

Improvisation Games

Have fun! Don't chicken out! Keep it energetic! Go for it!



Group Improvs

1. Your group is involved in a talk show. This talk show deals with the problems associated with _____ (*leader chooses topic*). Everyone must have an active part with things to do and say. The sky's the limit (keep it clean). You may add elements of dance, music, spoken words, and anything else you choose to create.
2. Your group is in charge of the newscast for WSOG-TV. The reporters are known for the bloopers they constantly make during broadcasts. Everyone must have an active part with things to do and say. The sky's the limit (keep it clean). You may add elements of dance, music, spoken words, and anything else you choose to create.
3. You are on an airplane when the stewardess quietly asks the passengers one by one if anyone knows how to fly a plane. Your reactions should be interesting. Everyone must have an active part with things to do and say. The sky's the limit (keep it clean). You may add elements of dance, music, spoken words, and anything else you choose to create.
4. You are in a boat with your group members. When looking in the water, each group member sees something different. Report what you saw to each other and figure out what to do. Everyone must have an active part with things to do and say.
5. Have the class create a "town." Divide them into groups of three or four and assign them to different social groups in the town. For example one group is the governing body, another may be some local merchants. Each student must create a specific role in the group that they are assigned. Once that is established.. tell them someone is going to be murdered, (*or committed another offense*), (leader will chose murderer and murderee)... and they must figure out who did it. In order to figure, who did the murder the students must interact with each other and develop their own relationship to the other townspeople as well as create their own character.

6. Make sure you have plenty of space.. create a horizontal barrier in the off center (i.e. closer to one end of the room than the other) of the classroom (or whatever space you are using) with chairs, desks, etc. On the side that has the greater distance from the barrier gather the players. Inform them there has just been a war going on, and the only shelter is on the other side of the room. The people who are able MUST help the people who are not get to the shelter. Assign some injuries to most of the players (such as blindness, broken limbs, etc.).

7. Using "nonsense talk" just random sounds, gibberish), the two participants must meet on the street. The problem is that they do not speak the same language. One of the participants needs something (i.e., directions to a specific place in town, help finding a lost child, protection from a potential mugger, etc. These choices can be left up to the participant, or can be assigned by the teacher. In any event, the participants should not share their objectives prior to playing out the Situation.). When one participant has succeeded in achieving his or her objective, the scene starts over, with the two meeting again. This time, the other participant must try to achieve his or her objective. (This sounds confusing, but if you ask each pair to decide who is "A" and who is "B" before you begin, you can simply give the direction to have "A" play his or her objective first, then "B.")

8. This is a wonderful, simple role play for aggressive/assertive/passive responses to teasing which you might adapt or find a use for. It's very simple. It was created by a man named Bill Eyman who works with the Rhode Island Dept. of Ed: his job is to create community in schools! Anyway, the role play goes like this.

First I model for the students three responses to teasing: aggressive, passive, and assertive. I do this by pretending I am a kid and asking for a volunteer to tease me about my homework. My aggressive response has an angry face and a clenched fist and my words put the teasing student down directly. My passive response has a sad face, slumped body, and my words accept the teasing as "probably right," but then I move to student in the audience and talk about the teasing student in unfavorable terms, such as, "You know Jessica? Well, don't you think she's not very nice? I mean, you know, she's not any fun either, don't you think?" This is the most complicated response because I'm trying to show the kids that talking behind someone's back is a way of not dealing w/ the person directly and it creates problems rather than solves them. The assertive response has open arms signifying open heart and mind, eye contact w/ the teaser, and in my words I stand up for myself without putting the other person down: "I did the best I could on my homework and I'm proud of it. If you think I could do better then next time why don't you help me?" or something of the sort. Then I circulate around the room and pretend to tease kids about homework and their job

is to give an assertive response. During this I do a lot of fine tuning because often kids will use assertive, respectful language with a hostile tone; I fine tune the tone and sometimes the words. This is a great little role play and it can be done in about ten minutes; do it once a week in a classroom and you'll find kids gradually learning to be assertive.

Theatre Warm-Ups/Games 1

Have fun! Don't chicken out! Keep it energetic! Go for it!



A Crazy Cake Walk

Vocabulary

Go = walk forward

Stop = stop

Turn = make a 180 degree turn and stop in place

Jump = do a 180 degree jump and stop in place

Twizzle=do a 360 degree jump and stop in place

The group will be walking in a circle. The leader will begin calling out directions, varying order and speed. When one participant makes a mistake, i.e. turns the wrong way, forgets to stop, etc., the leader takes their place and there is a new direction caller.

The Gauntlet

The gauntlet requires the class to form two straight, equal lines about six feet across from each other. These are the walls. Two volunteers, one on each end, are blindfolded. One individual is the hunter and the other the prey. The hunter must touch the hunted before they reach the other side of the gauntlet. The hunted tries to make it to the end of the gauntlet without being touched by the hunter. This exercise defines clear objectives, explores different tactics, and challenges the students' sensory skills.

Bus Stop

Split the class into two groups for simultaneous group improv, or have one group be the audience and then switch with the other group. Students improvise that they are at a bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive. As each new passenger boards the bus, everyone on the bus adopts the attitude, personality, accent, movements, etc. of the new arrival until the bus is full. Then begin randomly letting passengers off the bus remembering to adopt the mannerisms of the passenger that boarded before the exiting individual.

Black Magic

There are two main characters in this activity - a conveyor and an interpreter. The rest of the class acts as observers. The interpreter leaves the room while the conveyor asks the class to pick an object in the room. The interpreter is called back into the room. The interpreter has to guess the object according to what the conveyor says. The object of the game is for the observers to try and figure out how the conveyor and the interpreter are communicating with one another. Observers must look for possible physical, numerical, vocal, etc., clues the conveyor might be expressing. However, the actual process of communication is simple. The object that the class picks is always called after the conveyor calls an object that is black.

Example:

The interpreter leaves the room and the class points to a book on someone's desk. The interpreter is called back into the room.

Conveyor - Is it the window?

Interpreter - No.

Conveyor - Is it that purse? (which is green)

Interpreter - No.

Conveyor - Is it that folder? (which is black)

Interpreter - No.

Conveyor - Is it that book?

Interpreter - Yes!

Conveyor - (to observers) If you think you know the answer, do not say it out loud. Go outside with the interpreter while we pick a new object. When you return, we will let you play first before the interpreter reveals the method.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

All the participants pair up. Within each pair, one player (it doesn't matter who goes first) asks the other "(their name), What are you doing?" The second player responds by naming whatever action comes to mind, from "I'm building Frankenstein" to "I'm dancing in a ballet" or whatever. The first player then immediately starts performing whatever action the other player named, and while they are doing so, the second player asks them, "____, what are you doing?" and enacts whatever action the other person names. This goes very quickly, and once it gets started, both players should always be doing something physically. Theoretically, this can go back and forth forever.

One great way to get everybody started is to declare an action yourself that one person in each group starts with, and the other will then begin the questioning.

PASS THE FACE

(This works very well in green room before a performance. It encourages players to let go of fears and to raise their energy.)

Entire group stands in a circle. While holding hands, the leader begins by turning to her/his left and passing a goofy face. Each person passes a different face. They shouldn't copy the face of the person before them.

Playing options: instead of passing goofy faces, pass emotional faces.

The Clap Game

Group gets on all fours in a circle. They place their left hand over the right hand of the person on their right and right under left of person to right. Chose a leader. The leader starts off with one clap on either right or left

hand. One clap on ground means the clap goes clockwise in the circle. Two claps on ground means the clap goes back to the person before. If you miss the clap, take to long or mess up the sequence you are out of the game. It keeps going till there is a winner. (*Or just keep playing, there doesn't have to be an elimination*).



Theatre Warm Ups/Games 2

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ENHANCING STUDENTS' SELF CONCEPT

I AM

Players have paper and pencils. On the board the leader writes:

- I am _____
- I see _____
- I hear _____
- I smell _____
- I taste _____
- I touch _____
- I feel _____
- I am _____

· Players then write a poem based on the structure above by filling in the blanks. They can write about their school, neighborhood, home, fantasy selves, or other environments. Share poems with each other.

BUILDING ENSEMBLE

1-20

Players sit in a circle

The group concentrates intensely on each other. One person in the group will start by saying "1.", Players must then "sense" which individuals in the group will say "2," then "3," then "4," etc. The purpose is to get to "20" without two or more voices calling out the same number. If at first you don't succeed, keep trying (over a period of days if needed) until the task is accomplished. Depending on the number of people in the group, like 25, some might sense that they are not to speak; some might sense that they are to call out more than one number.

GAMES FOR GETTING ACQUAINTED

MNEMONIC NAMES

- Players sit in a circle.
- Each player thinks of a simple gesture or action that relates to him/herself (examples: a bearded man might stroke his beard; someone who loves tennis might swing an imaginary racket). The leader asks for group input and suggestions if a player is "stuck." These are visual mnemonics to help us remember names.
- One person in the circle says his/her name while doing the gesture; everyone in the

circle then repeats the gesture and says the name simultaneously. The next person in the circle does the same, then everyone repeats that person's name and gesture, plus the first person's. Continue adding on down the circle, but stop after the 7th-9th person. Start a new sequence with the 8th-10th person and continue for 7-9 more names. Our brains can only hold so much information.

- When everyone in the circle has given their name and gesture, go around the circle non-stop with everyone saying the names and doing the gestures simultaneously.
- Everyone now rearranges him/herself in the circle, and all simultaneously try to repeat the names and gestures in this new order.

THE CHAIR GAME (or Fruit Basket)

All players Sit in chairs in a large circle; one player stands in the center without a chair. The person in the center calls out some category or description that might apply to some of those seated (examples: "Everyone with brown eyes"; "Everyone who's under 30 years old"; "Anyone who went jogging this morning"; "All women"). If a seated person fits the category or description called out, he/she must get out of the chair and run to another one across the circle vacated by a different person (try to avoid going to a chair recently vacated next to you). The person in the center also tries to run to a vacant chair. The person left standing in the circle with no place to sit calls out the next category or description. Continue until exhausted. A "catch all" category for everyone to vacate and move to a new chair is when someone calls out "Fruit Basket."

Caution players to play safely - no pushing, be careful when you run, etc.



Theatre Warm Ups/Games 3

Have fun! Don't chicken out! Keep it energetic! Go for it!

What is it?

Materials: A piece of fabric, about a yard square, solid color or pattern

Explanation: This game stimulates imagination by encouraging multiple answers for the same question.

How to Play: Participants stand in a circle. The leader shows the fabric to the participants, saying "What could this piece of fabric be? We're going to pass it around the circle and each of you will show us something that it could become." The leader demonstrates, turning the fabric into something (for suggestions, see list below) and stating what it is. The fabric is passed from person to person, with each participant sharing an idea. If an idea is repeated, such as "a hat", the leader asks the participant to be more specific (a turban, a bonnet), thereby making the participant come up with their own idea. If the number of participants is small enough, the fabric can travel around the circle twice. A variation on this game is to limit the ideas to a category such as clothing, or things that are the color of the fabric.

Notes: Here are some of the answers to the question, although the possibilities are endless.

- A Superman cape
- A Diaper
- A Magic carpet
- A Flag
- A Picnic blanket
- A Dog's leash
- A Toga ("One of those things they wore in Greece" was the original description)
- A Leg cast
- A Wig

The Blob

Materials: Enough enclosed space to accommodate the number of participants

Explanation: The blob tries to assimilate everyone, and everyone tries to avoid assimilation.

How to Play: Participants spread out in an enclosed area and the Blob is chosen. At the leader's signal, the Blob begins trying to tag another participant. When the Blob succeeds in tagging a participant, that person latches on to the Blob, becoming part of the Blob. The Blob continues to try to tag others, and as they get tagged, they also join the Blob. Eventually, everyone is the Blob, and there is no one left to be tagged. Encourage both groups of participants as they try to avoid or assimilate, and

remember that the last person to be tagged by the Blob is not the "winner" and the first person to be tagged is not the "loser". The objectives for the Blob and the non-blobs should prevent the participants from thinking of this. The group will probably ask to play again, and because this is a fairly short game, there should be time to repeat the game. The second time, encourage the Blob to work together to find better ways to tag people, and the non-blobs to discover original ways to avoid the Blob.

Notes: Make sure that any obstacles that could cause a fall are removed before playing this game.

Category Clap

Explanation: Participants try to think of as many things as they can that fit into a particular category.

How to Play: Participants sit in a circle and begin a one-two rhythm (Clap-snap, or slap(legs)-clap). One person says, in rhythm, "I am thinking of" whatever the category is, and then says something that fits the category. On the second beat after the first person, the second person says something that fits the category, and so on around the circle.

Example:

"I-am-thinking-of-kinds-of-fruits" (Clap) "Apple"

(Clap) "Orange"

(Clap) "Strawberries"

(Clap) "Banana"

(Clap) "Watermelon"

It is okay if saying the category items takes longer than one beat, because of multiple syllables, but the participants are not allowed to pause for more than one beat between the end of the last person's item and their item. Everyone continues this process until someone gets stuck or repeats an item. When this happens, the participants can either start over with a new category, keeping the person who got stuck in the circle, or the person who got stuck could be "out" and the same category could be repeated until there is only one person left. If everyone stays in, the leader could time the participants to see for how long they can continue.

Notes: The category chosen depends on the ages and interests of the participants. A younger, less experienced group could play for a while with a category of "Different kinds of candy", while a high school drama club might have fun with "names of playwrights". The leader should explain that the objective of the game is to keep the category traveling around the circle as long as possible, even if the participants who get stuck or repeat are out. This way, the participant choosing the category won't be encouraged to come up with an obscure one that only they know several answers to.

MIME IT DOWN THE ALLEY

Explanation: A pantomimed version of "Whisper down the alley". Participants try to communicate an object or idea to each other so that the last person has the same "message" as the first.

How to Play: Participants are divided into groups of eight to ten people. Each group sits in a straight line, facing backward except for the first person. Participants are not allowed to talk at any point in the game. The first person in each line is given an object to mime (i.e., a toaster, a computer, a jack-in-the-box) – the only requirement is that it can be shown in pantomime in a seated position. The first person taps the second person in line on the shoulder so that they turn to face each other. The first person mimes the object, and when the second person thinks he knows what the object is, he nods. Then the object is mimed to the next person, traveling down the line to the last person. The objective is for the pantomime of the object to be clear enough each time that it stays the same object all the way down the line. Usually, the object changes into something entirely different – the interesting thing is to see how it changed along the line. Each person should tell the others what they thought the object was, and discuss what they saw the others demonstrating.

Notes: There are many variations that can be played with this game, by changing the object to a movie or book title, or incorporating concepts from a curricular area into the game. For example, the pantomime could be of a preposition or a science concept.



Theatre Warm Ups/Games 4

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Group Stop

Everyone quietly mills about the room. One person will elect to freeze in position unexpectedly. As soon as one notices that someone else has frozen in position they freeze as well. So the effect of one person freezing causes everyone to freeze. Once everyone is still the group starts milling around again. The goal is to see how quickly the group can freeze in position.

Flock of Seagulls

You have a lead actor and four other actors who must copy everything the lead actor does. The problem is that each of the other actors have some sort of problem. One has their foot stuck to the floor, one can't put their arms down, one has their hands stuck to their head, one keeps falling asleep (add your own problems).

If You Love Me

The goal of this game is to make others players 'crack'. The players whose turn it is approaches another player and says "If you really loved me, you'd smile." That player must answer "I really love you, but I just can't smile." while keeping a straight face.

Object

A fast-paced game for any number. An ordinary object is placed in the centre of the room. Players either take turns or jump in as they wish. The idea is to act a short (5 second!) scene in which the object is endowed as something other than what it is. For example, if the object used is a shoe, then someone might hold it to their ear and use it as a telephone, someone else might mime ironing their clothes and so on.

Slow Motion Race

A warmup game for an individual team. The team has a race over a short distance - each person moving in the slowest slow motion they can while still trying to actually win the race. A good physical warmup.

Shark Attack

A great fun game that is exciting and great to use at the end of the day or as a middle of the session break. This game is played with all your students as the swimmers and you as the 1st shark.

The Rules

What you need is some sections of old newspaper that are the big double sections. Strategically place them around the room. These are your islands and the rest of the floor space is the water. The object of the game is for the shark (you) to catch swimmers who are not COMPLETELY on the paper island. Tell the swimmers to swim around the room, when you yell out "SHARK ATTACK" they must get onto an island. Even if a half inch of their shoe is on the bare floor, they get eaten and are out! Sounds simple enough! Except for the fact that after each round, the lead shark will rip a piece of the island off so the islands slowly become smaller. This continues until all the swimmers have been eaten. You may or may not use the people that you kill as extra sharks. The space will help you decide this. You may want to just use one or two extras at a time. Watch out for this one, they will want to play it every day!

Advertisement

The team must advertise an imaginary product. The advertisement can be a song, a short scene or anything, but must sell the product.