



~ IMPROV THEATER ~



Theater Games to help quickly create interesting characters, dialogue and story with whatever items you have available

Fun for the whole family, all ages!

WEEK 4

Reference: Drama Games for Kids, a Beat By Beat book



Stand, Sit, Bend

Purpose: To work on physical improvisation and increase attentiveness. Encourages teamwork and focus.

Prop: Chair (optional)

Procedure:

1. Three players start
2. Ask one player to stand, one player to sit (can use a chair), and one player to bend over.
3. They improvise a scene (from a suggestion by the other players) where at any given point there must be someone standing, sitting, and bending. (Example Scene: Two students who are being disciplined after school by their teacher.)
4. If any one player changes their position during the scene, the other two must compensate.
5. As the players get better at this game, encourage them to justify their positions as they change throughout the scene.

Variation:

- If at any moment two players are in the same position consider ringing a bell to help warn them (or give this job to one of the other players). They must immediately adjust.



A Night at the Oscars

Purpose: To be creative and get out of your heads. Encourages teamwork and improv skills.

Procedure:

1. Create three groups of two players each, plus one “host”. Everyone else should sit in the “audience”.
2. Have the audience suggest three fictitious titles for movies and assign them to each of the three groups. (“Planet of the Apricots!”, “A taco paradise”, etc.)
3. The activity then plays out like a night at the Oscars, with the host presenting.
4. The host one at a time introduces the movies, and the groups come up and present their Oscar-winning scene.
5. At the end, the host has the audience vote on the winning scene.
6. The winning group comes forward and gives an improvised acceptance speech.

Vocabulary:

Audience - people watching the scene

To play - to act out



Superheroes

Purpose: To be creative and get out of your heads. Encourages teamwork and improv skills.

Procedure:

1. Player 1 takes “the stage” and Players 2, 3 and 4 line up “offstage.”
2. Ask the rest of the players to give a suggestion for a made-up superhero (Laundry Man!, Captain Toothbrush!, The Invisible Pancake!, Princess Talk Too Fast!, Dr. Never Smile! etc.) Player 1 takes on the identity of the selected character.
3. Now get a suggestion for a crisis (An asteroid is headed toward earth!, The Internet is down!, You’ve run out of milk!). The crisis can be large or small.
4. Player 1, as the superhero, starts the scene with a monologue, explaining the crisis. (To propel the scene, consider having them turn on the radio or TV to discover the problem.)
5. When Player 1 says, “If only I had some help!”, Player 2 enters. Player 1 gives Player 2 a superhero name. (“Thank goodness you’re here, Wink Girl!”). Player 2 takes on that character and joins the scene.
6. After a while of attempting to solve the crisis, Player 3 enters and Player 2 gives her a superhero name.
7. Finally Player 4 enters and Player 3 gives her a superhero name.
8. The scene continues until the superheroes find a reason to exit, in opposite order that they arrived.

Vocabulary:

Character – a person in a play

Identity – who or what the person is

Monologue - a long, tedious speech

The Stage – where the scene is performed

Offstage - not on the stage and so not visible to the audience



Scene from Real Life

Purpose: To translate ideas and convey them to others. Builds directing and communication skills.

Procedure:

1. Divide groups with 3 to 4 players in each.
2. One player in the group must tell the others a true story about an event in their life. Encourage them to describe it in as much detail as possible. This player is the “director”.
3. The director then chooses players of the group to play the various characters involved in the scene (including themselves).
4. The players improvise the scene in front of the director.
5. After each run through, the director should give notes. Then the group improvises the scene again. The goal of the director is to make the scene as believable as possible. (Because the director is vividly familiar with the real life event, it becomes easier to give notes and adjustments. The skill being developed is the ability to effectively communicate these ideas to the actors.)
6. Once the directors of each group are satisfied with their scenes, have the groups share in front of each other.

Vocabulary:

Characters – people in a play

Director - a person who supervises the actors, camera crew, and other staff for a play

Run through – rehearsal (practicing acting out the scene)



The Coffee House

Purpose: Incorporates elements of improv, gibberish, sound and movement.

Procedure:

1. Pretend the room has been transformed into a bohemian coffee house.
2. Ask four players to begin.
3. Assign each player a role as follows:
 - Player 1 = Foreign Poet (he/she must choose a specific country to be from)
 - Player 2 = Musician
 - Player 3 = Interpretive Dancer
 - Player 4 = Translator
4. The players present a poem to the coffee house “audience.” Ask them for a suggested title for the poem.
5. Once the title has been decided, the Foreign Poet presents first. The Foreign Poet improvises a poem from the suggested title using gibberish that resembles the country they are from (length should be about 4 stanzas).
6. Next, the Musician provides musical accompaniment for the Interpretive Dancer who translates the poem into movement.
7. Finally, the Translator translates the poem into English for the audience.
8. Encourage the Musician, Dancer, and Translator to mirror the same emotion of the Foreign Poet when presenting their interpretations.

Notes:

- Consider encouraging the foreign translator to include rhymes into the poem (in gibberish). This will help give it a sense of rhythm.
- If you have a big class and would like to involve more students, consider doubling up on the Musicians and Dancers.

Vocabulary:

Audience - people watching the scene

Gibberish – “Talking gibberish” means mumbling or creating your own language, with sounds and words that you make up.

Stanza - a group of lines forming the basic recurring metrical unit in a poem



Fast Forward/Rewind (DVR)

Purpose: To work on physical improvisation. Encourages kids to get out of their heads.

Procedure:

1. Two players will create a scene.
2. They ask the other players for a suggestion of a “who” and “what” (Who the players are and what they are doing.)
3. A third player is the “Remote Holder”.
4. The scene begins.
5. At any moment in the scene the “Remote Holder” can call out commands like “Pause”, “Rewind”, “Fast-Forward”, “Slow Motion”, and the players must act accordingly.
6. After a while allow a new set of players to start the process over again.
7. Some ideas for the “Remote Holder” include using the commands to make a player say a funny phrase of dialogue over and over again, or “pause” in a silly way, etc.

Note:

- If trying to include more kids, consider having three players improv a scene instead of two.
- Consider giving the “Remote Holder” a character like “Lazy dude on couch” or “Hyper 8-year old”. The player must act as this character when calling out the different commands.

Vocabulary:

Character - a person in a play

Dialogue - conversation between two or more people



Split Screen

Purpose: To focus and work on attentiveness. Encourages teamwork and creativity.

Procedure:

1. Pretend to split “the stage” into two halves. Ask two players to take the stage on the left half, and two players to take the stage on the right half.
2. Ask the other players for a suggestion for a setting for each half. (i.e. left side is a circus, right side is a dentist’s office).
3. The players on the stage right half begin a scene while the other half remains frozen. When there is a word or phrase that the players on the stage left half could use as a beginning to their scene, they repeat that word and begin their scene from that point. When this happens the stage right players freeze.
4. The two halves continue on with their scenes, each freezing when the other half is performing.
5. The goal for each half is to somehow find a way to bring the scenes together (i.e. A circus performer chips a tooth juggling and must be rushed to the dentist! Or the dentist becomes completely bored with his job and decides to join the circus!)
6. When the two halves come together, the “divider” disappears, and all four players briefly continue their scene until the instructor ends the game.

Vocabulary:

Setting - the place or type of surroundings where the scene takes place

The Stage - where the scene is performed



Fortunately, Unfortunately

Purpose: To create interesting stories by thinking quickly and creatively.

Procedure:

1. Players stand in a circle formation.
2. The objective of the group is to tell a coherent story going around the circle. Each player contributes one line at a time.
3. A leader will begin the story with one establishing sentence.
4. Then every line must alternate between beginning with “Fortunately...” and “Unfortunately...”.

Example:

- Leader: “Once there was a monkey who wanted to be a movie star.”
- Player 1: “Unfortunately, she lived in the wild far away from civilization.”
- Player 2: “Fortunately, she had a cousin who lived in Los Angeles.”
- Player 3: “Unfortunately, she had no money to buy a plane ticket to Los Angeles.”
- Player 4: “Fortunately, she was very fast at swinging through trees so she began her journey to California.”
- Player 5: “Unfortunately, her arms got so tired she had to stop and take a nap in a bear cave.”
- Player 6: “Fortunately, the bear was out running errands so she had the whole cave to herself.”

Vocabulary:

Story – a telling of events



Helping Hands

Purpose: A classic game that encourages creativity, quick thinking, and requires excellent focus.

Procedure:

1. Four players take “the stage”, two on each side.
2. For each duo, one will be the “voice” and the other will be the “arms”. The “voice” player stands with his/her hands held behind their back while the “arms” player stands behind them, pokes their hands through and provides the “arms”.
3. Give the players a 2-person scenario (see suggestions below).
4. The goal is for the players to act out the scene, having the arms and voice match and seem like one character.

Sample Scenarios:

- A principal lecturing a student for bringing his pet monkey to school.
- A chef teaching a student how to make pizza, but the student keeps eating the ingredients.
- Two muscle-builders at the gym who keeps trying to out-do each other.
- A grocery clerk and a customer checking out. The grocery clerk keeps falling asleep.

Notes:

- Encourage the “voice” players to try and justify all the movements made by the “arms”.
- Encourage the “arms” players to listen carefully to the “voice” while from time to time making physical liberties on their own.
- Encourage all players to take their time and try to remain in character.

Vocabulary:

Character – a person in a play

Scenario – an outline of a play with details of the plot and individual scenes

The Stage - where the scene is performed



Slide Show

Purpose: To make quick decisions and work on pantomime. Encourages teamwork and collaboration.

Procedure:

1. Players 1 and 2 are friends who recently went on vacation. They are showing other friends a photo slide show of their vacation.
2. Players 3, 4, 5 create the slides with their bodies through pantomime.
3. Player 6 is the “clicker”, who dims the lights between each slide.
4. Each time the “clicker” dims the lights, Players 3, 4, 5 create a different pose.
5. Then the friends explain which part of their vacation is shown and exactly what is happening in their photo, justifying the players poses.

Notes:

- Consider asking other players for a suggestion of where the vacation took place before beginning.
- Consider adding fun comments like “Oh, looks like that slide is upside down!”

Vocabulary:

Pantomime - the theatrical technique of suggesting action, character, or emotion without words, using only gesture, expression, and movement



Relationship Blitz

Purpose: To quickly establish relationships, involving the whole group.

Procedure:

1. Group stands forming a circle.
2. One player stands in the center.
3. Tell everyone in the circle they have 15 seconds to think of a specific relationship and situation they have with the person standing in the center (i.e. a robber breaking into his house, a young sibling asking for help with homework, a parent reading his terrible report card, a stranger asking for directions, etc.)
4. One by one, each player steps into the center and interacts with the center player with one line of dialogue. The center player, without being told the relationship, must respond with one line as quick as he can.
5. The game ends when everyone around the circle has had a chance to interact with the center player.

Note:

- To start, you may need to take it slow, but as the kids get better encourage them to speed up the pace.

Variation:

- After a few rounds, allow the greeting to turn into mini scenes. Then when the next player steps into the circle, challenge the students to make the scenes build upon each other to build a narrative.

Vocabulary:

Dialogue - conversation between two or more people