

# Short-Form Syllabus

V1.1 – 25 Nov 2018 - Richard F



## Intention:

This document contains a selection of short-form lessons for Comic Sans Script. The intention is that this is a quick aide-memoire for a lesson, not a full lesson theory. If you are unsure about the theory as to why the games are there have a chat with the senior instructor. Please follow the plan, or at least **do not 'borrow' things from upcoming sessions**, as it may spoil them for the next instructor. (You can 'borrow' things from past sessions if you are confident the students will be happy to do the games/exercises again).

## Lesson Format:

Each lesson is 2-3hours long and is a series of games/exercises. It is recommended that:

- **Try and Try Again:** Each game is attempted for 20-30 mins each. If ones 'go bad' try to work out why and how to improve it. Don't just 'do it once' then move on – try to improve via using the skills being learnt.
- **Don't have to do it all:** You do not have to get through all games/exercises stated per session, there are additional ones deliberately in there to give variety. Pick a random set you are interested in.
- **Play by Ear:** Read what the group on the night likes, don't try and plan to the last detail/minute. Feel free to skip stuff if running low on time, or stay on stuff if it is going well.
- **Games in Second Half:** Try and make the second half 100% games (as opposed to exercises) as they are more fun. The first half can be any mix of games/exercises.
- **End on Positive:** Try to end on a good/easy final game – and avoid negative critiques towards the end of the session – so students finish on a high.
- **Key** to activities. (if no tag, then assume it's a performance game)
  - [Ex] → An exercise, not a performance game
  - [Talk] → Where the teacher talks about something and demos it

## Schedule:

Week		Week	
#1	Platforms	#11	Partner Work
#2	Physicality	#12	Misc Games 2
#3	Being in the Moment	#13	Characters 2
#4	Characters 1	#14	Show Skills
#5	Self-Reliance	#15	Emotions / Internalisation
#6	Misc Games 1	#16	Narrative
#7	Group Mind	#17	Spontaneity
#8	Gaggy Games	#18	Misc Games 3
#9	Identifying Interest	#19	Listening
#10	Support Moves	#20	Status

## Example Warm-Ups

**Bread/Cheese/Sandwich (I am, I am, I am)** – 1 person says “I am X”, next steps in says “I am Y” (Y is related to X), then 3<sup>rd</sup> comes in says “I am Z” where Z follows pattern of X & Y. Z stays, repeats line as a start of a new sequence.

**Chinese Proverb / Local Headlines** – Group make up a Chinese Proverb or Local News Headline one word at a time.

**Clapping Game:** Partners clap their thighs, then move both arms up, left or right. If they both went in the same direction, then next time after they clap to their thighs then clap with partner.

**Endowments:** Players say to their partner “You are ...” and the partner must know/say/have/do the thing that they have just been endowed (then return an endowment)

**I Need:** Players in a circle go to others and say 3 things they need starting with the last 'need' of the player that come to them.

**Mind Meld:** In a circle two people step forwards and say a word simultaneously. This keeps happening until they say the same word (players are trying to find 'linking words')

**Misty Vistas** – In circle, 'Misty Vistas' passes left, 'Whisky Mixers' passes right, 'Mr Whiskers' passes elsewhere, 'Viscous Mixtures' switches left/right.

**One Frog:** Sequence Game; 1 frog, 2 eyes, 4 legs, ker-splash – 2 frogs, 4 eyes, 8 legs, ker-splash, ker-splash, 3 frogs....

**Point at things:** Walk around the room point at things and say the name of the previous thing, then 2 previous, then 3, etc.

**Pull out of bag:** Players are given a start word by their partner, then do word association by pulling words out of an imaginary bag.

**Sevens** – Players pass 1-6 with a 'low' arm, and 7 with a high arm. Fist left/right, open palm elsewhere. Can also use other sequences.

**Showdown** – Players simultaneously adopt a position of (1) pointing a gun, (2) hands up, or (3) shooting self. Anyone shot by someone else is out, unless they were shooting someone shooting themselves, in which case the shooter dies, the victim is fine. Anyone shooting themselves, and not being shot at is out.

**Soundball:** In a circle, players receive a sound, then pass a sound.

**What's in box:** Players describe the contents of a box in as much detail as possible.

**Zip Zap Zop** – In circle, players do a series of zips/zaps/zops of equal lengths (e.g. “zip”, “zip”, “zap”, “zap”, “zop”, “zop”)

# #01 Platforms

This session is about getting the students to understand what a platform is, why it is needed, and ideally get more into the habit of creating them early on in the scene. A Platform (also known as the 'Base Reality' in UCB parlance) is:

- **Who** – The relationship between the characters (not just their names)
- **What** - The activity the characters are doing (and 'watching the other person do something' is weak – try to both be doing something)
- **Where** – The location the characters are in

**[Talk] Platform Demo:** Give 2 people a word and ask them to do a scene. Then start a new scene and give them the full platform to start – the second scene is likely to be stronger and the actors get into it easier.

**[Ex] 3-Line Scene:** Person 2 says a word, Person 1 gives line 1, Person 2 gives line 2, then Person 1 gives line 3. Ideally by the end they should have a platform. For an advanced version check spacework, listening and building too...

**[Ex] Platform Move On:** 2 actors do a scene until a caller shouts “Move On and keep the...”, then a new scene starts keeping the thing that was requested. Whilst this game can be played for comedy – do it as a practice for creating platforms fast. One way to do this is not to call Move On until a clear platform is established.

**[Ex] Strengthening Platforms:** Person 1 says one aspect of the platform (e.g. “Here we are in the forest”) the second person then has to enhance on the same aspect (e.g. “Yes, here we are at the Forest of Dean fitness trail”). Person 1 then picks another aspect, person 2 enhances it – then they similarly do the last aspect. After take time to notice the 'strength' of the platform created by both actors, as opposed to if it was just person one's initial ideas.

**Director's Interview:** A Director is interviewed about a new film, occasionally they cut away to scenes which are acted out by the other players. Generally the director/interviewer set up the platform and possibly goals/motivations, but leave the rest up to the players.

**Alphabet:** 2 people do a scene where each line starts with the next letter of the alphabet.

**Cube:** 4 people simulate a TV set with 4 channels with a caller shouting 'channel up/down' as appropriate. Notice how it is beneficial to get the platform into the first scene(s).

**Any Extra Time:** *Pick any other game(s) from previous weeks (not future weeks) and play them focusing on getting the platform in.*

## #02 Physicality

The aim of this session is to get the students to be more physical in their scenes and get used to being more physical.

**[Ex] Stretch & Share:** In a circle, take turns to (1) perform a random stretch (which all must copy), and (2) say a mundane fact about what you have done this week. Winner is the person with the most mundane life...

**[Ex] Walkabout:** Walk about the room, then the coach says a physical rule (e.g. "When I say '1' touch the floor"), they then call it a few times, then nominate someone else to 'call'. The new caller adds a rule, then calls them a few times, then nominates the next person.

**[Ex] Slow-Mo Samurai:** In pairs have a slow-motion Samurai sword fight with the right forearm being a poisoned sword. The only way to fend off a `sword` is with a sword. If you are touched you die (in slow-motion)

**Freeze Tag:** 2 people do a scene with the rest on the side-lines. At any point someone on the sideline shouts 'Freeze!', tags-in, and starts a brand new scene based on the previous people's positions.

**[Ex] Only Talk When Touching:** Do a 2, 3 or 4 person scene, however you can only talk when touching the other person. Try to make the touching look natural, not artificial.

**Half Life:** 2 people do a scene in 60 seconds, then the same again in 30, then 15, then 8, then 4, and so on...

**Late To Work [Guessing]:** 1 person is 'late to work' for a reason (and to a place of work) they don't know. They must explain to the boss why they are late and where they work, whilst 2 or more of their colleagues mime clues behind the boss' back.

**Silent Witness [Guessing]:** 4 people (ghost, constable, sargent, inspector) must convey the details of a murder in mime to the next most senior person.

**Stand Sit Crouch:** (With two chairs) 3 people do a scene, however at any point one must be standing, one sitting, one crouching

**Arbitrary Scissor/Paper/Stone:** 2 people adopt a random pose on the count of 3, they then justify why their pose 'beats' the other. The second person does not have to use the same descriptions.

## #03 Being in the Moment

The aim of this week is to play exercises where the students must 'be in the moment' i.e. not be able to 'plan' or think ahead. Make sure with all these games students once students have got the mechanics, they still Listen/Accept Offers and build on them.

**Change:** 2 person scene, but they must change what they just did/said when a caller shouts 'Change' – ideally keeping the pattern of the original.

**No-Letter:** 2 people do a scene, but must not use words containing a certain letter. Aim for a '3 new words' minimum – and encourage 'going for it' over silence/thinking/safety

**Pillars:** 2 people do a scene, but at any point they can point to 'the audience' who will complete the sentence. Make sure whatever the audience shouts (so long as it's clean) is accepted as though it were the perfect line.

**Questions Only:** 2 people do a scene, but can only ask questions. Encourage listening (i.e. answering the previous question, not just random questions)

**Whose Line:** (Needs pre-written cards) 2 people do a scene, but at any point they can read out a line written on a card. Make sure whatever the audience writes (so long as it's clean) is accepted as though it were the perfect line.

**Word Count/Limit:** 3 people do a scene, each with their own word count (between 1 and 10). The must only talk in sentences of this number of words.

**Move Me:** 2 people do a scene, but can only move when moved by two other people/puppeteers.

## #04 & #13 - Characters (2 Sessions)

The aim of this session is to get the students more familiar with characters. There are two levels to character; (1) External – what they look like, their role in society, gender, etc. and (2) Internal – what they believe, their motivations/objectives, feelings, etc.

*Note: This plan covers TWO sessions, so if you are taking it – consider avoiding the activities done at the last one.*

**[Ex] Generating Characters – External:** Walk around room pick a inspiration (e.g. body part to lead with, animal, random movement, water/fire/wind/earth, etc.) make physical actions based on that, exaggerate them until a character forms.

**[Ex] Generating Characters – Internal:** Walk around room, pick a belief/feeling/motivation, keep repeating it to yourself and exaggerate it until a character forms.

**[Ex] 20 Second Character:** Choose a location (e.g. fairground) act line a character for 20 seconds, then introduce the next role, and repeat round the line. Look to increase the time for more advanced work – until (for advanced folks) you could do a 3 minute monologue.

**'Peas in a Pod' Scene:** One person establishes a character (on their own). Then do a scene where all different roles in the scene have the same characteristics.

**Blind-Date:** (Guessing Game) 1 person questions 3 characters in a dating show type format.

**MacGyver:** (Guessing Game) 1 person (MacGyver) has to solve a world crisis using 3 random objects, each with random properties, and the power of science

**Party Quirks:** (Guessing Game) 1 person is hosting a party and has to guess who the 3+ character are who turn up to it.

**Film & Theatre Styles:** 2 or 3 person scene, however at any point a caller can shout out a new style

**Sitcom:** 3 random characters/celebrities share a flat, hilarity ensues

**Here Comes Charlie Now:** 2 people are at an event where 'Charlie' will turn up, and talk about Charlie's characteristics. After a while Charlie turns up and hilarity ensues (maybe)...

**3-Way Character Swap:** 3 Actors do a scene, when a caller shouts 'swap' they switch places with another Actor and adopt their previous Character. (Note: the order is fixed)

**Mega Actor:** 2 person scene, where one person plays only one character – the second person plays 'everybody else'. (The first person tends to introduce a lot of people, and gives them time to interact with each other)

## #05 Self Reliance

This session is about getting students to do games and exercises where they are the only, or main, source of the interest/humour. As such, they cannot really rely on other people for much.

**[Ex] Passenger Scene:** 2 person scene, but one person just 'yes'es, and rarely 'and's or adds much. Note: The second person (the passenger) is not trying to ruin the scene, but is just not being a very strong actor.

**Character Monologue:** Act/talk as a character for 1-3 mins (depending on skill level). Tip: Talk about 'internals' (feelings, goals, ambitions, etc.) instead of just 'doing stuff')

**Dead Bodies:** 4 person scene, but 3 die on stage – the 4th uses them as puppets and does their voices/characteristics. Tip: the ones that die must establish strong characters quickly.

**Personal Monologue:** Talk for about 2 minutes on a word as yourself (not a character) -this must be true. Tip: Don't try and be funny, just 'yes and' forwards.

**Impro Stand-up:** Given a random set-list of notes that a comedian has to remind themselves of their act (e.g. Hybrid Badger, Onion Fall Tuesday) do the act. Tip: Don't try and be funny, just 'yes and' forwards in the style/manner of a stand-up – it'll probably work better that way.

**Master/Servant Dubbing:** A (deep voiced) master has a conversation with a (high-voiced) servant, but the actor playing the master must do both voices. The servant must try to mime along.

**Shakespearian Scene:** Do a very simple short 4-line scene, then do it again but make every-line as long as possible using Shakespearian-type description (note: do not add any new elements to the plot)

**Death in a Minute:** Actor does a one-person scene inspired by a word, but they have to die on the 60 second mark. Tip: After an attempt or two - try not think about how you will die until about 40 second in...

## #06, #12 & #18 - Miscellaneous Games (3 sessions)

This is a load of random stuff that doesn't really fit elsewhere – and it covers 3 sessions. So at each session only pick about one third of the things below, and chose the ones that haven't been covered in the last 2 'Misc Games' sessions.

**Jester's Feast:** Get two letters (e.g. AB) then go down the line of 4-7 people who make up the title of a game that starts with those letters (e.g. Angry Butterfly). Then go down the line again, each player repeats the title, then says the rules. Then the caller can pick ones to play – when picked the person says the name and rules again and then (some/all) of the other folks play it for about 5-20 seconds.

**TV Switch:** 4 People are given a tv show/style/channel each, then they must present only when a pointer is pointing at them. They must try to continue from exactly where the previous person left off.

**Directors Cut:** 2-3 people do a scene, after while a 'Director' shouts cut, talks to them as actors, and they are instructed to re-do the scene in some other style/manner.

**Home Shopping:** Get 2 objects each with 2 random properties and then 'sell' them to the audience as a duo in a home shopping style – i.e. creating artificial problems that only the product can solve.

**Ministry Of Information:** Get a list of concepts/objects then pairs are rotated through to do a quick 'Ministry Of Information' type broadcast on them.

**Rebel Without A Clue:** [Guessing Game] One person robs a bank with a weapon, disguise and get-away vehicle they don't know. The other 3 are customers/clerks who give clues.

**He Said, She Said:** 2 Person scene, however after each line the other person says “He/She said...” then describes a physical action, the first person then does this action.

**Narrated Scene:** 2 Person scene, however at any point they can step forward towards audience start narrating their own thoughts or story elements. They then step back in and the scene continues.

**Typewriter:** One person with a typewriter describe a story acted out by the others

**Mission Improbable:** Do a task in a spy-type manner, but obstacles keep getting in the actors' way.

**Rhyming Scene:** 2-4 person scene, but all lines must rhyme (with themselves or other actors)

**Time-shift Scene:** Scene where a caller can shift time arbitrarily (e.g. “back 10 days”)

**3-Way Dub:** 3 people do a scene, by they are dubbed by another actor, and they dub another actor.

**[Ex] Make up a Game:** Get small groups to make up a new game and try and perfect it. Then demo and 'swap' the game with the next group, then groups try and amend/perfect their 'new' game.

## #07 Group Mind

This session is to help students think more about what the group is trying to do, rather than what they are doing/expecting/thinking.

**[Ex] Mind Meld:** Two people step forwards, say a word simultaneously that links the previous words. If it is not the same word then keep going – if they both say the same word do the 'mind meld song'

**Group-ologue - basic:** Four people are off-stage, one walks on does/says something. The second does similar, then the third, then fourth. People can keep delivering lines until (as one) the group sees this short scene as 'complete' then stops. These will be able 10-30 seconds long, and the aim is to all 'know' when the finish is. Don't worry if it doesn't work - just reset and start again. Tip: Think more about what the rest of the people are thinking, not just what you can add/do. Also try and follow patterns set by others.

**Group-ologue - Advanced:** Same as above, but there are not rules/structure beyond the scene should be about 10-60 seconds, feel 'complete' and all finish at the same time. So not even all 4 people need to be on stage.

**2-Rooms:** 4 people play as 2 characters in two adjoining rooms (which are inverted on stage). Tip: Try and 'connect' with the other person who is playing your character – don't just live in your own scene.

**Double Bill / Messages:** 2 pairs of improvisers talk one word at a time to either (1 - Double Bill) recreate a TV show, or (2 – Messages) recreate a message/letter conversation between two famous people.

**Film Dub:** 2 Actors perform a made up film in a foreign language, 2 other actors 'dub' what they are saying between the lines.

**Scene Switch:** 3 pairs of improvisers do independent scenes, and can take focus by reusing one scene's last line as the next scene's first.

**Talk Together:** A group of improvisers all try and talk as one. Tip: Don't constantly lead, nor just let others lead.

**Large Scene:** Do a 3-5 minute scene with 5+ people in it. Tip: You don't have to be speaking to play your part in the scene! Afterwards see if move are justified by 'The scene needed...' or 'I wanted to do...'

## #08 Gaggy Games

This session is about practicing short-form games that are a bit 'gaggy' – so not necessarily deep/complex character-based improv, more quick laughs.

**Move On:** 2 actors do a scene until a caller shouts “Move On and keep the...”, then a new scene starts keeping the thing that was requested. Play this as a 'show game', so caller should keep the scenes quick and funny.

**Super-heroes:** Four superheroes try and solve a world crisis.

**This Is Your Life:** A host presents a 'mark' with the 'This is your life' treatment – featuring two mystery guests from the mark's past.

**Interview Switch:** Line-up game with 2 chairs. One person interviews an expert on something until they get a laugh, then all players move one place along.

**Someone Walks into a Bar:** Based on an occupation (e.g. Plumber), people step forwards and tell 'Plumber walks into a bar' style jokes.

**Adverts:** Caller gets a list of Occupations, then Products. Then shouts out random combinations and two people step forwards to do a 10-30 second advert on that product.

**Good, Bad Ugly Advice:** Agony aunt type questions from the audience are answered by 3 people, one giving good/genuine advice (approx 30 secs), one giving bad advice (20 secs), the other giving 'ugly'/random advice (10 secs).

**Scenes We'd Like To See:** Fill in the blanks below, or otherwise get random scenes/topics that may be amusing. The caller shouts out the requirement then people step forwards to do the scene.

- Unlikely lines from [tv, book, film, celeb, website, tv]
- Bad things to say at [event]
- Alternative slogans for [Product]
- Worlds worst [Event / Profession]
- Phrases to describe [Object] but not your partner
- Terrible advice for [People]
- Odd things to say during [Action]

## #09 - Identifying Interest

This session is about getting the students to understand what interest is and exploiting it for comedic value.

**[Warm-up] Soundball** is good for listening

**[Talk] Intro to Interest.** What is Interest? It is the thing(s) that are different from normality of context.

**[Demo] Spotting Interest:** Do a two person scenes (30-60 seconds) – and half of group discuss what is 'interesting' about it – and other half what are the things that are 'not normal' – note how they align.

**[Ex] Don't be Interesting:** Have 2 people do a scene, but try to be as 'uninteresting' as possible – notice how they can't be if they are 'yes anding' into the scene and not cancelling. Can also ask 2 or 3 people to just be sat there 'watching TV' (saying nothing) – notice we can still find them interesting.

**[Ex] Here-and-Now:** Person 1 says one of 'Past', 'Future' or 'There', person 2 says a line where the interest is in that place, the first person then takes the interest of that line and brings it into the 'Here and Now'.

**[Ex] Exploit Location Interest:** 1 person 'sets a scene' with 4 items each with a property about them (nothing wacky, all quite normal). The remainder of the (sub) group walk in and give a first line to a scene that exploits one of the interests.

*Important: On all the games below look out for when the mimers/actors 'go-wrong', i.e. it's not normal, i.e. it's an interest, i.e. exploit it for comedy!*

**Hey You Down There:** 2 (silent) people are in a ministry of information video and are being shown how to do something mundane. The third is the voice-over who is explaining what to do.

**Slide-Show:** 1 person describes an event they went to, whilst the others are slides in the slide show.

**Mundane Olympics:** 3 people compete in the Olympic version of some mundane event, which 1 or 2 others commentate on it.

**Directors Commentary:** 2 or 3 actors do a scene, at any point an off-stage Director can commentate on what they were thinking when they did this. Important: This is more about *reacting* to what was onstage – not just pimping the onstage folks to do a daft next scene.

**Theatre Critic(s):** 2 people do a non-comedic scene as best they can. 2 off-stage 'critics' point out where they've made errors. Note: They do not gossip between themselves, they just point out errors

## #10 (Non-Edit) Support Moves

This session is understanding and practising some moves you can do whilst on the side/back-line to support the actors onstage. The Support Moves being taught are: (1) Scene Painting, (2) Sound Effects, (3) Walk-Ons, (4) Background Objects/People. Key points:

- **Learn to 'Do Something' First:** Some new student might be uncomfortable coming onto others scene in case they 'ruin' them, or their idea is 'not good enough'. It is worth getting used to doing the support moves (even if wrong/bad) *then* looking to apply them more judiciously.
- **Serve the Scene:** Whilst “What *can* I do in this scene” is a great question to ask yourself whilst on the side/back-line, it **MUST** also be tempered with “*Should* I do it – does it serve the scene?”
- **Don't Steal The Scene:** If you are doing a support move, then support – don't steal the scene.

**[Ex] Scene Setting/Painting:** Describe the visual elements of the scene, then have other act within the scene, also you can add more detail as the scene goes on. (Use the term “We see...” to signal this move)

**[Ex] Sound Effects:** 1 person does offstage sound effects for a 2 player scene.

**[Ex] Walk-On – Temporary:** Two people do a scene and a third walks on as a character in the scene, but is looking to walk off reasonably quickly (e.g. a passing waiter etc.) This is known as a 'Canadian Cross'. Tip: Don't endow walk-ons, let them establish their own character.

**[Ex] Walk-On – Longer Term:** Two people do a scene, a third joins it for a longer period. This new Character should ideally be using/enhancing an existing interest, not adding a new one.

**[Ex] Background Object/Person:** 2 people do a scene, 6 others are background objects/people. Tips: Symmetry is nice, use fists for 'interact-able' items (e.g. handles), don't steal focus, keep listing to the scene, if moving use simple repetitive actions.

**Scenes/Games:** Do two-person scenes with 2+ people on the side-lines supporting. Or pick some 'standard' short-form games and apply support work to them.

## #11 Partner Work

This session is about working with one other improviser (i.e. your partner!)

**[Ex] Last Month:** Talk about what happened 'last month' to one of the actors. Once person must start “Yes, and then I”, the other “Yes, and then YOU”.

**2 (or 3)-Headed Expert:** An interviewer interviews an 'expert' on a topic. The expert can only talk one word at a time.

**2-Headed Stand Up:** Do a stand-up act with a joke on 3 ask-for topics one word at a time.

**Gibberish Switch:** Do a 2 person scene, but when a caller says 'switch' the actors must toggle between gibberish and English

**Helping Hands:** Actor one interviews actor two who has a 'hands on' occupation, but their arms are provided by actor three

**Say It:** (Guessing Game) 2 pairs, made up of a teller and a guesser, compete to describe a complex sentence from the teller to the guesser – switching between pairs every ten seconds.

**Sound Effects:** One person mimes an event/activity, the other does the sound effects for it

**Translator:** One person is a foreign expert on something giving a lecture. The other is their translator.

**Little Voice:** One person is in a location with lots of objects, one of which starts talking to them – the voice of the object is provided by the off-stage/second actor.

**Signed Scene:** 2 people do a scene, but after each line their signer does the sign language for that last line. *Tip: As signers – try and notice what signs mean what words.*

## #12 Misc Games 2 (see week #06)

## #13 Characters 2 (see week #04)

## #14 Show Skills

This session is about practising the skills requires to do a show (e.g. performance, game introduction, stagecraft), that would otherwise be missed in a workshop.

**[Ex] (Fake) Game Introduction:** (Used to get the patter needed) Introduce a fake improv game, the basic format is (1) optionally comment on previous game, (2) Game Name, (3) number of Players, (4) Sound proof booth?, (5) Rules, (6) ask-fors, (7) Return from booth, (8) Reiterate Name and (if not a guessing game) ask-fors, (9) Energetic handover (“Take it away!”, “Off you go!”, etc.)

**[Talk] Taking 'Ask-For' Chat:** Try to ignore/cancel rude/offensive/inappropriate, all others are 'good', enhance on 'dull' ask-fors, enhance on unknown ask-fors (“I've not seen it, can you describe what happens in that TV program”)

**[Ex] (Real) Game Introduction:** Introduce a real improv game in the same format as above. Trying to get rules right as you would in a real show.

**Voice Projection Exercise:** Pair at a time stand as far apart as you can – and try and have a 'natural' conversation (not shouting, but projecting more)

**[Talk] Stagecraft Chat:** Always face audience if speaking, props are stage-front (unlike most plays/shows!), don't block other actors. Have spark/energy whilst on stage.

**Mini Show!** Split the group into sub-groups and get them to organise their own 15-20 minute mini show, with hosting and games list set by them. Then watch them!

## #15 Emotions / Internalisation

This week is getting students to concentrate on what is going on 'within' the characters (i.e. internal), instead of 'outside' (i.e. external). Internal is things like emotions, motivations, goals/objectives, etc. Notes:

- The base emotions are Happy, Sad, Anger, Fear
- Yes - Ambivalence (not caring) is an emotion, but don't use it – as it's usually wimping
- No one ever leaves an improv show saying 'Man they really fixed that bike'

**[Ex] It's Tuesday:** One player says 'It's Tuesday' the other reacts with an emotion, then justifies it with some new information. This goes back and forth. E.g.

P1: It's Tuesday!

P2: (Happy) Yay! That's the day I get paid

P1: (Sad) I don't like it when you get paid, you always go out without me

P2: (Fear) I didn't realise you didn't like that – does this mean we are getting divorced?

**[Talk] Explain/Demo:** Explain Internalisation. Do an 'external scene' (e.g. putting out a fire) and replay it focusing on the internals – avoid the interest going external. Show how emotions are Offers to be accepted and added to.

**Emotional Roller-coaster:** Play a scene, however a caller will at any point allocate you an emotion you must play (and only play that emotion). A more advanced/gaggy version allocates an accent as well (e.g. Angry Jamaican, Happy Scot, etc.)

**Emotional Zones:** Split the stage into 4, and allocate an emotion to each. Play a scene and adopt the emotion of the zone you are standing in.

**'Play to a 10':** In a 2 or 3 person scene each person picks, or is given, an emotion, and must play it to the most extreme they can. Remember still to listen and allow others to talk!

**Emo-Date:** 1 (normal) person is going on a date with another person. The second person is played by 3 people, who each have a fixed emotion. The 3 keep tagging in and taking over as though the second person on the date has multiple personalities. The conversation should still 'flow'.

**What are you trying to say?** 2 person scene – at any point (and usually an innocuous line) a caller says 'What are they trying to say?' at which point the non-speaker goes into a 30-60 monologue exaggerating the meaning of 'What they were trying to say'.

**Oscar winning moment:** Play a two person scene. At any point a caller says “And here's the Oscar winning moment...” and the actor who is next to speak must perform an 'Oscar winning moment – which requires taking the last line and emoting about why it means so much to them...

***Extra Time:*** Take any other improv game – and play it, but look at how you can possibly add emotions into the Characters.

## #16 - Narrative

This week is about understanding story-telling techniques and how they can be used in short-form games. Things to look out for; (1) Listening/Accepting – try and use elements of the story that have been introduced, as opposed to adding 'new' stuff, (2) Cancelling – try not to cancel ideas (e.g. characters/ideas being killed off, saying they don't matter, or changing them randomly)

**[Talk] Intro to Narrative:** Chat about narrative and that as humans we naturally like it. Narrative is linking ideas together using 'plot' to make a complete story. Give examples of what are not stories (e.g. 2 random unconnected statements), see if group can work out what the minimum as story needs is.

**[Ex] Story Spine:** In group go through the following story structure (1) Once upon a time .... (2) And everyday..., (3) Until one day..., (4,5,6) and because of that..., (7) Until finally..., (8) and ever since then... In #8 the conclusion should ideally relate to something from #1 or #2 to close the loop. Notice the beginning/middle/end structure – and the parts/feel they have.

**[Ex] What Happens Next - Pairs:** In pairs one person says “What happens next?”, the second person suggests something, the first can say 'no' if they don't think it's good until there is a good offer - at which point they act it as a pair.

**[Ex] What Happens Next – Committee:** One person is the actor who says 'What happens next?', two 2-3 people are the Directors who suggest stuff. And the rest are the audience who 'ding!' or 'honk!' if they like/dislike the suggestion. Only liked suggestions are acted. After each story discuss why stuff was/wasn't liked.

**[Ex] Advance/Enhance Story Telling:** In pairs tell a story to an audience. One of the pair can only move plot forwards (and cannot describe stuff in detail), the other can describe things in detail (but cannot move plot forwards). Look at how they need to cooperate to tell a 'good' story.

**[Ex] Word at a Time Story:** In pairs tell a story a word at a time – possibly to an audience. Afterwards review was that a good or bad story and why?

**Story Story (Die):** A group of 4-8 performers tell a story only when they are being pointed at by a 'pointer' person. In a competitive version any failures have to 'die', however initially everyone stays alive and discuss how good the stories are.

**Greatest Story Never Told (aka String the Pearls):** 2 people are a first and last line to a story and stand extreme left and right of a row. Approx 8 players add themselves to the row and give their line which is fixed. As all the players join the story should become apparent. *Note: The first few player to enter the row don't position themselves just after the first player, but choose the 'middle' of the story*

**Previously:** 2 people so a scene, at any point someone on the side-line can shout 'Previously' and then tag-in to do a scene that was not only previous to the one just seen, but actually caused it.

**Any Extra Time** – try stringing multiple scenes together to create a story (i.e. basic longform)

## #17 - Spontaneity

This week is about getting student to think of relevant things things faster – it should be obvious why this is important to improv. The more we practice pushing/speeding-up our subconscious to think of relevant stuff – the better it will be. Things to avoid; (1) **Hedging** (“it might be...”, “sort of...”) - putting the scene/offer into two states, (2) **Wimping** (“There are a number of these. Which number? I dunno”) - not committing to a specific state and making a general statement.

**[Ex] What's in the Box:** In pairs a 'questioner' asks questions about the contents of the 'answerers' imaginary box. The answerer tries to give as much relevant, specific detail as possible. Avoid gossiping with the questioner (e.g. “what do you think?”), or just interacting with the object (as the expense of describing it) - try and be as committed as possible – make the questioner believe there is that object there. As a benchmark the questioner could count the number of new pieces of information given...

**[Ex] Words from a Bag:** Person 2 says a word, then person 1 does word association off that word – by pulling words out of an imaginary bag as fast as they can. Start at 60 secs, then work up...

**[Ex] Gimme Five:** Person one says “Gimme 5 <topic>”, where topic is 'cars' or 'biscuit' and then person 2 gives them as fast as possible (person 1 counts each one off as they go). If you can't think of something – say anything confidently – and it still counts. Once done, swap over – and keep doing it. For the more advanced version have two things like “Gimme 5 things an <emotion><occupation> would say” (e.g. angry vicar, happy farmer) – and try and find things that are in both categories.

**[Ex] Justification Game:** Person 1 says a random statement, Person 2 says an unrelated statement, then Person 1 has to say how the first caused the second. They might use multiple hops of logic, and they do not have to justify why the first is true – it just is.

**[Ex] No Gaps in Talking:** Do a 2-person scene and there can be no gaps in talking (i.e. someone has to be speaking at all times). It must last 3 mins, then try for longer.

**[Ex] Over-Confessing Servant:** A 'Master' calls in a Servant about something (unnamed) that's wrong. the Servant says 'Oh is it X', and the Master says 'what's wrong with X' – the servant says what's wrong with it then justifies it with how it happened. Repeat until bored.

**Ceremony:** Two people take turns (approx 20 secs each) to describe “<Verbing> of the <Noun>”

**Change:** 2 person scene, but they must change what they just did/said when a caller shouts 'Change' – ideally keeping the pattern of the original.

**It's a Spade:** 2 people 'argue' to describe an object, but not repeating any previously used words.

**Arbitrary Scissor/Paper/Stone:** 2 people adopt a random pose on the count of 3, they then justify why their pose 'beats' the other. The second person does not have to use the same descriptions.

**Actors Nightmare (Needs script):** One actor reads from a script, the other improvises the lines based on a given scenario/objective. (can also use phones chat logs – with permission!)

## #18 Misc Games 3 (see week #06)

### #19 Listening

The aim of this session is to get the students more used to improv 'listening'. Listening is often defined as 'being open to change', for a coach to see if a student has actually listened then the guideline 'Did your move prove you heard the last move?' may be useful.

**[Ex] Yes And:** 2 person scene, each line must start with 'Yes, And'

**[Ex] Accepting Circle:** Get everyone in a big circle. One player starts by making a little gesture, perhaps with a little sound. His or her neighbour then tries and does *exactly* the same, and so on. Note: Expect the gesture to change organically, but don't allow inorganic changes

**[Ex] Goalie:** One person in a group is the 'goalie' out front. The others, in turn, give them an opening line to which they must give a response straight-away that proves they listened (then add on 'always accept', 'builds', character, etc. to make it more advanced)

**[Ex] Cannoning:** In pairs: (1) One leads physical action, the other follows/mirrors as best as possible, then swap; (2) One speaks word at a time on a beat, the other says 'the previous word' each time, then swap; (3) Previous two exercises, one leads on the physical, one on the words – then swap.

**You Heard Us!** Two 'protesters' take turns to do 'yes and' type speaking off a initial demand – starting each line with 'you heard us!', then reiterating the new information of the last line – then following only that. For example: (1) “We want fish”, (2) “You heard us! We want Fish - so get into your boats people!”, (1) “You heard us! Get into your boats – they down in the harbour!”, (2) “You heard us! Your boats are in the harbour – We've put them back!”, etc...

**Last Letter/Word:** Two person scene, but each persons first word must start with (the last letter of) the last word of the previous sentence.

**Six Episodes:** Given a 'big task' (e.g. launch of a new flavour of coke) players get 1 minute to prepare 6 scenes, in which the given task needs to be completed. After 1 minute there is no more discussing, they just play the 6 scenes. *Note: Time it and see if they can make their minds up. Quarrelling will just slow them down, so this will only work if players agree; they should be immediately accepting any usable ideas.*

## #20 Status

This session is about introducing students to the concept of status and how it is used in improv. See the 'Status Notes' after this section.

**[Talk] Explain Status:** Status is how you expect to be treated, not necessarily how you are treated. It is not the same as 'rank' not 'likeability'.

**[Ex] Talk Up/Down Status:** In pairs one partner talks about their week, the other tells them how to be more low status. Then again, but talk 'up' to high status.

**[Ex] Mystery Status:** (Prep Cards?) Allocate 3 players a secret status of 1-10 (10 being high), and they play the scene. Audience guesses status value.

**[Ex] Match Status:** 2 or 3 person scene where people try and match the status of the other(s)

**[Ex] Just Higher/Lower:** 2 or 3 person scene where each is secretly told to be either 'just a bit higher', 'just a bit lower' or 'exactly the same' status as the other person. Play scene, then guess.

**[Ex] Unknown Status:** (Needs prep) 2-4 people are given a 1-10 card and elastic bands to attached to their forehead, so they cannot see their status, but all others can. Then play a scene and each tries to act their status.

**[Ex] Walking Through Chairs:** Two people on opposite side of the room, must cross to the other's position, by walking through 2 chairs that are in the middle that only have space for one to walk through. Compete for high-status

**Status Fight:** (harsh game – allow opt outs!) 4 people do a scene in a lounge (with 4 chairs, 2 to the side, 2 in centre as a 'sofa') the game stops when one is ignored / low-stated by all the others. The key point is to review and see what was liked/disliked and why?

**Status Battle:** Two performers attempt to achieve the highest or lowest status in a scenario.

**Status Switch:** two person scene, one high, one low status. When caller calls 'switch!' they must switch status with a justification based on the last line.

**Replay Scene:** Do a two person scene, one person is a combination of {high/low} status and {likeable/unlikeable} – the other person is the opposite. Re-do scene, they are the same character, but the opposite status/likeability.

## Status Notes

Aspect	High Status	Low Status
<b>Movement</b>	Focused, quiet, graceful, confident, firm, directed; head moves only slightly	Unsure, nervous, jerky, stiff, tight, awkward
<b>Speech</b>	"normal" voice pitch. But also: yelling/whispering as appropriate to the situation	Quiet, mumbling, faltering, fast.
<b>Pitch of voice</b>	typically deep, relaxed	typically high, squeaking, forced
<b>Posture</b>	Upright, straight But also: free, unforced, loose	bent, slack But also: knotted, stiff
<b>Breathing</b>	Calm and regular. (High-status characters hold their breath to strengthen a threatening gesture)	Hectic, shallow, fast, panting, faltering (Low-status characters hold their breath for fear or shock.)
<b>Touching Others</b>	Every kind of unasked-for touch: laying a hand on a shoulder, picking lint from a sweatshirt, stroking a cheek...	Shy away from touching others. Acquiesce to unwanted contact.
<b>Interacting With One's Body</b>	Don't touch. But also: ostentatious self-contact.	Awkward or embarrassed gestures: run your fingers through your hair, rub your face.
<b>Looking At Others</b>	Look directly, with a duration appropriate to the social situation - not too long, not too short. But also: dominant staredown, hypnotic gaze.	Rapidly avert your eyes, and avoid long eye contact. Unsteady gaze. But also: admiring, naive, or socially inappropriate stare.
<b>Social Adequacy</b>	Always finds the correct words and gestures. Knows what is appropriate to the situation and acts appropriately. "Knows how to behave" Also knows when to say or do nothing. Flexible, principled, decisive, discerning. But also: breaks with social convention as needed.	Is always wrong, interrupting with talking, blabbing something. Violates social norms out of fear, insecurity or weakness. But also: know-it-all attitude, arrogance, stubbornness, incorrigibility.
<b>Problems</b>	Knows no problems. Can go around any situation. Always knows what to do. Always has a good one. Answers and yet an ace up the sleeve. Knows priorities.	Sees problems all the time and everywhere. Fails at the smallest daily routines. But also: fails to recognize the actual problems that other players are dealing with.
<b>Calmness</b>	Let yourself bring nothing but peace, even in completely hopeless situations. Scream only to show your superiority.	Let yourself easily unsettled. Starts to panic easily. Is easy to provoke. Throws a fit when touched upon a raw nerve. Pleads for mercy.