Anything goes. The game is played by 2 players. Ask for a location, or a profession, and have every player draw 3 of these slips. Players put these in their pockets without reading them.

Then a scene is played, in which at any point in time, players replace what they might have said, by whatever is on the piece of paper they draw out of their pocket. Try to incorporate/justify whatever is your line into the scene.

Notes

Try to avoid thinks like 'My granny always said.' You want your character to say whatever is on the piece of paper Don't try to put those words into someone else's mouth.

Popcorn

Game

Everyone finds themselves a nice spot, and squat down. The teacher now talks the group through this exercise. Everyone is a piece of corn, the floor is a big pan, and we're going to make popcorn.

We slowly start heating the pan; as the pan gets hotter, corn starts to 'pop'. A player can 'pop' by jumping up, clapping hands above their head, and saying 'pop'.

Make sure the 'popping' starts gradually, 'popping' is a group thing, and in the end, 'popping' should stop.

Variations

Forget to take the pan off the fireplace, and have the popcorn start charring.

Presents

Game

Great warm-up exercise that helps you blank your mind. Good for control freaks. Players stand in pairs and give each other presents. To give a present, you just open your arms/hands to indicate you're holding something. Don't try to think about what you're holding, but give it to your companion.

Upon receiving the present, you give it a name, the first thing that comes to mind. You say something like 'Oh, thanks, a little dead bird'. You promptly ignore your present and return something else to your companion.

This game works best if it's played fast, so players really don't have the time to preconceive. It's also nice and positive, as everybody is always extremely happy with their presents, no matter what they are.

If players complain they always receive the same present ("It's always a book") tell them this is quite ok. They should be happy to receive so many books. See also *Spontaneity* for related games.

Press Conference

Game

3 to 8 players. One player leaves the room, while the audience provides the name of a famous or historical person. The 'absent' player will give a press conference, but he does not know who he is.

The other players are journalists, whose questions should provide indications to who the mystery guest might be.

Game ends when our player guesses who he is.

Notes

The 'journalists' should really play journalist characters. They can take photographs, or have a fight about who gets to ask the next question.

Variations

Instead of a famous or historical person, choose an expert. The game is over when the 'expert' figures out what he or she is expert in.

Primal Screams

Game

All players in a circle. One player steps into the circle, making a big gesture and a loud sound. Player then steps back, and the rest of the circle imitates the sound and gesture.

Try and do this with open sounds, as loud as possible. As *Keith Johnstone* says: "Yelling 'en masse' is good for the soul".

Props

Game

In this game the players need to come up with an original/funny use of a prop. They cannot use the prop the way it is supposed to be used for, obviously.

Notes

You could really use any object as if it were a cell phone, but that is not the idea of the exercise. Look at the object (or its parts) and see what inspires you. We once saw a player, given a chair, who turned into a prisoner. The back of the chair became the bars of this cell.

Protest Song

Game

Ask the audience for something that pisses them off. Then improvise a song about it, like the 70s screw-the-government type characters. Typically done as a Verse-Chorus type song.

Notes

Here's a suggestion for chord succession (but by all means feel free to improvise something all yourself if you're an improv musician):

Verse: G Am D D (4 times)

Chorus: D C G# (4 times)

You can do this in a Verse Verse Chorus Verse succession. Or improvise something else.

Puppets

Game

4 players. 2 players will be puppets; these players offer the lines of dialog in the scene, but they are not allowed to move about themselves. The other 2 players are the puppet masters, that will provide the movements for the puppets.

Variations

Some groups use audience members to play the puppets or the puppet masters.

Rash

Game

Make sure you have as many pieces of paper as there are players. Write 'cure' on all but one, and a disease (like 'rash') on one. Each player draws a piece of paper, but no-one knows who's got the disease. Then find the disease and cure it.

Variations

Have one 'cure' and all the others the same disease.

Real Estate Broker

Game

One player is a real estate broker and shows a second player (or multiple players) around a space, given by the audience/trainer. Each player can create whatever they wish in the space, and questions are not allowed. Any object created should be justified (by the broker or by the others).

And obviously any object created stays where it is (unless explicitly moved).

Receiver Right Clap

Game

Nice concentration and warm-up exercise. All players in a circle. Players can throw a 'clap' to any other player by pushing their hands together in front of their chest (like a praying gesture), and then pushing both hands towards the receiving player, opening up their arms as they do so. Sending a 'clap' makes a 'Woof' sound; receiving a clap makes a sucking sound.

The receiver receives the clap by making the inverse gesture, and uttering a sucking sound.

Once a clap is received, the player to the right of the receiver sends a new clap to any other player.

And so on.

Once everyone's got it, switch to left-hand side player of the receiver to send the next clap.

Variations

If all players are really concentrating, and this game goes particularly well, try 'skipping' a neighbour. E.g. the second player to the left of the receiver sends the next clap.

Repair Shop

Game

One player leaves the stage (or gets a headphone). Audience provides an object, and something not-so-obvious that is wrong with the object. Example: an airlines for which the keys to open the door have been lost. In the game the player that is 'it' needs to solve the problem, without knowing what the problem is. As soon as he finds out the game is over.

Reverse Chair Dance

Game

You will need music for this exercise; provide a tape deck or a ghetto blaster, and a bunch of chairs. Start by placing chairs in a circle, one chair less than the number of players. Play music, and have the players dance around the chairs. When the music stops, everyone should find a chair to sit on.

The player that doesn't find a chair needs to find some other way to get his/his feet off the ground.

Remove a chair and repeat. In the end, all players will have to find a way to not touch the ground, by climbing and clinging on to each other. Make sure you got sturdy chairs; we've known chairs to collapse under the weight of 10 players...

It's important not to side coach. The group needs to figure out themselves how to solve the problem.

Reverse Trivial Pursuit

Game

Like most of the games in the *Verbal wit* category, not exactly theatre, but fun if played well. Ask the audience for statements or facts, to which the players need to come up with the funniest question to which the statement/fact might be the answer.

Example:

Statement: "Green Bananas"

Question: "What is best avoided if you got constipation?"

Rhymes

Game

Scene played in verses. The idea is that the first player offers a line, and the second player rhymes to that. Then the second player offers another line, with which the first player needs to make a rhyme.

Players that hesitate or forget to rhyme 'die' and are replaced by other players. The idea is to keep the story going, so players that can't find a good rhyme that would advance the story better die than screw up the story.

See also *Verses*.

Rituals

Game

Get an everyday activity from the audience. Then play this activity as if it were a ritual.

Notes

Think about religion, voodoo, sports, a NATO summit, whatever. You'll realize a lot of what we do is ritualised, just heighten that.

Scene in the Dark

Game

Fairly obvious: a scene is played in the dark. See also *The Bat*.

Notes

If the theatre is really dark, then moving about on the scene can make quite a lot of disruptive noise. You may want to do a 'radio play', where all players just sit on the stage, and provide the words and (background) noises for the scene.

Scene Replay

Game

Ask 2 players to play a short scene. One could limit the scene to 8 lines of dialog per player. Then ask the players to replay the scene, based on some audience suggestions for:

A particular emotion. Also known as *Emotion Replay*.

An era. Also known as *Through the Ages*. Also known as *Historical Replay*.

A different location

A film / TV / literature style. Also known as *Style Replay*.

In *Gibberish*

Backwards. Also known as *Backwards Scene*.

Variations

You can time the scene to 1 minute, and then replay in 30 seconds, 15 seconds, 7 seconds and 3 seconds. Other variations:

Have the scene replayed by 2 other players

Insist that the dialog remains exactly the same

Scene To Music

Game

A silent scene is played, in which the characters' emotions are controlled by the music.

Scorpion

Game

A number of players stand in the middle of the room, eyes closed the others stand by the walls. One of the middle players is tapped on the shoulder, he become the 'killer' or the 'vampire'. The trainer gives a go-sign, and all 'blinded' players start milling around the room. When the killer bumps into someone, he squeezes that persons forearm to 'kill' him. When a victim dies, he utters a scream, opens his eyes and is 'out'.

Game is over when all potential victims are dead.

Audience by the walls make sure that blind players don't bump into stuff or hurt themselves.

Variations

When a 'vampire' runs into a victim, the victim becomes a vampire too

When 2 vampires bump into one another, they become normal mortal souls again

Sculptors

Game

Works best with an even number of players. Split the group in 2. One half forms a circle in the middle of the room, facing outwards. The other half positions themselves, each player in front of one of the players in the middle circle.

The middle players are clay, or stone, and the outsiders are sculptors. Let each sculptor do something to his lump of clay, then make the sculptors rotate clockwise. Everyone now stands in front of someone else's block of stone or lump of clay. Have them work some more on the sculpture and rotate again. Repeat till every player is in front of his original piece of stone again.

Then ask the sculptors to introduce their work, and give it a name.

Variations

Each statue or sculpture has a built in voice chip that can utter exactly one sentence. Let the sculptors switch on the voice chip at the end of their explanation.

Notes

Excellent exercise to try with a new group to see who is *Mr. Nice Guy*. Players that keep placing the sculptures in positions that are impossible to maintain or physically painful can easily be spotted with this exercise.

Other thing to watch for is which players undo the work the previous artists made. The idea is to build art together, not to destroy previously done work in order to push your own ideas. Make this clear by asking the sculptors, when they're in front of their original work again, to what extent the works still looks anything like what they started with.

Seven Up

Game

Everyone in a circle, start counting to 7 while waving right arm up and down to the same rhythm you're counting. After 7 switch to the other arm, then the right leg, then the other leg. At the end of the last leg of 7 go back to the original arm and do the same thing counting to 6, and so on down to 1-1-1.

Shootout

Game

Excellent game to get to know each other's names. Everybody's a cowboy or cowgirl, you get them in a circle and ask them to test their revolvers. Have them shoot up in air, not at each other (yet). Then ask the group to concentrate; when everybody's quiet, call someone's name. That person needs to drop to the floor as fast as he can. His neighbours take a shot at him; if he's not down fast enough, he dies (making gruelling sounds). If he's down before a gun is fired, the neighbour who fired last dies.

Insist that for every shot there should be at least one victim. If's there's any confusion about who shot first, they should all spontaneously die.

Repeat till only 2 players are alive. Place those 2 back to back in the middle of the room, and give them a sign to start walking away from each other. When they hear you drop a coin (or a key ring, or whatever) they turn around as fast as they can and shoot the other. Again, at least one victim, and if they're not sure who shot first they should both gladly die.

Variations

A shot can only be fired after a player has made a 360 degree spin.

Notes

This is really a game about *Chivalry* and not about winning. Use this game early in a workshop to spot the students that stubbornly refuse to be shot and correct them. You could consider your moment of death you moment of glory Show off how willing you are to accept you own death, and die with enthusiasm.

Sideways

Game

In this game we play a scene, in which the back wall is the 'floor', and the floor is a wall. So, if you are 'standing' in the scene, you would be lying on the floor, and if you're lying down, you'd really be standing against the back wall.

This setup allows players to do all kinds of weird things, like defying gravity, or become a bat that's hanging upside down off the wall.

Silly Stinky Sexy

Game

4 players. Each player endows each of the other players with either sexy-ness, silly-ness or stinky-ness. Have them play a scene in which people come together, at a party, a picnic, in church.

Afterwards, ask the audience if they could see who endowed who with what.

Simon Says

Game

You are Simon, and you tell the players to do exactly what Simon tells them to do, but only if Simon's sentence starts with "Simon says". Any time a player does what Simon tells his to do, without preceding that with "Simon says" is out.

Tell the players the game starts when you say "Simon says the game has started". Then try to trick them into doing stuff they're not supposed to do. Ask them e.g. if they understand the rules; whoever nods is out. Try telling players that are out they can join in again; if they do they're out again.

Simple Continuation

Game

A scene is started, played by 2 to 4 players. Mid-scene the MC interrupts, and all characters are replaced by new players. The new players should take over the original characters, and stick to the story that was being developed.

Sitting Standing Lying

Game

Silly game to teach fast acting. 3 players play a scene. At any point in time, there should always be one player standing, one player sitting and one player lying down. As soon as a sitter stands up, the stander needs to sit down.

Try to justify the moves!

Six Episodes

Game

Excellent game to teach group storytelling. Give a big task, like 'The launch of a new flavour of coke', or 'Building a new clubhouse for the girl scouts'. The players get 1 minute to prepare 6 scenes, in which the given task needs to be completed. After 1 minute there is no more discussing, they just play the 6 scenes.

Time it and see if they can make their minds up. Quarrelling will just slow them down, so this will only work if players agree; they should be immediately *Accepting* any usable ideas.

Slide Show

Game

Give one player a big activity, perhaps a trip through the jungle, or the construction of a home. This player needs to present a slide show; the other players will play what's in the slides.

Notes

The idea is that the story is built both by the presenter, and by the images the other players present in the slides. Side coach players not to simply just 'build' what the narrator has described, but to extend it, to build/show the sequel or next step in the story.

SloMo Samurai

Game

Tell the players they are Samurai, and their right forearm is a poisoned sword. Then have them do a slow motion sword fight.

The only way to fend off a 'sword' is by blocking it with your right arm. If another player's sword touches your body on any other part than your right forearm, you die a gruesome death (also in slow motion).

Notes

Players should not speed up when they are about to get 'killed', but rather 'let themselves be killed'. Good game to teach a little *Chivalry*.

SloMo Tag

Game

Play tag, but in slow motion. Immensely entertaining if played well; players are not to escape the tagger by making a sudden movement, and the tagger cannot lash out to tag another player. Tell players to breathe, scream and groan in slow motion.

You may want to have the players exercise walking in slow motion first, to make sure they are aware of how they (naturally) move, and learn how to stick with that in slow motion.

Solitaire

Game

All players but one spread along opposing edges of a wide surface. The player in the middle runs from one end of the space with closed eyes. The others prevent the runner from deviating too much left/right, and catch the runner at the end.

This is more difficult than it sounds. It's like after a couple of steps most people start sensing a looming wall in front of them.

Solo Doors

Game

A solo exercise. Enter, as a character, through a door. Make the environment clear (by means of the (kind of) door). In that environment, address your character as a different character, then one of the characters (you again) leaves (through the door, or through another door/window/hole/whatever).

Do this fairly fast and long enough so you run through your easy characters. You can shelve any interesting characters you discover of course.

Excellent exercise to help you establish the *Platform*. This is like a solo variation on *Ding Characters*.

Sound Circle

Game

Everybody in a big circle. One player starts the game by making a gesture and a sound to his right neighbour. The neighbour immediately imitates gesture and sound, then turns to his right neighbour and makes a totally different gesture and sound.

Tell players not to preconceive, ask them to throw themselves into this exercise.

Variations

Instead of passing the sound/gesture to your neighbour, players can pass it to any player in the circle.

Try the game without imitating the sound/gesture received; just have players turn around and throw a new gesture/sound to their neighbours as fast as possible.

Sounds Like a Song

Game

Play a scene (or series of scenes). At any time, anyone can stop the scene and say 'Sounds like a song', after which the player(s) sing a song based on the last line that was spoken, or last action that was done.

Space Jump

Game

This is like an extended *Freeze Tag* game. 4 players. One player starts miming an everyday activity or routine. A second player (or the MC) calls Freeze and the first one freezes. Second player builds another scene based on the frozen position of the first player.

The other 2 players enter the same way. Once players 3 and 4 are in, as soon as Freeze is called, 2 and 3 take on their positions in which they were frozen, and continue their scene. And so on backwards.

As soon as player 1 is back alone in his activity, he needs to finish it and that ends the game.

Split Screen

Game

Divide the stage in a left and a right half. The right part becomes the left and vice versa, and the division in the middle becomes a 'wall'.

Then play a scene with 4 players and only 2 characters. When a player leaves the stage to the left hand side, his character, played by another player, should enter from the right.

The character should stay the same, even though it's played by a different player.

Notes

The centre of the stage cannot be crossed as it is a wall. As a gimmick one might decide to make a hole in the wall, but stepping through this hole would make the character appear at the other side of the 'room' Hard to justify...

Sportz Centre

Game

3 players, and an everyday activity (brushing your teeth, washing your car). In this game, the everyday activity is performed as if it were done at the Olympics or at a world championship. One player is the athlete, and the two others are in a TV studio. One is the interviewer who interviews the athlete's trainer, as the athlete performs the task.

Usually, something goes wrong and the athlete fails miserably. Gimmicks may include:

Interviewing the athlete on the field after the win (or the disaster)

Asking for a replay of a particularly dramatic moment

Asking for a replay with a different camera (different angle)

Squeezer

Game

Get everyone into a circle, holding hands. One player starts the game by squeezing the hand of one of his neighbours. The receiver then squeezes the hand of his other neighbour, thus generating a 'squeeze wave' through the circle.

Variations

Squeezes can run in different directions, and you can have more than one squeeze wave cycling through the circle at a time

Instead of squeezing, you can make players communicate by pressing (or even slapping) hands together

Squeezes can run at different rates. This can be controlled by letting nobody squeeze their neighbours as long as the squeeze they receive is not over yet

You can have one player try to 'detect' the squeeze (try and squeeze as unnoticeably as possible)

Story Story Die

Game

Players form a line on the stage. A title for a story, and a story genre is obtained from the audience. The MC starts the game by pointing to a player, who needs to start telling the story. At any point in time the MC can switch to another player, who needs to continue the story flawlessly, even if the switch happened in the middle of a sentence or even in the middle of a word.

Players that hesitate, or whose sentences are not grammatically correct or don't make sense, are booed out of the game, by the audience yelling 'Die'. The last player left ends the story.

Story To A Chair

Game

A solo character exercise. Tell a story to a few chairs. Any story, and the story does not really matter. Then, as you go, start playing all the characters. Feel free to narrate in between.

Make your story such that it becomes easy to establish the character. Start with something like 'Jodi didn't really like leaving the house' -Which would point yourself to playing somebody with an outdoor phobia.

Stretching

Game

As a warm-up, let's do some simple stretching exercises. Everyone in the group shows a stretch of a body part, and that is then done by all others. Repeat until the whole body has been stretched.

Notes

On a silly note, try stretching unstretchable body parts: eye balls, ears, hair, noses, toenails.

Stunt Double

Game

A scene is played by 2 players. Every time a player needs to do something difficult/unpleasant, another player jumps in as a stunt double. When done, the stunt double freezes the scene and the original player continues the scene.

Sung Story Die

Game

This is like *Story Story Die*, but sung. Get suggestions, and sing a song to that suggestion. When the host points to another player, that player continues the song. Both music and lyrics should fit flawlessly, otherwise the player is out.

Can be done with without a musician. Without is a bit easier as the rhythm can be broken a bit more easily. Then again, continuing the musical line can be more difficult.

Supernova

Game

Nice energy builder. All players dispersed around the room, have everyone stand up comfortably, feet apart, eyes closed.

Ask your players to imagine they've got a ball of energy hiding in their chests, radiating warm light.

Ask them to imagine this light and energy starts filling their chest, their arms and legs, their hands and feet, their head, their whole body.

Then ask the players to imagine this light starts shining out of their bodies, through their eyes, their fingers and toes, filling the whole room. Then imagine the light starts filling the whole building, the street, the city, the country, the whole world.

Finally, imagine this warm light starts reaching into the skies, up to the moon, overpowering the sun, and filling the whole of the universe.

End the exercise by asking the players to open their eyes.

Surprise Movement

Game

Have everyone walk around leisurely. Tell them to stop and start make a movement, a gesture, a sound, anything really. Let the players repeat the gesture until they know what they 'are'.

The idea is not to preconceive, but to let it happen. Players may turn out to be dish washers, ushers, lawn mowers, ping pong balls, whatever. Explain that there are no wrong answers.

Tell the players just to acknowledge what they 'are' for themselves, and then move on, stop again and make another gesture/movement/sound.

Survivor

Game

Four to six players play a scene. Then the audience chooses one of the players to get "voted off the island." The remaining players do the scene again, covering everything that happened the first time. Then another person gets voted out, and so on until one person has to act out the scene all by themselves.

There are various ways of re-playing the original scene, even when only one player left: player can do a monologue, can play all original characters himself, you name it...

You can play this for an audience, but it's also a great listening and paying-attention exercise.

Swedish Sculptors

Game

This one is an extension of *Sculptors*. Divide the class in 2 groups, same number of players in every group. One group is clay, and they close their eyes. The other group are sculptors.

The sculptors build one sculpture out of all the 'clay' players. The sculpture is finished when all of the players touch someone else (so all are connected to the sculpture). The artists cannot 'push' the clay into position. They need to 'pull' parts of the clay into position without actually pulling. 'Pulling' is done by touching a body part with an open hand, and then moving the hand about. They 'clay' players need to 'follow' the moving open hands.

As soon as the sculpture is finished, the sculptors move away, and re-build the statue, themselves now becoming clay. The (original) clay players keep their eyes closed. As soon as the imitation sculpture is finished, the clay players, eyes still closed, try to find 'themselves' in the imitation. When everybody has found themselves the game is over, and the clay players assess to what extent they found 'themselves' and to what extent the imitation is exact.

Switcheroo

Game

This is like *Simple Continuation*, except that the MC interrupts the scene several times, and at each interruption all actors in the scene get switched; no new actors join in, and no actors leave. See also *Hat Continuation*.

Sybil

Game

This is basically a one-person *Long Form*. In this format the player plays all characters. The play typically starts with a character monologue and then goes into scenes alternated with more monologues.

One could summarize the 'rules as:

You play all the characters and their dialogue in the scenes

Monologues are either internal (to the character) or to the audience, addresses as a group (a minister preaching to a church, a person introducing himself at a job interview).

Origin

The format is attributed to Andy Eninger. The name is based on a book with the same title, about Sybil Dorsett, a survivor of child abuse who was diagnosed with the first multiple personality disorder. He allegedly played host to 16 separate personalities.

More info can be found on www.sybilisation.com.

Synchro Clap

Game

All players in a circle. One player starts the game by making eye contact with another player. Then, both clap their hands simultaneously. The 'receiving' player then makes eye contact with another player, and they synchro-clap. And so on.

Once a firm rhythm is established, start accelerating slowly.

Telltales

Game

We're doing almost exactly this for two weeks at the beginning of April with a cast of 5. We call it "Telltales" and it ROCKS. We don't restrict the actors to interacting with invisible characters though. Our cast of five gets one ask-for each at the top of the show, and then each person is free to play solo scenes with invisible characters, addressing the audience, musing to themselves, speaking on the telephone, just being physical and so on until another player enters, at which point they have to leave. Over the course of the evening we build a complete play (and the actors can play multiple characters too if they want). We're doing 45 minutes of scripted monologues in the first half, and then a 45 minute Telltales in the second half. All the info is on our website, and look out for this show in "plugs" shortly!

The Bag

Game

This is a group exercise for building *Characters*. One player on a chair, up to 5 other players sit in front of his. The player on the chair starts by taking something out of a big mimed bag. He holds the object in front of his and names the object Anything that comes to mind is just fine (see *Warehouse, Open Your Hand or Presents*).

The other players start asking the middle player questions about the object, why he has it, what it might mean to his. After a few questions, he is asked to take another object from the bag. Again, this can be anything and need not be related to the first object that came up. This prompts more questions, and more objects.

Continue until we know the character that is sitting on the chair.

Notes

The idea of the exercise is to construct the character as a group. Both objects, questions and answers to the questions will provide clues to who the person on the chair might be. Avoid very leading questions, although any element in the questions should probably be accepted.

As soon as the person on the chair has an idea of who he might be, what his state of mind might be, how old he might be, what his *Status* might be, he should start showing these qualities, until he really 'becomes' the character. Use voice and body language to express this.

The Bat

Game

This is a *Long Form* format based on *Blind Harold*. It is basically a long form played with the lights out in a theatre.

You can download mp3 files of a couple of Bat performances off the website of the Impatients.

The Gerbil

Game

Invent a silly dramatic story, and explain it to the audience. Classic example is the following: "After fixing the roof, Roger decided to clean the house, including the cage of Mary's gerbil. He put the animal in a frying pan, from which it escaped to the roof, where it got stuck in some fresh tar. Roger put it back in its cage, where it got smothered by the fresh woodchips. Roger tried to use a solvent to clean the creature, but the solvent fumes cause the creature to die of a cardiac arrest. At that point Mary walks in".

This is when the scene starts: Roger needs to explain what happens, but as soon as the audience starts laughing Roger is replaced by another player who gets a new shot. The idea is to try and play the scene without getting the audience to laugh.

Notes

Don't stick to the gerbil story. You can invent any silly story for this game.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice

Game

3 players, form a line (or sit down). The audience provides questions or problems for which they need advice. The 3 players provide good, bad, and really bad advice.

Have the MC choose who provide what advice, so everyone can have a stab at really bad advice.

If the 'bad advice' is really bad, then the Ugly advice should be even worse.

You can play this as a *Die* game. If a bad advice is not followed by an even worse advice, replace the last player by another one.

The Magnet

Game

Played in pairs. One player becomes a sculpture, standing still, while his partner closes his eyes. He needs to explore the statue, with his eyes closed, and then tries to become the same statue.

The Party

Game

One player plays a character that is having a party. The other players will be the guests, and the audience provides us with who the guests might be. Of course the host does not know who the guests are. His task is to guess who the guests might be, based on hints the guests offer.

The game is over as soon as the host has guessed all guests.

Variations

Use quirks instead of characters.

The Scream

Game

Everybody in a circle, watch the ground. On your sign, everybody lifts their head and either looks straight, left or right. Whenever 2 people look each other in the eyes, they scream as loud as they can, as if they're startled, and then drop dead.

Repeat till only one or 2 players are alive.

Three Line Environment

Game

Played with 2 players. They get 3 lines (first player gets 2 lines, second one gets one line). Using no more than 3 lines (A-B-A) they need to establish their *Platform*; who they are, where they are, when and why.

Three Line Solo

Game

This is a solo exercise. Play a 3 line scene with 2 characters. Play both characters yourself. Repeat at high speed so you run through your 'easy' characters fast.

Three Melodies

Game

Ask for 2 occupations. Then do a 4-beat scene as follows:

Player 1 sings about how great and satisfying his job is, but he's missing something critical, or has a minor little problem with it (melody 1)

Number 2 does the same (to a second melody)

Both characters meet in a bar, complaining about their problems. They summarize their problem in one line each (to finish their song), something like "I got plenty of x but I'm missing y"

Then they solve each other's problem (fitting each other's x to the other's y), they do this in a duet to a third melody.

Three Noses

Game

A fun and silly game. Let everyone walk leisurely around the room. When you shout '3 Noses' the players must form little groups, each group consisting of 3 touching noses.

Use your imagination. As for 7 left big toes, 2 earlobes, 9 fingers, 4 nipples, 5 bellybuttons. Repeat till everyone is giggling.

Notes

This is a great game for new groups, as it lets the players get a feel (literally) for each other.

Three Rules

Game

Get 3 rules from the audience, e.g. players have only one arm, players can't use a word that contains an 's' and after every question uttered players need to yell 'Yess!'. Players then play a scene, obeying the 3 rules. For examples of what else might be used as a rule see the other games in the *Limitations* category.

Three Sentence Story

Game

2 players. 3 unconnected sentences are provided by one player; the other builds the shortest possible story incorporating the 3 sentences.

Timed Scenes

Game

Here are a couple of different ways to time scenes (apart from using your watch)

Time a player can keep his head immersed in a bucket of water

Time it takes the audience to throw 20 socks onto the stage

Time it takes for an audience member to finish a beer (or a series of beers)

Time it takes a player to go get a burger

Timeline

Game

A scene is played, number of players unlimited. The scene starts in prehistoric times, and evolves through the ages, till it ends in the future.

The idea is to stick to one and the same story line, but as time progresses, characters may take on characteristics or use attributes appropriate to the 'time'. Of course, every characteristic and attribute needs to be justified and take the scene forward.

Tossing

Game

Eight players form 2 lines, facing each other, and mesh their forearms together, to form a platform to 'launch' another player up in the air and catch him again. Do make sure that your platform is sturdy (holding the other players by the wrists seems to be most solid).

Touch to Talk

Game

In this handle players play a scene in which they can only use speech when they touch each other.

Notes

Fun when played in locations when people don't usually touch each other, like a confession chair, a sauna.

Don't go for the easy option of just touching your partner's forearm or shoulder. There are so many ways to touch each other. Try hugging, fighting, baptizing, tickling.

Translate Gibberish

Game

This is best played with an odd number of players. Everyone in a circle. The first player gives a gibberish word to his right neighbour, who translates the word. The next player provides the next gibberish word, and so on.

Variations

The receiver can provide both the translation, and a new gibberish word.

You may want to add the origin of the language along with the translation.

Notes

Any gibberish word might be translated as 'banana' of course, but that is not the idea of the exercise. For your translation, use the first thing that comes to mind. You may be inspired by the whole sound of the word (it might sound like something 'known'), or parts of the word (only the vowels, or only the consonants), or by the intonation of the 'giver', or even by his expression or body language.

Try gibberish in different 'languages' or 'accents'.

Translation for the Deaf

Game

We need 3 players for this game. One will be an expert on a topic provided by the audience; another will be the interviewer. The third will provide simultaneous translation for the hearing impaired, using 'sign language'.

Notes

This works best if the interview itself does not go too fast, so the translator has plenty of time to translate. Also helpful are returning keywords that the translator can always translate the same way.

A gimmick is to translate everything literally, even 'dummy' words, like 'oh', 'great', 'hm hm'.

Triple Play

Game

This is really a series of 3 3-act plays mixed. Three separate plays are played, each based on different audience suggestions, and not related at all. We first see the three first acts for every play, then the three second acts, and finally the three final acts.

Variations

Some folks play each act in a different style, usually a kind of play (say Shakespeare), a kind of movie (say a spaghetti western) and something musical (say a musical or an opera).

Trivial Pursuit

Game

MC asks the audience to pick Trivial Pursuit cards. Players line up, and the MC reads questions from the cards picked by the audience. Players invent the funniest answer to these questions.

Notes

The MC needs to screen the questions; a question like 'In what year electricity was invented' should be avoided. As there are 6 questions on a card, go for the question that is vaguest and offers most options.

Variations

Read the answer, and let the players come up with the question. See also *Reverse Trivial Pursuit*.

Tug-O-War

Game

Divide the class in 2 groups and have them mime a Tug-o-war fight. See if the mimed rope does not stretch or shrink somebody wins (i.e. one group gladly loses (see *Chivalry*))

Variations

Do 2 per 2. Or try men against women.

Turning Circle

Game

Fun game to warm up those muscles and get the blood pumping. Everyone in a circle. The circle starts running (slowly) clockwise. As soon as anybody shouts 'go', the circle changes direction, without anybody bumping into someone else.

TV News

Game

3 players, who play characters in a TV newscast. One will be the lead anchor, another will do the weather, and the third is a reporter at a location. Then, a newscast is played.

Variations

Ask for an audience suggestion for a central theme in the newscast.

Typewriter

Game

This is a nice handle to structure scenes. One of the players is the Narrator. He has a (mimed) typewriter and starts the scene by reading aloud as he types. As soon as the Narrator has given a few elements, the players take over and start playing the scene.

At any point, the Narrator can take over again, perhaps switch to another location, introduce new character, provide tilts or flashbacks.

Variations

When a scene goes bad, the Narrator can mime ripping a couple of pages of his story apart, and restart the scene (or the story).

Verses

Game

Scene is played in verses, that is, every player need to rhyme to himself. Nice handle to combine with a Shakespeare style.

Voices From Heaven

Game

Excellent game for building characters and group-storytelling. 4 players, ask the audience who they are, what their occupation would be.

These 4 characters have died together, and they are going to tell us how that came about. Players line up. The game is played in 3 rounds. In every round, each player offers some information about how they happened to die. At the end of the thirds round, they should all be dead.

Notes

It's fun to take risks If in the first round each of the players just offers what they happened to be doing the day they died, and where. It is quite a challenge to get these 4 stories together, including the deaths of all characters, by the end of the third round.

See also *Goon River* for a more open, more free *Long Form* version of the same *Handle*.

Walking by Numbers

Game

Every player finds himself a spot in the room, make sure players can see each other. When you give a sign, exactly 1 person starts walking. Whenever that person halts, one person, and only one person starts walking.

Gradually increase the number of walkers. See also *Group Freeze*.

Walkout

Game

You need at least 3 players for this one. Give each player a word. Start playing a scene with 2 players. As soon as a player hears his word, he has to leave the scene. As soon as he hear his word again, he needs to walk into the scene again. Walkouts and re-entrances need to be justified.

Walk-over Association

Game

Another way of playing association games. Place all players at one end of the room. Ask them to name, for themselves, all the things they think of when you throw them the word 'Banana' (or anything else).

For every word they come up with they can take a step. They should keep thinking of stuff until they reach the other side of the room. Then throw them another word.

Notes

Watch for players that take unreasonably big steps. Ask them if they are afraid they will run out of ideas.

Variations

You can combine this with *Last Letter*.

Warehouse

Game

Let the players walk around leisurely. Tell them they are in a big warehouse, with lots of shelves and cabinets, packed with junk.

Let the players reach out, take something from a shelf, and name it. Players should not preconceive, just open their hands and mime taking something from a shelf, and see what it becomes. Once they've named it for themselves, they place the object back, move on to another shelf and pick up something else.

Notes

If players find this difficult, have them play *Presents* first.

See also *Open Your Hand*.

What are you doing

Game

This is really a *Dissociation* game, but fun to play. Everyone at one end of the room, form a long line. The first player of the line steps into the room and starts miming an activity. As soon as the activity is clear, player 2 approaches player 1 and asks 'What are you doing'.

The first player answers something that has nothing to do with what he's actually doing. E.g. if player 1 is cutting someone's hair, when asked what he's doing he might say, "I'm reading the newspaper".

First player moves away, and the second player starts miming the activity stated by the previous player. A third player comes up to player 2, asks what he is doing, and so on.

Play until everyone has mimed something, and has answered the question.

Notes

Other dissociation games are *Malapropism* and *Dissociation*.

What Happens Next

Game

One player in the middle, the others sit aside. Any person can give the middle player a task, which he performs, and then he asks 'What happens next'? Any player may suggest what needs to happen next, but the idea is for the group to construct a coherent story.

Notes

The player in the middle should only and strictly be doing what he's told; it is up to the players at the side to construct the story.

What Has Changed

Game

Played in pairs. One player observes another closely. Then he closes his eyes, and his partner changes three things in his appearance. He opens his eyes again and tries to discover what has changed.

What Would He Be If

Game

Choose one player and let him stand in front of the class. Then ask the whole class to think what he would be if he were a car, a flower, a building, an era, a foreign country, a mineral, a beverage, your name it.

Notes

Tell the group there are no wrong answers. You may want to ask players what triggered their responses. The answers will probably vary widely.

If you are doing a series of workshops, it may also be interesting to play this game early on, before people know each other, and then again after a couple of weeks, when everyone has gotten to know everyone a bit better. See if the answers are any different.

Whoosh

Game

Everybody in a circle. Start with one person, who waves both hands to his/his neighbour, saying 'Whoosh'. The next person passes the Whoosh to his neighbour, and that way the Whoosh is passed around the circle.

There's 4 other sounds/movements that can be made.

'Wow': indicated by saying Wow, and moving both arms down. A Wow changes the direction of the Whoosh

'Zap': instead of passing the Whoosh to your neighbour, it gets zapped to the person you point to.

The receiver continues with either a Whoosh to his neighbour, or another Zap to another person.

A Wow after a Zap returns to the Zapper.

'Grooooooovelicious': for this one the whole group bends down and up again in a kinda groovy way, all saying Grooooooovelicious. Afterwards, the person who started the Groovelicious sets the Whoosh in motion again, in any direction.

'Freakout': indicated by waving both hands in the air. Everybody starts screaming and moves to the centre of the circle. When everybody's freaked out a new circle is formed, and the starter of the Freakout sets the Whoosh in motion again (or Zaps, or does a Grooooooovelicious).

Variations

You can invent other sounds and gestures. You might replace Whoosh by a kind of Vroom-Vroom, as if you're in a car, and replace Wow by the sounds of brakes ('iiiiii') etc.

Who Where Why Am I

Game

One player leaves the room. The audience provides:

Where we are, and when (what era)

Who the player will be (can be a person, or just his occupation)

A physical handicap for the player (perhaps he's blind ?)

A problem the player has

Then a scene is played, in which the other players need to coach player 1 into guessing each of the items above, without giving any explicit clues. Example: scene is played on the Red Square in Moscow, in 2050, where a limping salesman of vacuum cleaners never sells any vacuum cleaners, since his prices are quoted in roubles instead of Euros (Russia is obviously part of the Eurodollar zone in 2050).

Without Sound

Game

A scene is played, in which no talk and no sounds are allowed.

Without Words

Game

A scene is played, in which the players are not allowed to talk. Sounds, like slamming doors, running water, singing birds, echoing footsteps are allowed.

Word at a Time Expert

Game

3 players: one is the interviewer, and the other 2 are an expert on a subject chosen by the audience.

The expert is really one person, with 2 heads, and answers to the interviewer's question are provided word by word, one word at a time per player.

Also known as *Oracle*. ; use an ancient Greek oracle instead of an expert, and have the audience ask the oracle questions about life & love.

Variations

The interviewer can raise the stakes, e.g. by pimping the expert into a word-at-a-time-song.

Word at a Time Letter

Game

Play in pairs. The 2 players will compose a letter, one word at a time. Have them actually write down the letter. Anything, even 'where' on the paper one starts writing, is an offer.

No need to side coach, but the possibilities are endless; thing about greeting cards, love letters, legal stuff, promotional letters, suicide notes, etc.

Word at a Time Scene

Game

This is like *Word at a Time Expert*, but with a bit more scene work. 2 players, speaking one word at a time, alternating between the players. The scene is starting by stating who they are, or where they are. Example: "We-are-on-a-sunny-beach". The players then actually play that, and build a story, word at a time, and actually playing the story at the same time.

For example: "We-see-a-dead-whale"; the players should actually see the whale, and do something with it. There is no need to 'say' everything before doing it (use our motto: Play it, don't say it).

Notes

Players have an adventure together; the story needs to happen to both of them, they are not to play against each other.

As many players tend to verbosity, use a director that 'cuts' the scene and tells the players what to do. Example: "Give the whale mouth-to-mouth".

Variations

Allow a third character to enter the scene, playing against the two others. Now the lines are done word per word, by 3 players, but we have 2 characters. This gets extremely silly/messy To create some order out of this chaos make sure the third player (i.e. the second character) has a different voice (different accent or pitch). Unlikely to produce interesting stories, but quite hilarious.

Word at a Time Song

Game

This is like *Word at a Time Scene*, but here the players improvise a song. Song can be sung to a known melody (makes things a bit easier), or on a tune played on the piano. Tell the piano player not to play too fast, though.

Word at a Time Story

Game

This is an exercise to train group narrative. All players sit in a circle. We are going to tell a story one word at a time. Each player provides one word of a sentence. End of a sentence can be indicated by a player saying 'period', although that is not necessary.

Notes

This is more difficult than it sounds, especially with newbies. If you're working with novice players have them try a familiar story. Like Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs first. Summarize the story before they get started, to make sure they're all on the same story. Don't be surprised if gagsters manage to smuggle atomic bombs and crashing aircraft into the story. Ask the group if they can see/understand the reasons why their story sucks.

You can also play this a challenge with newbies: divide the group into 2 circles, and have them compete each other See which group can finish the story first.

Word Ball

Game

Another association game. All players in a circle. One player starts by tossing a word to another player. The receiver associates on this word, and throws his association to yet another player.

Variations

Try this in combination with *Last Letter* or *Free Association Lines*

Instead of just tossing word, have the players throw a soft ball, or a towel tied in a knot to each other try with multiple 'tossers' at once.

World's Worst

Game

Not exactly theatre, but fun if played well. Players line up, and the audience provides verbs, hobbies and occupations. The players need to come up with the worst possible way of doing/being what the audience suggests.

Yes Lets

Game

Excellent warm-up, and great introduction to *Accepting*. Pick a group activity, like throwing a party or organizing a picnic. One player starts, saying "Let's ..." filling in what he wants to do. Then he starts actually doing what he said he wanted to do. A second player jumps in, saying "Let's ..." do

something else, to advance the group activity. Both players say "Yes, let's do that" and start doing whatever suggested. Third player jumps in, suggests what to do, and again all players loudly agree to do it, and actually do it. Continue till everyone has suggested something.

See also *Yes Lets Or Rather Not* for a more advanced version of this exercise.

Yes Lets Or Rather Not

Game

This is a bit controversial, and you probably don't want to do this with newbies. This one goes a bit like *Yes Lets*: all players on stage, someone provides a location, e.g. a beach.

One player suggests an action. All players that like the action yell 'Yes, Let's do that' and start doing it. Whoever does not like the suggestion steps out sits down. Game continues till only one player is left.

Notes

This one is a bit controversial as players will object that (one of) the main ideas in Improv is to accept, and in this game one can reject a suggestion.

The idea behind this exercise is that we want our players to be *Mr. Nice Guy* Players should try to make their co-players happy. The problem is to learn what suggestions are 'good', which suggestions make our other players happy. And that's what we're trying to learn with this exercise.

Attitude is important for this one:

Players should not feel inhibited to step out (i.e. they should not feel that they are not accepting

Players should not feel rejected when others step out. Be happy about that. You are learning which suggestions make others happy! (See *Chivalry*).

You're Fired

Game

This is a scene with 2 players, in which the lines are scripted. Here's the script:

(1) {Knocks on a door}

(2) Come in. You know why I called you?

(1) {Indicates he does not know why}

(2) {Hands 1 a (mimed) piece of paper}

(1) I thought you wouldn't take that into account?

(2) You're fired.

(1) Fine. I hated that stupid job anyway.

Have the players play that scene. They need to stick to the script, but can really do anything as long as they don't add any lines. It probably won't be all that interesting.

Then make them replay the scene, but give them a side coaching (which the other player and the audience or the rest of the group don't hear). See if the scenes become any more interesting. Things you might give a player could be: -

- You're nervous, happy, sad, afraid of the other
- The other smells nice/stinks
- You've been eating beans/garlic
- You turn into a crow/monkey/cow
- You are in a wheelchair
- You try to make a pass at the other
- Your underwear doesn't quite fit (too small)
- You are a bit deaf, you can't find your glasses, you lose a contact, lose your dentures
- You are a kleptomaniac

Notes

Players can do quite a lot without deviating from the script. They can build/open doors, windows, cabinets, make all kinds of noises or faces.

Remind players they can switch status. Perhaps they could try and make clear what's on the note?

Is it bad, or petty, or funny, or sad?

Variations

Feel free to come up with a different scene, with different lines.

Zapping

Game

4 players, each chooses a TV format, like the News, a documentary, a Pokemon show, you name it. The audience provides a central theme, and the MC will 'zap' through the channels. Miraculously, all broadcasts cover the same theme.

Zulu(1)

Game

All players form a line, facing the audience. Audience suggests a general product category, like soup or family cars. Players then have to come up with original new names for (new) products in that category.

Zulu(2)

Game

All players form a line, facing the audience. Audience suggests a general product category, like soup or family cars or candy bars.

The MC now points to a player, who needs to keep coming up with original names for a product of that category. No doubles are allowed, neither are existing brand names. A player that makes a mistake 'dies' (when the audience yells 'Die'). The MC can switch players at any time, and the game lasts till there is only one player left.