

# THE ACTOR'S *toolkit*

An 8 week lesson plan of  
Introductory Acting for  
Intermediate Students

*Warm Up*

# GAMES

## Introductions & Applause

Type: Warm-up.

Purpose:

A way for students to introduce themselves that establishes a supportive environment

Procedure:

Either using a real door or an imaginary door (which you create for the students), tell the group each student will come up one by one, walk through the door to "enter" the stage, introduce themselves saying "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_" and say one interesting thing about themselves (you can add on more to the speech but don't make it too long or complicated – the point is to give an incredibly easy task).

After each introduction, the audience will enthusiastically applaud as the student stays up on stage and takes in the applause.

Note:

Do NO coaching here – the point again is to let each student perform their introduction, with no criticism whatsoever. The only thing you CAN coach them on is waiting for the applause – don't let them run off the stage before they take it in.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Props Game

Type: elements of theatre

Purpose:

A way to work with props and theatre elements.

Procedure:

The prop game is an exercise for students that will get them thinking beyond their limits. To play, two to three students stand at the front of the room and are instructed to find any object in the room to use as their scene prop. After they have chosen their props they may break out into a short improvisation. The catch- their prop cannot be used as the actual item it is! This never fails to get creative juices going and a few laughs going.

# Warm Up GAMES

## What Are You Doing?

Type: improv.

Purpose: Develops focus and creativity, and reinforces concept of having an activity vs. action.

Procedure:

1. Have students volunteer. Two stand up facing the audience and the other six line up behind each of the two. (Two vertical lines facing the audience)
2. One student in the front row starts an "activity" (brushing teeth, tap dancing, swimming).
3. The other person in the front row asks "What are you doing?"
4. While that person continues to, for example, brush his teeth, he says "I'm washing my car"
5. The asker must immediately start washing his car while the first student goes to the back of the line and the next student moves up.
6. That student who just moved up immediately asks "What are you doing?" Again the other student in front must continue to wash a car while he says, for example, "I'm curling my hair."
7. And so on. Students are eliminated if they hesitate, freeze up or stop what they are doing while they say what they are doing.
8. Go until you are down to one student.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Beep Game

**Type:** Improv, Creativity

**Purpose:** A fun game to play with students who are already a little familiar with improv.

**Procedure:**

1. Ask two players to take the stage to create a scene.
2. Ask the audience for a suggestion of a "who" and "what" (Who the players are, and what they are doing.)
3. Ask a third student to be the "Remote Holder".
4. Have the scene begin.
5. At any moment in the scene the "Remote Holder" can call out commands like "Pause", "Rewind", "Fast-forward", "Slow Motion", etc and the players must act accordingly. Or BEEP to change the last word a character said.
6. After awhile allow a new set of players take the stage and start the process over again.
7. Some ideas for the "Remote Holder" : use the commands to make a player say a funny phrase of dialogue over and over again, or "pause" in a silly way, etc.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Goon River

Type: Improv.

Purpose:

A way to incorporate improv with monologue work.

Procedure:

This is a improv 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 herself. 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.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Minefield

**Type:** Ensemble Building, Focus, Stage Directions

**Purpose:** This is a fun game to play to help your students become proficient at using stage directions.

**Procedure:**

1. Choose one player to be blindfolded.
2. Ask students to scatter the floor of the stage with random objects (a book, a crumpled piece of paper, a backpack, an eraser, etc.). These objects become the "mines".
3. Place the blindfolded player at one end of the stage, while the rest of the class sits in straight lines in front of the stage.
4. The goal is for the class to direct the blindfolded player from one end of the stage to the other without touching a mine, using precise "stage direction" commands. Each person gives the blindfolded player one direction.
5. For example:  
1st Student: Take two small steps upstage.  
2nd Student: Take 4 large steps stage right.  
Etc.
6. If the blindfolded player touches a "mine", it "explodes" and their turn is over.
7. Once the turn is over, choose another player to be blindfolded while the class re-scatters the stage and plays again.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Fortunately/Unfortunately

Type: storytelling and plotting

Purpose: create plot

Procedure:

1. Explain that you are going to create a story as a group by going around the circle and adding a line each. The only rule is that the lines must alternate between: "Unfortunately...." and "Fortunately....".

For example:

"Unfortunately my flight hit some turbulence."

"Fortunately it didn't last too long."

"Unfortunately the turbulence caused an engine to fail."

"Fortunately there were parachutes on board."

"Unfortunately there weren't enough to go round."

...etc.

Encourage participants to play with the theme as it develops and to avoid too many tangents. The continuity allows the remaining participants to carefully consider their addition into the story.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Party Host

Type: Creativity, Improv

### Procedure:

1. Each player thinks of a character.
2. One person (the host) begins in the center of the room, setting up for a party.
3. Another player knocks on the door and is let in by the host. A second player must act in the manner of his/her character. A third person knocks and enters with a different character. Now the party host must guess the characters being portrayed after they interact with each other. Play continues until all of the players have entered the party and have their characters accurately guessed.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Story Tableau

Type: Creativity

Purpose: Have students connect story to physicalization and to work together.

Procedure:

1. Give students a story prompt.
2. One at a time, students will come up to add a still image to create a large tableau “scene” with the other students, working off of what other students have contributed to flesh out a scene which makes narrative sense.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Hitchhiker

Type: Improv, Creativity

Purpose: Introduce improvisation and encourage ensemble cohesion.

Procedure:

1. Place four chairs on stage to represent four seats in a car. Four students start in the car and they are going somewhere.
2. A "hitchhiker" stands up and puts their thumb out. The hitchhiker has a very strong characteristic, such as enormous sneezes, extremely old age, annoyed business person, etc.
3. One of the passengers will say "look, hitchhiker" and they will pull over to pick the hitchhiker up.
4. The hitchhiker enters the front passenger seat and the other students rotate around clockwise. The driver gets out of the car.
5. As soon as the hitchhiker enters the car, all the passengers and driver take on the hitchhiker's characteristics immediately and to the extreme.
6. They continue dialogue until new hitchhiker comes on.
7. This round robin should move very quickly.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Mirror Activity

Type: Ensemble Building, Focus.

Purpose: A great way to get students aware of body movement and working together

Procedure:

Pair students up and tell them to pick an A and B.

Tell A's that they are looking in the mirror. (Optional: Tell them it is morning and they are getting ready for the day.)

Tell them to move VERY slowly. B's are the mirror and must follow A so closely that an observer would not be able to tell who is leading and who is following.

Encourage them to mirror not only body movement but also facial expression.

Have them switch after a minute or so. Then tell them that neither is the leader or follower. You will probably have to tell them to go slower a few times.

Start again with A's but this time tell them that they are talking to themselves in the mirror as B's follow. Again let them switch and then try it with no leader and no follower.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Three Word Story

**Type:** Improv

**Purpose:** A fun beginner improv activity that involves every player at the same time.

**Procedure:**

1. Divide the class into pairs.
2. Have each pair decide on who is Player A and who is Player B.
3. Call out three words that are unrelated (i.e. "Palm Tree", "Saturn", "Shoelace")
4. Player A has one minute to tell Player B a story that somehow incorporates all three of those words.
5. After the minute is up, call out three new words. Now Player B has one minute to tell Player A a story that incorporates those words.
6. If time permits, consider asking for volunteers to share the best stories in front of the class.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Quadrants

**Type:** Creativity

**Purpose:** An active way to allow students to explore a range of emotions.

**Procedure:**

1. Create a cross in the center of the playing area. This can be done with jump ropes, chairs, chalk, etc. The goal is to make it clear there are four distinct quadrants that the students will pass through as they walk around in a circle. Tell your students that each quadrant (section) represents a different emotion.
3. Have the students walk neutrally around the circle.
4. When they cross into different quadrants, each student should notice their section and begin acting out the feeling. They can do this however they think best. Remind students there should be no physical contact with any other student. Play a few rounds. Then assign the quadrants new "feelings".

**VARIATIONS:**

- The quadrants can be used for any category that you want the students to explore, i.e. professions, ages, locations, weathers, sports, decades, etc.
- For older students, consider having them walk in slow motion. You can occasionally call out "stay put" to have them stay in their current quadrant for awhile and being to develop their "character" or "scene".
- Consider giving the students a specific prompt for each round.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Walking Blind

Type: Warm-up.

Purpose: Encourage comfortability among the group.

Encourage trust.

Procedure:

This is a silent activity.

Students work in pairs.

Partner 1 is instructed to close their eyes as partner 2 leads them around the space.

Partner 2's goal is to make their partner feel as safe as possible. They must determine what is best for their partner (without talking) – walking with both hands held, one hand held, arm around shoulder, etc.

Let them wander for 2 minutes or so, keeping their movement slow at all times. Switch.

Reflection:

How did you make your partner feel safe? What did your partner do that made you feel safe?

# Warm Up GAMES

## Factory

**Type:** Focus, Ensemble Building.

**Purpose:** Develops creativity, concentration, and group cooperation.

**Procedure:**

1. Start with one student making a noise and a simple repeatable gesture.
2. When the student has a rhythm and another student has an idea for a movement which connects to the first gesture that student joins the first student by making a new noise and movement which connects to the original gesture.
3. Each student joins in with a new noise and gesture and connects to the others in some way until all students are involved in creating the machine.

**VARIATION:** Decide on a type of machine and then have everyone create it together- everyone starts at the same time.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Meet My Friend

Type: Warm-up

Purpose:

A fun simple ice-breaker to play that will help kids get to know one another

Procedure:

1. Have each pair select an A and a B partner.
2. Instruct the kids that you are going to set a timer and for one minute A is going to tell B as many things about himself as possible. (School, grade, favorite subject, favorite food, favorite music, etc.)
3. Start timer and let them go.
4. Now, for one minute B is going to tell A as many things about herself as possible.
5. Start timer and let them go.
6. Gather everyone back into a circle.
7. Go around the circle; each student must say 3 things about their partner beginning with this phrase "Meet my friend...".

**PRO TIP:** Consider, after letting one minute run up, to tell the kids you're adding an additional 30 seconds and GO! Sometimes this will force the kids to communicate more information that goes beyond just the obvious.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Walk the Space & Greetings

**Type:** Ensemble Building, Warm-Up

**Purpose:**

To get students familiar with their environment

To get students to work together as a group

**Procedure:**

Ask the students to spread across the room.

Tell them when you tell them to they will start walking around the space. As they walk they should try to cover the space, making sure that they are evenly spread across the floor. They should be aware of each other but should not speak or communicate in any way. They should try to keep in motion at all times but be careful not to touch anyone.

**Variations:**

Walking in pairs, varying speed, as a character, as an emotion, starting & stopping, grouping based on a characteristic.

**Greetings:**

Then, ask the players to greet each other in a specific way. Encourage them to continue walking around the room, greeting different people each time. Here are some options:

# Warm Up GAMES

## People Shelter Storm

Type: Warm-Up, Ensemble Building

Purpose:

A fun game to get students comfortable with each other and working together.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into small groups; three players to a group.
2. Explain that within each group there will be two players who form a shelter, while the other player becomes the person living in the shelter. A shelter is formed by two players facing each other, arms extended high placing their palms flat against each other to create a "roof". The person living in the shelter should duck underneath.
3. Explain that you are going to call out three words: "People", "Shelter" or "Storm". When you call out "People", the people must leave their shelters and run to a different one while the shelters stay in place. When you call out "Shelter", the shelters must break apart and find a new person to build a shelter over. Finally, when you call out "Storm", everyone runs around for 5 seconds. At the end of 5 seconds new groups of 3 should form with 2 shelters and 1 person. During the "Storm", shelters can become people and people can become shelters.

For slightly older students, consider making the game competitive by having the "caller" be a student. When "storm" is called the "caller" joins the game and tries to find a group of 3. Whoever is left out becomes the new "caller".

# Warm Up GAMES

## Me You You Me

Type: Warm-up.

Purpose:

A fun, quick game to help learn the names of everyone in the class.

Procedure:

1. Have the students stand in a single line.
2. The 1st student in line (i.e. Marc) turns to the 2nd student in line (i.e. Rachel) and initiates the following script (taken from the name of the game, Me You You Me!)

Marc says his own name... "Marc" (me)

Rachel says her own name... "Rachel" (you)

Marc says Rachel's name... "Rachel" (you)

Rachel says Marc's name... "Marc" (me)

4. He continues with everyone down the line until he ends up standing at the opposite end from which he started.

5. Now the new head of the line (in this case Rachel) does the same thing, all the way down the line until she ends up at the end.

6. After the class becomes comfortable with the pattern, encourage them to speed up and do it as quickly as possible (while still speaking loud and clearly).

7. Continue until everyone has had a chance to go down the line.

# Warm Up GAMES

## ZipZapZop

**Type:** Warm-up.

**Purpose:**

**To be attentive and work on quick decision making.**

**To work on focus.**

**To raise comfortability of a group.**

**Materials:**

**A big enough space for the entire class to stand in a circle comfortably.**

**Procedure:**

**Players stand in a circle.**

**One player, Player A, claps his hands, ending in a pointing position toward the direction of another player. Simultaneously Player A will say the nonsense word "Zip!"**

**Player B repeats this action, clapping and pointing at another player, Player C, while saying "Zap!"**

**Player C repeats this action, pointing at yet again another player while saying the word "Zop!"**

**Players do not need to follow any order can clap and point at any other player they choose, but they should follow the patter of "zip, zap, zop."**

# Warm Up GAMES

## Look & Scream

Type: Warm-up.

Procedure:

1. Have the class stand in a circle.
2. Tell everyone to look down.
3. Assign a counter to count "1, 2, 3...look!"
4. On "look" everyone must look up and directly at someone in the circle.
5. If the person you are looking is not looking back at you, you are "safe". If the person you are looking at is looking back at you too, you both must scream "aahh!" and fall to the ground.
6. The counter begins another round with the remaining people standing in the circle.
7. Play until everyone is sitting or there's just one person remaining.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Human Knot

Type: Activity.

Purpose:

Help build an ensemble.

Procedure:

Group stands in circle and all come in close with hands stretched into middle of the circle.

Everyone grabs two hands - not the person next to them, and not both hands of the same person.

Tell the students they must untie the knot without anyone ever letting go of their hands.

Counsel them to go very slowly and be very gentle.

Do it once allowing the students to talk and once in silence.

# Warm Up GAMES

## Rainstorm

Type: Warm-Up, Focus

Purpose: This is a great game to play in the beginning of a session to calm down a group of high-energy students. It's simple, peaceful, and allows everyone to focus on one common goal.

Procedure:

1. The goal is to create the sound of a rainstorm using only our bodies. This requires no speaking. Ask everyone to sit with you in a circle on the floor.
2. Tell the students that they are to carefully copy the movements of the person to their left, and not switch activities until that person switches. Try to encourage them to not focus on "the leader", but instead on the person to their left.
  - Ask what other environmental sounds could be created using just our bodies?
  - For an extended activity, group the students and give them 5 minutes to create their own "soundscape". Encourage them to have a beginning, middle and end. Ask each group to share.

