

Improv Scene Work Notes

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Scene Work Basics

1. Character of the Space - Start with agreement on one or more of the following elements:
 - "Where"/Environment
 - Attitude
 - Emotion
 - Intensity/energy
 - Activity
2. Establish who you are, where you are, and what you are doing as soon as possible. Show don't tell.
3. Start scenes real and play to the top of your intelligence (the character knows what you know). This establishes a reality against which the unusual or specific can stand out. Blue doesn't show up well on blue.
4. Don't ask questions, make statements and take action
5. Yes and. Agree with and add to the reality your partner establishes.
6. Don't be coy. If you have decided something about the scene, share it.

Finding the Game

1. Listen and recognize when the first unusual thing or specific has naturally occurred.
2. If, then. Decide what pattern or world this specific thing partakes in (*if* this happened, *then* what else would happen?)
3. Play under this "umbrella" and heighten.
4. Don't make jokes. Play the game. Every time you play within the pattern of the game, that's a laugh.

Helpful Hints

1. This scene is not about _____.
2. When saying “no” people are actually trying to show something about their character (i.e., my character wouldn’t like this, do that, agree with that). Recognize that you can say “yes” and we can still know you would like to say “no” by the way you say “yes”. This way action continues and we still know how your character feels.
3. Avoid Teaching scenes. One person can’t participate.
4. Avoid transactions scenes. The scene is over once the transaction is through.
5. When in doubt, confess. Share the secret.
6. Think Action/Reaction. Be affected by and react truthfully and realistically to what your scene partner does. Think of yourself and your scene partner as Lincoln Logs, Legos, the Yin Yang Symbol, etc. If your scene partner is the “unusual” one, then often you will need to be the “normal” one or straight man.
7. Keep status in mind. This will effect the degree to which you can express your truthful, realistic responses to your scene partner’s actions.
8. OR mirror your partner. Have the same interests, opinions, likes, dislikes, passions, enemies, etc... Life is often this way. We associate with people with whom we have something in common.
9. Don’t do a scene about “it”. Name “it” quickly. The longer you wait, the more pressure there is to make “it” pretty fantastic. “It” scenes are frustrating to you and the audience.
10. Know your scene partner
11. Don’t kill your scene partner.

Final Rule

12. You can break all the preceding rules, however, most of the time you’ll be better off if you don’t. Improv rules tend to be life rules. They exist to make our work look more like life.