

## THE GUIDELINES OR 'RULES' FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPROVISATION

Keep this sheet..... Memorize these rules..... Follow these guidelines.  
You and your class/teammates will thrive together.

DEFINITION: IMPROVISATION is acting without a script. The actor creates the scene and dialogue as he/she goes along.

1. Have a CHARACTER and keep it. Using a costume, prop, funny voice, accent or unusual physical quality helps but the best characters start with the actor and a unique point of view. The preoccupation or motivation of the character is what drives the scene and creates the conflict, making it interesting to watch.
2. Use your IMAGINATION. Never ignore something unusual or unexpected. Listen to your inner voice, trust yourself, and go with the impulse. The unusual choices result in the best scenes. Trust!
3. RELAX so you can listen to your impulses. Warm-ups, stretching, and breathing always helps.
4. LISTEN to everything that is said. The best improvisers are those that listen and remember what was said. A player's move is not complete until you see how it affects your partner(s).
5. SHARE the stage time, don't try to control it. An improv grows from explored moments where nothing is ignored, nothing is forgotten and nothing is a mistake. No one player is more important than anyone else. Each player must share the responsibility of the scene. Share your ideas but be willing to change or drop the idea (of how you wanted it to go) immediately the moment the scene takes an unexpected twist.
6. Stay in GOOD TASTE. Inappropriate material is just a desperate effort by insecure players when they are worried that a scene isn't funny. Being inappropriate will result in the scene being stopped and the actors asked to leave the stage. This IS embarrassing.
7. The best way to look good is to make others look good!! You do this by never DENYING what is said. YES is always the answer in improv. There are no mistakes on stage if everyone commits 100% to the scene.
8. Try for AGREEMENT rather than arguing. Fighting over the scene accomplishes little except to delay the action. It is easy to argue but audiences find it more interesting when actors agree and go with it. The audience rarely sees people agree to the crazy things improv forces the players to agree with. This is funny.
9. Don't explain what you plan to do – JUST DO IT! Keep the action in the present and make active choices. Since exposition is boring, start the action (conflict) and move the plot along quickly.
10. Don't WHISPER onstage. Make sure your audience can hear everything said.
11. Don't COACH from the audience. Yelling advice to people only makes them nervous and upset. Remember it is easier to think of things to do when you are sitting in the audience. Don't be rude. If you find yourself stuck on stage you can turn to the teacher and ask for help. If the teacher then calls on the class for suggestions then constructive advice would be appropriate.

12. The TRUTH is funny. NEVER FORCE HUMOR for it will look like you are showing off. The only way to do comedy is to play the scene HONESTLY. A truly funny scene is one of generosity where you are trying to make the other person and his/her ideas look as good as possible. In comedy honesty is the best policy. Trying to get a laugh is obvious to audiences and largely ineffective.
13. Use good BLOCKING: This is where the actors stand and how they move. Until this is studied in detail the basic rules are don't stand behind people or turn your back on the audience.
14. He who gives information is a gift giver. He who asks QUESTIONS is a thief. Questions place the burden of the scene on the other person. Do your share by giving information. When a player asks a question he/she usually has an answer in mind; so why ask the question? State it – don't question it.
15. SILENCE creates tension and draws in the audience. Give yourself time to think.
16. Please don't use PHYSICAL VIOLENCE. If physical altercations seem natural in a scene always play these moments in slow motion for safety. The audience will find the fight funny.
17. When making a choice SPECIFICS are more interesting than generalities. "Nice car." is dull but, "Wow, a Corvette!!" adds interest, realism, and gives your partner(s) something to work with.
18. Don't feel pressured to SOLVE PROBLEMS. Improv is sometimes better when players add conflict to the scene making the problems worse instead of solving them.
19. Use PRESENT TENSE. This keeps the conflict happening now and it does not become people standing around telling a boring story.
20. The characters in the scene must have a RELATIONSHIP. Establish this quickly. You must know who you are talking to! Conflict is the starting point. The relationship makes the scene. If you don't know what the relationship is make one up! YES is always the right answer.