

Introduction to Improvisation

Improvisation, often called improv, empowers the student of theatre to communicate thoughts creatively. The purpose of the improvisation is to learn the art of composition and performance on the spur of the moment. Improv practice helps make students secure in their ability to think fast, take risks, solve problems, trust their creative ideas, and communicate with others. This art fosters the thinking skills and creativity so valued in the world of theatre and in many workplaces. Improv teaches the importance of teamwork and cooperation.

In improvisation, the actors are living in the moment and making choices based on who they are, where they are, and what they are doing. Thinking on the feet, accessing information, and instantly responding without judging are important attributes for the student of improvisation. Listening, analyzing, acting and instantly reacting can be accomplished through many of the following exercises and lots and lots of practice. It is okay to make mistakes. Students should use their first impulse to create.

Basic Principles of Improv

1. Never say “No.” Accept what is given and build from it.
2. Don’t try to be funny. You will find the best humor comes out of the relationships you have created.
3. Trust that you have the imagination to make it work and that others will jump in and help the scene along.
4. Choose to get involved in the scene. Change the stage picture. Justify behavior through action.
5. Give and take. Yield focus to others for the story’s sake.
6. Always have a reason to come on stage-make it pertinent to the scene. If you are not needed, then motivate an exit. Acknowledge all exits and entrances.
7. Give information and tell the story. Asking questions only passes the buck.
8. Stay in character and be sure your character has a stake in the scene. Think like the character.
9. Give others on stage eye contact. It helps communication.
10. Use CROW in every scene Never forget who your *character* is in the scene. Be aware of his or her *relationship* to others in the scene. Be sure your character’s *objective* is always clear to the audience. Be aware at all time of your physical location in the scene-*where you are*.

Character
Relationship
Objective
Where you are

Red Light

Profanity, unfriendly jokes about physical limitations, ethnic slurs, alternative lifestyle putdowns, and allusions to drugs or alcohol are unacceptable in the classroom. If a student presents material that is offensive, they will be asked to stop and correct. A student will have one chance to make a more appropriate choice. Any student who fails to correct or is stopped a second time forfeits the right to participate in the assignment.