

Favorite Games for Teaching Acting

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Hershey Area Playhouse, Hershey, PA, offers standards based instruction in theatre arts in an out of school program managed by the Education Department.

Games may be modified to be used with many age groups.

These theatre games/activities have been compiled through training, research, reading and direct experience. Since our teaching has been influenced by so many great teachers of acting, after awhile, like most acting teachers, we have lost track of which game was inspired by which source, how much we have specialized the game to our style of teaching and which games are blends of many great sources. For this reason, we have chosen to list the games and descriptions followed by the resources that have inspired and trained us.

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The expertise of several master acting teachers and performers with whom we have worked and trained including but not limited to Roxanne Rix, Lisa Weitzman, Augusto Boal, Terri Mastrobuono, Anne Alsedek, Doug Paterson, Lynne Clark, Anna Scher and Chris Vine.

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FULL DESCRIPTIONS OF GAMES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Abdominal Breathing – mind, voice, focus

This is not so much a game as an exercise for breath control and support that can be used both to help increase focus and concentration and also as a way to teach students breath support that will develop projection. It works on and develops the diaphragm. Ask your students to lay on their backs knees up. Ask them to place one hand about 3 inches above their belly buttons and one hand on their chest. Tell them we will imagine that we are breathing from the abdomen, not our lungs- so that when we breathe in our bellies should puff up and when we breathe out our bellies should suck in. Then ask them to begin to breathe deeply and slowly – in through their mouth and out through their nose. The hand on their abdomen should rise and fall, while the hand on their chest should remain absolutely still. Side coach Tell them to pretend that the breathe is coming from the abdomen- not their chest area- so they are to make the hand on their abdomen push out when they breathe in and pull in. With very young students I sometimes place a small doll or action figure (no more than 2” tall) on their bellies and ask them to take the doll for a ride up and down. While they breathe side coach “keep your chest still” “in through your nose, out through your mouth” “breathe slowly” “fill your body with air down to your toes”. Once students have mastered this technique have them try it sitting up cross-legged. Watch to be certain chests remain still and shoulders don’t collapse.

Action Partners – skill building for subtext

This game operates on two important concepts. First that everything we do on stage (and in life) has a purpose- a tactic or an action- aimed at getting what the character wants. Secondly- that these purposes, goals or actions can be communicated to an audience. The problem is that sometimes the actor is communicating an action that was unintended, such as “I hope I remember my line”. This game shows actors exactly what they are communicating. Begin a simple scene- best between two people. Assign each actor a “reader”- someone who will watch their every move. Instruct the readers to say out loud what they think the actor is thinking, feeling or intending. Then run the scene with the “readers” talking continuously, telling the actors what they see.

Alligator Alley – team building

All of the players are put into groups of 3-6. Each group is given either two chairs or two pieces of paper and asked to go to one end of the room. The groups are then challenged to get their group across the room (or down and back if the space is small) without any group member touching the floor- they must devise a strategy together that works. The first group to get all of their members across the space wins.

Alphabet Game

Description

This is a scene consisting of 26 lines of dialog. The first line starts with a given letter (say `R`). The reply to that line must start with a `S`, and so on, until the whole alphabet has been covered. After `Z` comes `A`. Players that hesitate, or use the wrong letter `Die`, and are replaced by another player. The replacement needs to take over the character of the player she replaces. Notes: Urge players not to `stick` to the game - if you can’t think of a good sentence to advance the story, it’s better to just `die` than to mess up the story (see Chivalry).

Ball of Light

This is a relaxation technique with its roots in yoga best used with older students or adults. It is a good one to use to pull an active group into a quiet state of focus. Ask your students to lie on the floor on their backs. Put on some soft music in the background. Ask them to focus on their breathing and try to make it slower. The teacher can help by counting slowly “In” “Out” “In” “Out” etc. Then ask them to begin a squeeze tight and let go sequence coached by the teacher. Begin at the toes and tell them “tense your toes, tight, tight, tight” “now relax them and sigh” “tense your feet tight, tight, tight” “now relax them with a sigh” “tense your calves, knees, thighs, buttocks, stomach, chest, hands, lower arms, upper arms, neck, face, forehead ..” etc. working upwards to the head. Then ask them to imagine a ball of light starting at the toes. Side coach “the ball of light moves over your feet and collects any leftover tension – relax your feet” “the ball of light moves over your legs...” etc. Finally this ball of energy- not good energy not bad energy- just yours – moves to your heart and is released.

Bippity- Boppity – Boo - body, mind and voice warm up – reacting in the moment

Also good to raise energy levels and help with team building.

Actors get in a circle. One person starts out in the middle as “it”. It is this person’s job to trick someone in the circle into giving up their spot. The person who is it may accomplish this in one of two ways:

by walking up to someone and completing the phrase “Bippity, Boppity boo” before they can complete it.

by walking up to someone and commanding either Bunny, Pocahontas or Little Mermaid then quickly counting to ten. If the person and the two on either side do not complete Bunny, Pocahontas or Little Mermaid before “It” gets to 10 one of the group must take “It’s” place in the middle.

Bunny – the person indicated must form a ‘bunny’ with the two people on either side. Each side person forms the ear, while the center person creates whiskers. All three say “bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny”

Pocahontas – the person indicated and one person on each side must all face in the same direction, paddle an imaginary canoe and sing “floating down the river”

Little Mermaid – the person indicated must put their hands together under their chin in a dramatic operatic pose and sing “Ahhhhhhhhhh” as loudly as possible while the person on either side makes whooshing sounds and pretends to splash water on the singer.

Blind Guide – team building, focus

Players are asked to set up obstacles in an empty space- chairs, books, props, etc. are scattered over the floor. Next each person chooses a partner and decides who will be the first “guide”. The guide and partner hook together their index fingers and the partner closes their eyes to become blind. On a start command from the leader the guide begins to lead their partner around the room by the finger, carefully taking them around several obstacles without bumping into anything. The leader side coaches “guides take care of your partners” “partners trust your guide”. The guides and partners change roles and the exercise is repeated. After a brief discussion of their experience, each member of the group chooses a sound they can make repeatedly. Next the guides lead their partners without touching, asking the partners to listen for and follow the sound. Partners and guides trade places and discussion completes the exercise. Most people find that after the initial few seconds of following the sound they are able to tune out the others and experience clear single-minded focus. A great discussion starter- what is focus? How do actors use it? Variation: Using blindfolds place ask one partner to lead another around the room and then leave them in a spot. Now any of the other leaders may lead this person to another spot. Encourage imaginative ways of leading- by the hand, by a piece of clothing, backwards, etc.

Blind Sculpture – concentration, focus, group bonding

Players are placed in partners and given blindfolds. One person is chosen to go first as guide while the other puts on the blindfold. The guide now leads their partner anywhere in the room and sculpts them into a pose. Caution the group to be respectful of touching. Players are not allowed to pose their partner with another person. After the partner is placed in a pose the guide leaves and any other guide can repose the players. Play continues until all have had a chance to go through several poses, then the leader calls freeze. Those without blindfolds then view the sculptures and comment on them. Next the partners change places and the guide becomes the blindfolded one.

Blocking Scene – spontaneity, also to discover how actions are blocked. This game is the opposite of “yes and” – Two players begin a game of get the chair. A is seated in a chair. A has no character assigned, however has the goal of keeping the chair. B enters and assigns a character/relationship which is intended to induce A to give up the chair. Ex- A is seated, B enters and says “Young man I told you to clean your room two hours ago, now get out of that chair and go do it.” B would block saying things like “You’re not my mother” to which A must immediately agree and try to continue A: Of course I’m not I was just practicing for my play next week. B: You’re not in a play. Etc. At the end of a brief time of trying this scene so that all have a chance to be both characters, discuss the difficulties of moving the action forward, then switch to standard get the chair with the instruction of “take the offer”.

Body Parts – team building

Designate one student as leader. Check to be sure that this leaves an uneven number of people remaining to play. The leader calls out the name of a body part such as “right leg to right leg” or “left wrist to left wrist”. Everyone must find a partner as quickly as possible and touch their body part to their partners. The teacher plays if needed to be certain that the group remains an uneven number of people Side coach so that students make neutral choices of body parts so that all feel comfortable playing.

Bus Driver – skill building, reacting in the moment, creating characters

Set up 7 chairs in the shape of a bus. – the first player is the bus driver – 6 players line up to get on the bus – the bus driver pulls over and a player gets on – this player has a clear distinct personality trait – the bus driver becomes exactly like this player – the two interact for a bit until the bus driver pulls over and picks up the next player with another distinct personality trait – now all are exactly like the new personality – play continues to all are on the bus- then the bus pulls over and one by one all get off – whenever someone leaves the group becomes the prior personality till the bus is empty.

Character Cards – skill building, who, what, where, how

Prior to class prepare random groups of 3 x 5 “character (who/what)” and “where” cards with characters, motivations and places such as:

“a bumbling giant wants attention” “an elf who wants to be left alone” “a very hungry mouse looking for food” “a school teacher with papers to correct who has lost her glasses” “a mom who is late for carpool and can’t find her keys”

WHERE: “an elevator” “a cave” “a desert island” “a grocery store” “the school”

Split the group into smaller groups- give each student a character card and each group a where card- then ask them to create 3 scenes and a problem. Scene one should show the audience who and where – Scene two should establish the problem and Scene three should be the solution. Remind the group that their play should show 4 questions (who, where, what and how) 3 scenes (beginning, middle, end) and 1 problem. Allow each group to plan and practice while the teacher rotates giving suggestions with a focus on creating who– then share the plays with the larger group.

Character Tag – body, imagination

Students play a traditional game of tag, except the person who is it must first choose a character and then run as if they were that character, for example a turtle, an old man, an angry elephant, the possibilities are endless. All others must run as the same character. When “it” catches someone- the new “it” gets to choose the character.

Circle Dash – body, mind warm up, (add voice by requiring students to make sounds as they run)

Place actors in a circle. Ask one to volunteer to stand in the middle. The object of the game is for two people to trade places across the circle while the player in the middle attempts to steal one of their spots. If the middle player is successful the person who lost their spot must now stand in the middle. The trick is that students must make silent subtle agreements with their eyes in order to change places, and only two people may change places at any given time. No preplanning allowed. A good fast paced game to grab a group’s attention, use up a little energy and have some fun. Warning: although all ages can play it does take concentration to do it successfully. To make this game a vocal warm up as well insist that students vocalize as they change places – making some loud continuous sound.

Circle Sculpture – Often played after Blind Sculpture. Place the group in pairs and have the group create a large circle with the partners standing facing each other. The leader announces a word /concept such as “freedom” and all of the partners facing the center of the circle sculpt the partners facing outward. Then the group tours the art gallery of sculptures and discusses what they see. Next the pairs change places and the leader assigns another concept which is the opposite of the first. (Ex- freedom/enslavement school day/weekend, etc.)

Circle Story – reacting in the moment, focus, imagination, team building

Actors sit in a circle. One person begins a story with “once upon a time there was a...” After they have finished their sentence the person to the right must add a sentence. When the story seems finished someone may add. “And this is the end.”, then another story may be begun or the game is over. This can also be done by allowing actors only one word each- which creates some very interesting stories!

Commonalities – focus, group building

Seat actors in a circle (or stand) Ask one actor to go into the center. This person will then name something that many people might have in common. (EX: All people who like chocolate or All people wearing sandals.) All who have this quality in common must now change places across the circle.

CORE – idors or Corridors – skill building, listen and respond

The group is split into partners who form two lines and sit on the floor facing each other leaving a large corridor between them. One at a time one actor enters the corridor and begins an activity. Their partner must now enter the space and establish Character - Objective – Relationship and Environment for both of them. EX- the first actor enters the space and begins to mime mopping the floor – the second actor enters with the line “Cinderella I told you I need my dress ironed- why are you still mopping the floor”

Dracula - body, mind, teambuilding

All of the players get in a circle with one player in middle – the one in the middle is Dracula – Dracula must choose a victim in the circle and walk to them and tap them on the shoulder before they are able to get another person in the circle to say their name – Dracula’s intended victim must use only eye contact to get someone else to say their name – If someone other than the person the victim is looking at says the name it doesn’t count – If Dracula is successful the victim must go into the middle and become Dracula

Dodge Ball – body, mind, focus

Start a game of dodge ball without the ball- mime dodge ball. Students play using all of the rules of regular dodge ball; however they must mime having the ball. Side coach focus to encourage students to visualize the imaginary ball, focus, watch and react. Make certain that everyone is clear on where the “ball” is at all times. Even young students pick this up quickly- a great focus exercise that is high energy!

Emotion Squares – skill building, emotion work

Using masking tape or safety cones create four distinct squares in a large open space. Assign each square an emotion (you may want to use signs with feeling faces/emoticons for young students) – happy, angry, sad, afraid. Split the class into four groups and place each group in an emotion square. Assign each group a different nonsense word such as broccoli – eggplant – furniture – pickled beets, etc. – something odd enough to remember but totally unrelated to any emotion. Explain to the students that they will be moving through the squares talking to the people in the other squares using only their word; however they must show the emotion for that square. (Ex- a group of students in the angry square are shouting broccoli and stomping their feet while a group of students in the sad square weep and say cauliflower etc.) Keep rotating the groups clockwise through the squares by calling “change” until each group has been to each square several times.

Fill the Space – body, teambuilding

Players spread out over the space. The teacher asks them to begin moving about the space trying to make sure that the entire space is filled at all times with moving bodies. Then at the command “freeze” all must stop and look around them to see if there is any empty space or if the group has successfully filled it. Next they will hear “look” If they feel there is an empty space near them, they may move one step in that direction and freeze again. Next the teacher gives the command “connect”. Now all must link arms, legs, whatever, to create a web that completely fills the space.

First Line Last Line – listen and respond – focus

Two arbitrary lines are chosen as first and last line. The players are assigned given circumstances and asked to begin the scene with the first line. The scene continues until the last line naturally evolves.

Fruit Basket Upset – body, mind

An easier version of Circle Dash great for younger players. One student must stand in the middle while the others make a circle of chairs around them and sit down. The actors will be asked to choose between three fruits – banana, pear and apple (or use your imagination- it could be animals, exotic fruits, anything) The player in the center must now call out a fruit and all players who have chosen that fruit must change places while the person in the middle attempts to steal a chair. The leader should teach the group the safe way of sitting when playing such an active game- run to the chair, turn and sit- no diving for the chair. Anyone left without a chair during a trade must become the new player in the middle. No one is allowed to sit in their own chair two times in a row.

Get the Chair – skill building, motivation

This game is a variation of Waiting for the Bus without props. Character A sits in the chair. Character B approaches and wants the chair. Character A does not want to give it up. Character B must not touch Character A to get the chair but must instead motivate A to give up the chair. It works best if B establishes a strong character and relationship such as “Young man get out of that chair and clean your room”. The audience will watch to be sure everyone stays honest. If B says something that would obviously make A give up the chair then the audience or teacher should make sure this happens. (ex- B enters and making retching gestures leans over A and announces “I’m going to be sick” – A would obviously leap up) The teacher may want to play character B first as a demonstration. If B is successful then B sits in the chair and becomes the new character for someone else. If B is unable to motivate A to give up the chair in 3-4 attempts a new B is chosen. Side coach “create a who” “make them want to give you the chair” “solve the problem”

Give and Take – skill building – reacting and listening – learning not to upstage

Tell the students that it is an actor's job to help to focus the audience's attention on stage in order to best communicate the story of the play. In order to do this groups of actors must share the audience's attention with a give and take. Today they will play a game to practice giving and taking attention and taking turns putting the audience focus on themselves. Create a playing space and an audience space and ask the group to sit in the audience space. Place a chair or stage cube in the playing space. Tell the students that two will be chosen to go into the playing space. The first – actor A – will begin to do interesting movements using the chair or stage cube. They can do anything they wish, but may not use words. The second – actor B – must remain frozen in the space watching. When actor B feels that A has had a turn getting audience attention they clap their hands and take the attention. Actor A must immediately freeze. Actor B then goes to the chair or stage cube and begins to do interesting things to keep audience attention. When Actor A feels Actor B has had a long enough turn Actor A claps their hands or makes a sound and Actor B must immediately freeze and give up the attention. Young children may better understand this exercise if you use terms like “take the spotlight” or “give your attention to” “take your attention from” etc. After the first time of “give and take” the actors can be allowed to make any sound to freeze each other. Times between freezes may get shorter and a natural rhythm and even sometimes a story will emerge. An excellent exercise to use to help students understand how important it is not to upstage during a scene.

Groups Of – body, mind, team building, getting to know you

One student is designated as leader- this leader then calls out a number of people in a group such as “groups of three”. The rest of the students must now form groups of three as quickly as possible. Anyone left out will have a turn to become leader. The teacher keeps play moving quickly to ensure that students mingle with new people. This is a good game to use to sort students into smaller groups for other exercises.

Group Clap – focus, concentration

The students and teacher sit in a circle with the teacher as leader. The teacher begins a clapping pattern by turning to the person on the right, making eye contact and then clapping both hands together once. The teacher asks the person to the right to clap at exactly the same time- so that both clap simultaneously, using the eye contact as the “ready” cue. In this way a clapping pattern is started and travels around the circle, passing the sound from one person to another. Once all are able to pass around the pattern clapping simultaneously with each other the teacher stops the pattern and tells the group that another clap will be added, then starts the pattern again, and after one or two people have passed the sound, begins another clapping wave right on top of the first. Play continues adding clapping waves until 3-4 waves of clapping are passing around the circle.

Group Count – focus, concentration

Note: This is an excellent game just before a performance to help a cast lose nervous energy and focus on their work. The teacher sits all in a circle so that everyone can see each other's faces. The teacher explains that together as a group they will begin to count as high as they can. It should sound like one voice counting very slowly 1, 2, 3, etc., however each person will add a number. No one may plan ahead who will speak when, and all must participate by adding only one number. If two people speak at the same time the group will begin again.

Honey if you Love Me- team building, get to know you

All sit in a circle. The teacher tells the students that the object of the game is to get their neighbor to break up laughing using only their words and actions – no touching allowed. They must say to the person on their right “Honey if you love me, won't you please, please, smile? To which this person must respond without cracking a smile “Dear you know I love you, but I just can't smile.” Each person in the circle gets 3 attempts.

Huh - voice

This is a simple game for vocal projection that strengthens the muscle which supports our breath- the diaphragm. It is played very like Whee, Whoosh, Beep. Students are placed in a circle. The teacher asks them to imagine the traditional football player warm up in which the players crash into a padded piece of equipment with a deep guttural “huh” sound. Ask each person in the circle to practice saying “huh” in this deep voice. Caution them not to yell or scream- this will carry the sound up into their vocal chords and could damage their voices. To be certain that everyone can do this from the diaphragm, ask the students to place one hand about 3 inches above their belly button and try to make that hand bounce as they say “huh”. When everyone has mastered the technique begin passing “huh” around the circle- one person turns to their neighbor on the right and begins by throwing “huh” at them. This person then may choose to either continue passing “huh” to the right or to instead throw “huh” back to the original playing which starts the sound moving to the left. At any given time anyone can change the direction of the sound in this manner. Kids enjoy changing the direction of the sound so much that it is best to allow each student only one change of direction as the game first begins. Another variation is to allow the students to throw “huh” across the circle – in this case they must first make clear eye contact so that all can keep track of where the sound is going.

Image Theatre – skill building – story structure – stage picture

Tell the students they are going to create some image theatre plays. Explain that image theatre is a series of frozen pictures created just as if you froze the DVD player on one scene, or as if you were watching a slide show. The pictures show beginning, middle and end of a story. The pictures show who, what and where. Explain that you will show a brief image theatre. Explain that you will show an image theatre story. You will tell them to close their eyes while you set up each picture and to open their eyes when you are ready so that they can see the slide show. Briefly demonstrate a series of four images (using the cues “eyes closed” and “eyes open” between each): #1 mime walking towards a chair #2 mime beginning to sit down in the chair #3 lay the chair on it’s side on the floor and lay down next to it as if you had fallen over #4 freeze in a formal bow.

After you have demonstrated, split into smaller acting groups and ask the each group to recreate a famous story or fairy tale for each other in 6 pictures or less. Great for helping determine the main events of a story and get to the heart of the conflict. Also great for helping them choose actions to show who, what, where.

Image Theatre Birthday (a variation of Image Theatre) – skill building – story structure – stage picture, showing who, what, where

Tell the students they are going to create some image theatre plays. Explain that image theatre is a series of frozen pictures created just as if you froze the DVD player on one scene, or as if you were watching a slide show. The pictures show beginning, middle and end of a story. The pictures show who, what and where. Explain that you will show a brief image theatre. You will tell them to close their eyes while you set up each picture and to open their eyes when you are ready so that they can see the slide show. Briefly demonstrate a series of four images (using the cues “eyes closed” and “eyes open” between each): #1 mime walking towards a chair #2 mime beginning to sit down in the chair #3 lay the chair on it’s side on the floor and lay down next to it as if you had fallen over #4 freeze in a formal bow.

After you have demonstrated, split the students into smaller acting groups and ask each group to create a story entitled “what happened at my birthday party” Briefly discuss birthday parties. Who attends? Where do they happen? What kinds of things do people do at birthday parties? Tell them they must agree on a story and create it in 5 or 6 pictures. Everyone does not have to be in each picture. Each person must play only one character. Give them time to prepare then share the image theatre stories with each other.

Kerplop – voice, vocus

A variation on Zip Zap Zop. The game begins with a round of Zip Zap Zop in a circle. Next the teacher introduces the idea that if someone breaks the sound pattern or if two people both respond to a thrown sound ball then the person or people who broke the pattern must fall to the ground using their voice to show why. Demonstrate a huge fainting scene with a large, loud sigh or perhaps a melodramatic “Oh, no!”. (You may also see melodramatic death scenes- encourage imagination and fun, not gruesome details or realism)

Knot – team building

The group forms a circle and joins hands, with the teacher as a part of the circle. The teacher explains only that each person in the circle must be very gentle and take care of the people whose hand they hold, and no matter what they must not let go. Then the teacher asks the group to follow each other as they are gently pulled, and the teacher walks directly across the circle (still holding hands with students) and ducks under the connected arms of two students forming a human knot. The teacher will repeat this action one or two more times, side coaching “don’t let go” “take care of your partners” until the group is tangled, then the circle is challenged to carefully “unknot” without letting go of hands or pulling too hard on each other.

Magic Microphone - voice, team building, get to know you game for very young actors

A variation of Name Ball. All of the students sit in a circle. The teacher brings in a tall thin object such as a wooden spoon, ruler, wire whisk, etc. The teacher tells the students that this is a magic microphone – when someone speaks into it their voice is magnified. The teacher demonstrates projecting voice when holding the “magic microphone”, using their full name. The teacher then passes it to the right- the student on the right says their name. This continues until all have had a chance to say their name. Then the teacher asks the students to introduce the student on their right just as a talk show host does. The teacher side coaches “let the microphone create a loud booming voice”. Once all have had a turn to introduce the person to their right the teacher asks each person in the circle to find a new place to sit. Play continues until all have had a chance to name several in the group.

Mime Ball – focus, concentration

Place the group in two straight lines of equal numbers facing each other across the width of the room, so that each player has a partner across the empty space. Choose one line as A and one as B. Ask all the A’s to pick up an imaginary baseball- demonstrate and side coach holding the ball “what size is a baseball? How heavy is it? What does it feel like?” Ask As to throw the baseball to Bs, who must catch it and throw it back. Allow the groups to practice while the teacher side coaches, encouraging concentration, focus and truthful mime. Then ask all in As to put down their baseball and pick up a ping pong ball to toss back and forth. Variations: a basketball, huge heavy medicine ball, balloon. Each time the ball changes encourage the actors to think about the weight and feel of this new ball as they make their choices.

Mime Tug of War – focus, concentration, team building

Divide the students into two groups and place them in 2 long lines for tug of war. Demonstrate using muscle tension, facial expression and sound to show that you are tugging on something. Talk about the way in which a team in tug of war work together, the ways in which one side, then the other seems to win, etc. Hand each side one end of an imaginary rope and conduct an imaginary tug of war while side coaching “work together” “concentrate” “feel the rope” “who is winning now? Show me!” With younger groups the teacher can signal which side has the advantage at any given time to help direct the focus and action.

Mirror – focus, concentration

The group is placed in pairs. Each pair chooses a leader. The teacher instructs the leaders to begin very slow, fluid arm movements. Their partner must try to copy these movements as if they were a reflection of the other in the mirror. After a few minutes the leaders become the reflection and the other in the pair has a turn to lead. During the exercise the teacher side coaches “focus” “work together” and encourages quiet concentration. After the pairs have mastered slow arm movements they may stand and add other body movements. Variation: allow the partners to work without a designated leader.

Name Ball – voice, team building, get to know you game

The students and teacher sit in a circle. The teacher passes around a ball. Anyone holding the ball must say their name aloud in a bold booming voice. Once all have had a chance to say their name, then the teacher asks each student to say the name of the person next to them as they pass the ball to that person. When all in the circle have had a turn the teacher asks each person to find a new spot to sit in the circle and then pass the ball again, saying the name of the person they are passing the ball to. Play continues until all have had a chance to name several in the group. Side coach “booming voice” as students say their names.

Name Ball Toss– voice, team building, get to know you game

The students and teacher stand in a circle. The teacher tosses a ball to one player saying that player's name. The player who received the ball tosses it to another player saying this player's name and so on. Play continues until each person in the circle has been tossed the ball.

Name Challenge – team building, get to know you

Put all of the students in a circle. After each student has had a chance to say their name ask one student to volunteer to go into the middle of the circle. The only way out of the circle is to walk up to someone standing in the circle and challenge them by attempting to say their name 3 times before they can say their name one time. The student in the middle will soon realize that the way to win the game is to surprise someone who is not paying attention. In the meantime, everyone gets practice learning names.

Observation Game – concentration, focus

Students lie down on the floor and begin to slow their breathing. While the teacher side coaches for relaxation they are asked to listen and observe the sounds around them for one full minute, then discuss what they heard. Next they are asked to move around the room and observe things in the room, then discuss what they had seen.

One Two Three – concentration, focus, icebreaking

Place the group in pairs facing each other. Ask each pair to count to three aloud, taking turns saying the number. Then continue until told to stop. (Ex- A:One B: Two A: Three B: One A: Two B: Three A: One B: Two A: Three, etc.) Next replace two with a clap, then after the pairs have mastered this, replace three with a stomp of the foot, after the pairs have mastered this, replace one with a snap of the fingers.

Pattern Ball Toss – focus, concentration, team building

This game is an excellent one to build group focus, however it does require several soft balls and one or two soft small objects which are easy to pass. Play starts with the group in a circle. The teacher begins by tossing a soft ball gently across the circle to one player, explaining that the group will create a pattern by tossing the ball around the circle to each other and then repeating the very same tosses. This person next tosses the ball to another, and raises their hand so that no one will toss them a ball while the pattern is being established. The third person tosses the ball across the circle to a fourth and so on until everyone in the circle has had the ball tossed to them. The last player to receive the ball tosses it back to the teacher, completing the pattern. The teacher then asks each person to point to the person they tossed the ball to. Next the teacher asks everyone to point to the person who tosses the ball to them. Now the pattern is repeated, tossing the ball around the circle from person to person in the same way as before. Once all know the pattern, the teacher slowly begins tossing more balls, explaining as they go that if a ball drops the nearest person is to pick it up and throw it to their partner NOT return it from where it came- so that the pattern continues as smoothly as possible. Remind the group to take care of their partners- i.e. wait for eye contact before you throw a ball to someone. If the group becomes noisy, the teacher should side coach “focus”. Sometimes concentration is improved if the group is asked to hum while completing the patterns. The teacher should stop play after several balls have been added and get the group to reflect- was it easier to complete the pattern during times of quiet? Variation: after a group has mastered tossing several balls, add items to pass- one to the left and one to the right- during the ball tossing pattern.

Pictures Alive

One actor enters the playing space and freezes. A second actor enters and freezes creating a picture with the first. On a cue from the teacher the first actor leaves the picture, observes the second actor’s position and creates a new picture with. Play continues switching from actor to actor until a story emerges and reaches a conclusion.

Physical Improv – creating characters, responding in the moment

Two students enter the playing space and are sculpted into random positions by a third student or the teacher. On a signal from the teacher the pair come to life and react to each other. Side coach: focus, think who are you? Who is the other person? Where are you?

Point of View Exercise – skill building to get actors to listen to each other and react

NOTE: This is a tricky one to pull off and is best used with older youth or adults

Assign a simple task to the actor which is detailed enough to demand their attention. Ideas may be completing a sheet of math problems, grading a spelling test, doing their nails (for girls), writing a thank you note. The task should be important to them and real. Tell them that in a moment a second actor will join them and begin a scene. They must only respond to what they know. They can not make up details.

Have the actor begin the task. In the meantime, ask a second actor to step out in the hall. Assign the second actor a set of given circumstances and point of view which so that they will have strong ideas about the situation. - such as “you just found out that this person recommended you for a promotion” and you want to thank them or “this person had you fired and you want to demand justice”. Ask the second actor to go in and begin the scene with open ended words such as “how dare you!” or “thank you so much!” however they must not simply state what happened- only refer to what happened in general terms. No clues- just act as if the other person already knows. The first actor must be reminded to always be truthful. They don’t know what happened. So of course they would respond with “how dare I what” The second actor would continue “you know”. The first, being truthful says “no I don’t,” etc. When this works the actors are forced to really listen and respond- and to be absolutely truthful- not make up reactions and pretend them.

Pow

This simple exercise is a great way to encourage young students to project. Ask students to stand in a circle. Explain that we are going to throw our voices back and forth across the circle just as if our voices were a ball- using the word POW. Coach the students to make eye contact with another student across the circle and then actively throw the word “POW” towards their entire body to throw the sound. The sound does not have to be received, simply passed on; the chosen person responds by quickly throwing “POW” to another person across the circle, and play continues. Side coach “make eye contact” “throw voice out” “make the sound big” “support it with your body”.

Pow Splat Boing – A game of Zip Zap Zop begins- students in a circle pass a ball of sound around in a pattern- zip , zap, zop, etc. After the pattern has been established the teacher adds the following choices. Once you have been Zopped – you may either:

- choose to continue the pattern by saying “Zip”
- throw the sound as a ball across the circle saying “Pow”

If you have been “powed” you may either:

- throw the ball of sound to someone else saying Pow
- begin a pattern of Zip Zap Zop
- bounce the sound back to the person who “powed” you by saying “boing” and pretending to bounce it back off your chest
- throw the ball of sound into the middle of the circle shouting “splat”

Once a ball of sound is thrown into the circle with a splat anyone can run in and grab it to continue play.

Queen Wants her Special Object (or the King wants...) – skillbuilding character and status game

Line up 5 students in a row – choose one end to start from – this is the queen or king – now assign roles to each of the other four in descending status- ex: advisor – cook – chamber maid – and finally end with rat catcher. Explain that in the game each person may only speak to the person above them in status and below them in status and there must be a difference in the way they speak to each – then ask the Queen (King) to look around the room and choose a simple, easily seen object – now the Queen begins by turning to the chief advisor and saying “Fetch me my special object” - in turn each one gives the job to the one below them- the rat catcher chooses an object and sends it back up the line and the Queen reacts to it – was this the right object? If not- the Queen grows increasingly agitated – putting the pressure on the group who all must react in line with their status.

Rain Storm

All students sit on the floor or in chairs facing the teacher or in a circle. The teacher leads through the following sequence of movements:

1. To start, rub your palms together. (or rub two fingers together)
2. Snap your fingers.
3. Clap with two fingers to palm.
4. Clap.
- 5 Slap your lap and stamp your feet.
6. Clap.
7. Clap with two fingers to palm.
8. Snap fingers.
9. Rub palms together.
10. Stop rubbing palms together. Remain silent for a few moments

Questions Two actors enter the playing space and begin a scene. They are assigned a location by the audience. The trick is the scene may only be played in questions. Encourage the actors to carry on a conversation, not simply parrot back what the other said as a question. Ex: 2 people lost in the desert A: “Where are we?” B: “Have you checked the map?” A: Where did we put the map? B: Are you asking me? A: Is there anyone else here? Etc...

Sit, Stand, Bend – skill building, levels

(best for older students) Place three students in the acting space and tell them that they will be asked to create an improvised scene. They will be given the place and problem. During the scene at any given time each person must be either sitting, standing or bending- but no one may be doing the same thing at the same time. Every movement must be justified – that is to say their character must have a reason for doing this movement. Prepare a list of places and problems in advanced. Once students get more experienced at improvisation you may allow the audience to supply the place and problem. Example of justified movement: A coach is preparing 2 students for a cheerleading competition. The coach stands tall and does a stretch, one cheerleader bends over – too exhausted to participate, while another sits down because their shoe is untied.

Shave and a Hair Cut – focus, concentration

Best for older students. The teacher asks all to stand in a circle and demonstrates the following clapping and word pattern:

CLAP and hold	2 SHORT Claps	CLAP and hold	CLAP and hold
Shave	and a	hair	cut

PAUSE then	2 Short Claps
	2 Bits

After the group has mastered the clapping pattern by doing it together, the teacher then asks the group to pass the clapping pattern across the circle just as in Zip Zap Zop, keeping the same rhythm of clap, 2 short claps, clap, clap, pause, 2 short claps while saying the words. In this manner person A claps once and holds (shave) with eye contact towards person B across the circle, who claps 2 quick times (and a) making eye contact with person C who claps once and holds (hair) making eye contact with person D who claps once and holds (cut) making eye contact with person E who, after a pause claps two quick times (2 bits) making eye contact with another who starts the pattern again.

Serpent Tag – body, team building

This game starts much like a traditional game of tag. One person is it and the others run away. When “it” catches someone the two join hands and begin to chase the others. Each time someone is caught they add to the “serpent”, so that eventually a large group is chasing a few people. The group must work together so that the last remaining runners don’t slip from their grasp. Everyone in the serpent must take care of each other so that the serpent remains attached and no one is hurt. Side coach “work together” “be a team” “take care of each other”.

Sit Stand Bend – (think on your feet – develop levels)

Three actors enter the playing space and begin a scene. They are assigned a location by the audience. During the scene they must alternate between sitting, standing and bending. No one can be doing the same action at the same time, and the actions must appear natural and fit in the scene.

Snap – Focus – listening

One actor enters the playing space and begins telling a story. At any time the audience can say “snap” and the actor must change their last statement. Ex: I was walking down the street and it was pouring rain. SNAP I was walking down the street and the sun was beating down.

Stage Picture - skill building – stage movement

Place ½ of the group in a playing space, ½ as an audience. Ask the group in the playing space to move quickly about the space. On a freeze cue they must all freeze in place. Then on the cue “stage picture” they must, without moving from that spot, find a way to share their face with the audience. The people in the front of the stage picture must find a way to get to a lower level than the people in the back. The teacher then asks the audience if they can see all of the faces. If some members of the audience can’t see the group must brainstorm a way to make all visible. Side coach “don’t hide your face”. Variation: after the cue “stage picture” add the cue “ta” “da” - and all must lift their arms in a musical theatre final ending moment without blocking another’s face with their raised hands.

Slow Motion Freeze Tag – body

Players begin a traditional game of tag in slow motion. When a runner is tagged by “it” they must freeze in place until another runner touches them to release them. Play continues until “it” has managed to freeze all or most of the players. Side coach “slow motion” “think about how you move”.

Sound Ball – body, voice

Ask your students to stand in a circle. Explain that we will be passing a ball of sound around the circle. They must throw the ball and receive the ball with sound. The sound ball may morph as each person passes it to the next. Begin the passing by creating an imaginary ball and miming throwing it to the next person with a loud distinctive sound that begins as you start and then complete the throw. Encourage the person catching to receive the “ball” with a sound. As the ball goes around the circle side coach “don’t forget to receive the ball” “how big is the ball?” “how heavy is the ball?” “What does this ball sound like?”

Sound Effects Partners (for listening and reacting) Place three students in the playing space. One student tells a story while another makes the sound effects and a third mimes the action.

Stuck in a Box – focus, concentration

Students lie down on the floor and make themselves comfortable. It is helpful to start them on their backs facing up; however they may choose other positions, as long as they are quiet and relaxed. The teacher side coaches “let your body sink into the floor” “feel the floor supporting you”. Next they are walked through an imaginary story in which they fall asleep, wake up and discover they are stuck in a box. “You were so comfortable that you fell asleep” “When you wake up you realize that while you were sleeping someone has placed a giant cardboard box over you- and you are stuck”. Encourage students to move slowly and feel all of the edges of their box with their hands. Encourage them to make several attempts to get out of their box before they are successful. Encourage them to be imaginative when they finally escape- do they lift up the side and crawl out? Do they kick their way out? Do they tear a hole in the side? With older students you may want to add music that becomes increasingly tense and tell them that the box is getting smaller. This exercise makes a good introduction to classic play structure of rising tension, pursuit of a goal, etc.

Sub Text Circle – skill building, motivation, action

Explain to the students that we all use words to get what we want. The very same words can have 2 different meanings depending on what we want – or our intentions. Demonstrate with the game “Two Meanings” or remind them of this game. Place the students in a circle and tell them we will be practicing using a nonsense word to show many different meanings. Choose 2 nonsense words such as “watermelon”, “broccoli” “window curtains” etc. Have prepared a list of opposite actions/intentions of varying intensities such as “to brush off” “to hurt” “to destroy” - “to compliment” “to befriend” “to adore” “to comfort” “to soothe” “to repair” “to inquire” “to question” “to interrogate” “to check” “to demand” “to blast” etc. Ask the first student to your right to turn to the person on their right and say their nonsense word with an assigned intention/tactic. The person to the right must react using a nonsense word. Each actor gets three attempts to use their word to pursue the assigned intention. (Best for older actors)

Surprise Movement – creating characters, imagination, respond in the moment (from the Improv Encyclopedia)

Have everyone walk around leisurely. Tell them to stop and start make a movement, a gesture, a sound, anything really. Let the players repeat the gesture until they know what they `are`.

The idea is not to preconceive, but to let it happen. Players may turn out to be dish washers, ushers, lawn mowers, ping pong balls, whatever. Explain that there are no wrong answers. Tell the players just to acknowledge what they `are` for themselves, and then move on, stop again and make another gesture/movement/sound.

Tableaux – skill building, showing who, emotion work, character development

Talk to the students about a tableaux or frozen picture. Have ready some illustrations from children's books or copies of great paintings with a strong sense of movement, plot and action. Place the students in small acting groups and hand out the images. Ask each group to recreate the images exactly by choosing one of the characters in the image and placing their body in that position. Walk around the room observing each group and side coaching to be certain emotions and subtle gestures and body positions match the pictures. Share the final tableaux with each other. When a group shares their frozen picture be certain that someone holds up the image that was the source, and allow audience members to adjust group members in order to more accurately re-create the image. This is a great exercise to use with a simple children's book to help younger students create improvised scenes. Simply copy several images from the book that can be placed in order to illustrate the main events of the story. Next ask the students to create tableaux of each image and title them "Scene One" "Scene Two" etc. Later on bring the images to life and you have the beginnings of an improvised play. Variation: to use for emotion work, subtext or motivation, the teacher may walk up to any character in the frozen image and tap them on the head. When tapped on the head a character must say what they are thinking or feeling.

Three Scenes – Six actors (in pairs) enter the playing space. The audience chooses a relationship and a location for each pair. Next the audience chooses a starting line. The line may be "grabbed" by any of the three pairs who feel that it might work in their scene. These two play a scene while the others watch. Whenever this pair says a line which another pair feel might work, the new pair can "grab" the line and begin a scene. Play continues bouncing back and forth until all three find a line that will end each scene.

Ex: Two dentists at a convention – A husband and wife on a cruise – A coach and athlete at the Olympics. Starting line: I really wouldn't. The coach begins "I really wouldn't go out there without a warm up." "But I have warmed up today." "Yeah, how long?" "Two hours" "Well two hours isn't long enough- you need at least another hour". *The dentists grab the line* ... "Well two hours isn't long enough – you need at least another hour to see the laser bonding exhibit" "But I only have two hours before I'm due on a conference call." "You can't miss the exhibit!" "Well what do you suggest I do about it?" "You could skip the conference call" *the cruise couple grab the line* "you could skip the conference call for once – we are on vacation you know!" "I know, but I told you it would have to be a working vacation" "Work, work, work, that's all you do anymore!" etc....

Too Dee Tah – by Theatre Artist Michelle Fogel – Lancaster, PA

Too Dee Tah

(Chorus – to be chanted at the beginning and before every additional action. Try to hold the physical pose while you sing, then go back to a ‘starting stance’ to begin again.)

Aaaaa.....Too dee tah, a-too dee tah, a-too dee tah tah.

A-too dee tah, a-too dee tah, a-too dee tah tah.

(The actions – you say and do each one, and the audience says/does the same. Call/response approach. You can, of course, add and delete as appropriate. For example, I never use “eyes shut” with the preschoolers for safety reasons. Plus, it’s much more fun to watch everyone!)

- *Thumbs up!
- *Elbows back!
- *Feet apart!
- *Knees together!
- *Bottoms up!
- *Tongue out!
- *Eyes shut!
- *Turn around!

Tongue Twisters – voice warm up

This one is self explanatory. A good idea is to first teach the tongue twister by call and response, and then have the students complete the tongue twister in groups of three which grow faster and faster as the teacher stands in front and conducts like a choir director. Some good tongue twisters:

A - Around the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran.

B - Big black bug bit a big black bear and the big black bear bled black blood.

C - Can I cook a proper cup of coffee in a copper coffee pot?

D - Don't doubt the doorbell, but differ with the doorknob.

E - Eight gray geese in a green field grazing.

F - Fine white vinegar with veal.

The free thugs set three thugs free.

G - Grab the groundhog from the glazed grass.

Grey geese in a green field grazing.

H - High roller, low roller, lower roller.

How can a clam cram in a clean cream can?

I - Inexplicably mimicking him hiccupping.

I wish to wash my Irish wristwatch

J - Jingle jungle jangle joker.

K - Knit kilts for nasty cold nights.

L - Little lucky luke likes lakes, lucky little luke likes licking lakes

M - Monkeys make monopoly monotonous.

N - The Next nest will not necessarily be next to nothing.

New York's unique, unique's New York.

O - Octopi occupy a porcupine's mind.

Only royal oily royal oil boils

P - Peter Prangle, the prickly pear picker, picked three perfectly prickly pears.

A proper copper coffee pot.

Q - Queen Catherine wakes the cat, and the cat quietly cries.

R - Rubber Baby Buggy Bumpers!

Roberta ran rings around the Roman ruins.

Red lolly yellow trolley.

S - Some shun sunshine. Do you shun sunshine?

Six stick shifts stuck shut.

T - Three thick thistle sticks.

The thirty-three thieves thought that they thrilled the throne throughout Thursday.

U - Unique New York, Unique New York, Unique New York.
V - Venti, Grande, Tall - Very Grand Words for Large, Medium, Small.
W - Will's wetsuit is round and wet and rough and wide and ready to go on a watery ride.
Wayne went to Wales to watch walruses.
X - Xylophones exist or so existentialists insist.
Y - Yoda met a Yeti on the Plains of Serengeti.
Z - Zoologists illogically love to read astrology.

Tongue Twisters with Characters – voice, imagination

Take any unique tongue twister and match it up with a character voice and some simple illustrative movements. Teach the tongue twister first and then explain that you will be creating a character with the words using your voice and your body. Demonstrate and have the students mimic you, then allow them to travel about the space using the tongue twister as dialogue each time they greet each other. Ex- Rubber Baby Buggy Bumpers performed with an English accent as a queen. The teacher demonstrates a caricature of a nose in the air queen or king sipping tea and announcing Rubber Baby Buggy Bumpers with upper class English tonalities.

Two Meanings – skill building, showing motivation/intention

Tell the students that voices make choices that tell a story and voices make choices that show what the character is really thinking, feeling and wanting. Tell them that actors always know what their character wants and why their character says or does something. The actors try to show the audience what their character is thinking (what they really want) using their voices. Demonstrate with a volunteer. Ask the volunteer to perform a simple scene with you. Hand the volunteer a pencil or a pen and tell them that this is the first day of school and they have purchased this pencil at the school store. They are very proud of this pencil because they purchased it with their own hard work. Next tell the audience that you will be playing the scene 2 times – one time with a mean friend who wants to make someone feel bad and the other with a kind friend who wants to make someone feel bad. You will use the same words both times.

Perform the scene 2 times using the same words- “Hello” – What’s that you have? Oh I love that pencil where did you get it?” but one time be sure your voice is dripping with sarcasm. Ask the students to tell you which scene was the mean friend and talk about what vocal choices were used. This should be a very brief demonstration– no more than 5 minutes or so. Next allow the students in groups of 2 or 3 to create their own “two meaning” scenes, using the very same words to show 2 very different intentions.

Two Moods – skill building

Students are placed in groups of two or three and given a dramatic situation with an inherent problem- such as “stuck in an elevator” or “fighting over a bargain at a garage sale” – then asked to create a scene together in which each character plays two moods during the course of the scene. Ex- you are at a garage sale shopping for your mom for mother’s day and both of you want to buy the fake flower arrangement. You are first to pick it up so you feel triumphant, then the person running the sale tells you that it is already sold and you feel defeated”. Encourage imagination

and character development. Remind students to pre-plan so that their scene shows who they are, where they are and what they want, with each character clearly showing two moods.

Questions: Two actors enter the playing space. They are assigned a location- they choose who they are and what they want. Now they begin a scene. Each is only allowed to speak in questions. Whenever someone forgets they are replaced.

Two Lines: Three actors enter the playing space. They are assigned a location. Two actors must choose a line and can speak only using that line, the third can say anything to keep building the scene.

Ex: A may say anything, B may only say “You must pay the rent” C may only say “I’ll save you” the location is at the mall.

A: Look! A shoe sale!

B: You must pay the rent!

A: No, I must buy some shoes.

C: I’ll save you!

A: I don’t need to be saved- I want to buy the shoes.

B: You must pay the rent!

A: But I really need those shoes!

C: I’ll save you!

A: Will you buy me the shoes?

Up, Down, One Leg – body, teamwork, group building, focus

The students are asked to spread out over the empty space and to face the teacher. The teacher explains that they will be playing a listening game. The students must listen for the command “up” or “down” or “one leg”. When they hear “up” they must freeze standing tall and stretching their arms in the air. When they hear “down” they must freeze flat on the floor. When they hear “one leg” they must freeze on one leg. After each command they must freeze in the correct position while the teacher looks for anyone too slow to respond or wiggling. If anyone is still moving after a command they must sit on the sidelines. Play continues until all are eliminated.

Walk Like A Line – skill building, character work

Students begin by walking around the space as the teacher side coaches. First they are asked to find their normal walk and examine it- what part of their body hits the ground first – heel? Mid foot? How do they hold their heads? Next they are asked to imagine that they could be a line come to life. The first type of line they must be is a straight line. Side coach “walk like a straight line” “explore the space like a straight line” “what type of character might this be?” “Greet each other as this straight line character might” The process is repeated with curvy lines, zig zag lines and dotted lines. Variation: “Toe the Line Shoe store” After completing the walk like a line exercise students are placed in groups of 3-4 and asked to create a scene in which several people enter a shoe store trying to buy shoes. Each student must choose a character and a type of line to determine that character’s personality. Each person in the scene must be one of the lines come to life. What type of personality would a shoe salesman have

who is a straight line, etc? Their final scenes must clearly show the character traits created by the type of line. All scenes must have a clear beginning, middle and end.

Waiting for the Bus – skill building, character work

Show students a box filled with several hats or simple props that suggest a strong who such as a stenographer's pad and pencil, a fireman's hat, a bowl and spoon, etc.

Place two chairs or large wooden stage cubes together in the playing space to create a bus stop. Ask for a volunteer to sit at the bus stop, waiting for the bus and they want to be alone. You might give them a newspaper or book to pretend to be reading. This is character A- we know that are waiting for the bus and want to be left alone. Next choose a student to play character B. Character B must choose a hat or prop to help them create a character that wants attention. This character must interact with the student at the bus stop and try to get them to give up the bench by making demands for attention. The dialogue is up to the students' imaginations. The teacher side coaches to help them create a character. "show who" "how does a fireman get things done" etc.

Walk Your Name – body, mind

This simple warm up is a great focus exercise as well as a good one for new groups to play. The students begin by walking around a large open space- any way they choose- simply exploring space. Then they are asked to walk out their name on the floor as if their feet were a giant marking pencil- creating a path they can easily remember. Names can criss-cross each other as long as the students can repeat the path later. Now the students are asked to walk their name in silence- then walk it as if they are in a snowy blizzard without a coat, a hot desert, etc.

What Are You Doing? – body, mind

Students are placed in a circle. One student begins a simple mimed activity such as sweeping. The student to their right must now ask "What are you doing?" to which the student miming must respond with anything OTHER THAN the activity they are doing. For example "brushing my teeth". The second student now begins to mime whatever is said – in this case, brushing their teeth, and a third student to the right asks "what are you doing?" Play continues until all have had one or two chances. Teacher side coaches "don't think too much!" to encourage action before their brains can censor ideas.

Whee Whoosh Beep- body, voice, mind

Students begin in a circle, the teacher demonstrates passing the sound "whoosh" around the circle to the right by scooping hands low to the floor while saying "whoosh" in a deep voice. All practice passing whoosh to the right. Next the teacher demonstrates passing "wheee" to the left by sweeping arms together up in a semicircle beginning at the waist and sweeping in front of body up and to the left while saying "wheeeeeee" in a loud, siren like head voice. All practice wheee to the left. Then the teacher demonstrates "beep" – hands up in a "stop" gesture in front of chest while saying "beep". Play begins to the right using "whoosh"- any player may reverse direction by saying "beep"- the play then reverses direction and sound – whoosh for right movement, wheee for left movement. The trick to the game is to move quickly so that the students have to react without thinking. It is like patting your head and rubbing your belly- a head game – as well as a nice vocal and body warm up. It is probably best to limit the "beep" to one per student; otherwise several players on one side of the circle could be left with nothing to do while the other half of the circle enjoys passing the sound back and forth.

The Martha Game/Where game – skill building

Tell the students to think of a place – such as the beach, McDonalds, school, etc. – as soon as they have thought of this place they can go into the playing spot and mime an activity they would do there – once someone watching recognizes this place they can join the first person, doing an appropriate activity that complements what the first person is doing – play continues till all have recognized “where” and joined in miming an activity – after each time the group discusses where they were.

Who Am I? - skill building, character work, team building

This is a game for showing “who”. Ask the students to think of different types of personalities and characters and occupations - for example “a regal queen” “a fierce lion tamer” “a busy waitress”. Send one student out of the room. Explain that when they return the group will have decided who they are and will begin to treat them as that person. They must guess who they are and begin responding as that character until the teacher stops the game. After the chosen person has left the room ask the remaining students to choose a “who”. Brainstorm the ways we react to this who. Ex- who is a famous celebrity – some students may be taking their picture; another might be the director placing them on set, etc. Tell the students that they must each choose a character and interact with the “who” with words and actions; however they may not ever use words that directly tell the person “who” they are.

Wizards, Giants and Elves – imagination, team building

The group is divided into two teams. The teacher explains that they will be conducting an imaginary battle similar to playing rock paper scissors. Instead of rock paper and scissors the choices will be wizards, giants or elves. The teacher demonstrates how to create a wizard (stand feet apart, left arm high in the air over head, sweeping right arm from side to side as if holding an imaginary magic wand) giant (stand on toes, arms above head with hands curled into claws and elbows bent, making snarling faces) or elf (squat down on floor with hands near mouth, making body as tiny as possible). Each character is only more powerful than one other character. The wizard can vanquish a dwarf because of the magic wand, the giant can step on the elf because of its great size and the elf can defeat a wizard by running up it’s cape. On a signal from the teacher each team marches to a home base on opposite sides of the room to choose a character in secret. All members of the group must be the same character, so they must work together quickly to choose. Then on another signal the groups march to the center and meet face to face then “declare” by quickly taking the position and sounds of the character they have chosen. Which ever group chose the more powerful character may chase the weaker character group (ex- if one team chose elves and another chose giants, the giants may chase the elves). Anyone from the weaker team who is tagged before making it back to the safety of home base must now join the opposite team. If both groups choose the same character it is a draw and another round is played. Play continues until one group has been completely absorbed or until the students tire of the game.

Zip – Zap – Zop – voice, body, mind

Students are placed in a circle and the teacher demonstrates the sound pattern they will reproduce, clapping with each sound- Zip – Zap – Zop. Players practice chanting and clapping to the sound pattern until everyone understands that Zap comes after Zip, etc. Then the teacher asks the students to “throw” the sound around the circle by making eye contact with someone and throwing the sound out clapping in front of their body and imagining that they can shoot the word across the room. The first person sends out “zip” the next player makes eye contact with a third player and

throws “zap” and the third player makes eye contact with a fourth player and sends out “zop” – then the fourth player begins the pattern again with “zip”. Play continues until a mistake is made in the pattern or two players respond to one sound “throw”- then the teacher begins again. A fun addition after players can complete the pattern rapidly is to eliminate anyone who makes a mistake by asking them to “die” loudly and creatively with a huge swoon. Ex- “I died from 10,000 paper cuts” proclaimed as a student yips and wiggles to the floor.

Zip – Zap – Zop – Bunny - body, mind and voice warm up – reacting in the moment

Also good to raise energy levels and help with teambuilding.

Actors get in a circle. A game of Zip, Zap, and Zop is begun. Once a complete Zip Zap Zop pattern is accomplished the actor who was last sent “Zop” may choose one of the following commands:

Bunny – the person indicated must form a ‘bunny’ with the two people on either side. Each side person forms the ear, while the center person creates whiskers. All three say “bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny, bunny”

Pocahontas – the person indicated and one person on each side must all face in the same direction, paddle an imaginary canoe and sing “floating down the river”

Little Mermaid – the person indicated must put their hands together under their chin in a dramatic operatic pose and sing “Ahhhhhhhhhh” as loudly as possible while the person on either side makes whooshing sounds and pretends to splash water on the singer.