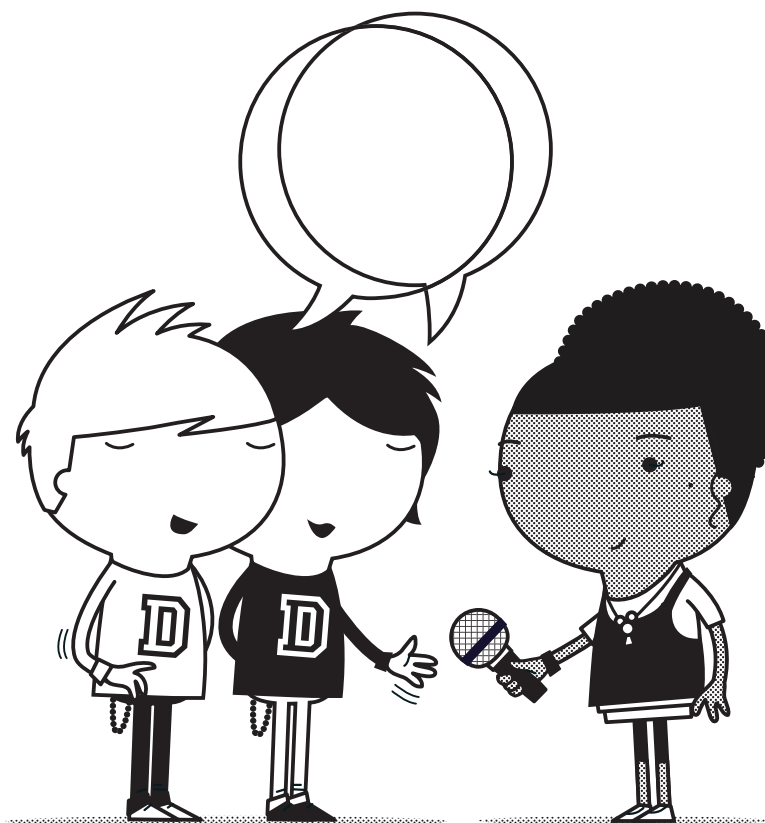


**Drama Games  
for Key Stage 3**  
by Adam Milford,  
Theatre Workout



# Introduction



Active participation in drama by anyone, of any age, can increase confidence and self-esteem, develop excellent communication skills, nurture a creative imagination, and improve the ability to think, act and perform better both in groups and as an individual.

The most simplistic of exercises can have wonderful results, and most techniques can be tailored to suit any group, and can often be used outside of conventional drama lessons to generate thought and discussion on any subject.

The aim of this pack is to provide you as a drama teacher or workshop leader with an increased repertoire of exercises. This should help you to develop students' ability to work with a group, and allow you to feel more confident in responding to your groups reactions – i.e. feeling comfortable adapting your lesson plans on the hoof in order to follow their lead in a creative, engaging, enjoyable and challenging manner.

The exercises in this pack are used in drama school training and in professional theatre rehearsal processes. Among other skills, the techniques involved should help develop:

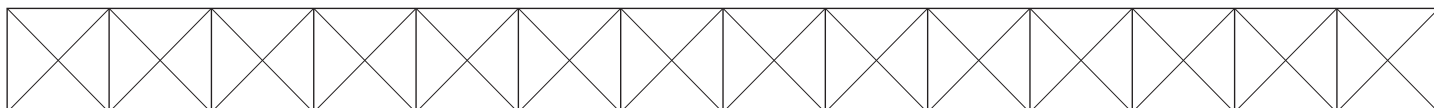
- ▲ Listening skills
- ▲ Communication
- ▲ Instinctive reactions
- ▲ Imagination
- ▲ Voice and speech
- ▲ Physicality and range of motion

The pack is broken down into the following sections:

- ▲ Top Tips
- ▲ The Warm-Up
  - △ The Walk
  - △ Other Games and Activities
- ▲ Improvisation and Storytelling
- ▲ Expanding the Experience

**Design:** Studio EMMI

**Illustration:** Spencer Wilson



## Top Tips



### **A guide to general dos and don'ts for drama teachers and workshop leaders**

As we age we become more aware of the world around us and the society we live in. Children don't have this awareness, their imagination creates new worlds, they speak their mind and ask inquisitive questions. By the time children reach Key Stage 3 they will have developed their own class culture and social structure, and as such each group you work with will censor its behaviour in different ways.

It is your job to make sure your students know that they are allowed to play, to laugh and have fun. By building the right tone with the **warm up exercises** below and encouraging them to say "yes" through **improvisation and storytelling** you will allow them to gain confidence, to develop their creativity and their ability to challenge themselves and each other in a positive and safe environment.

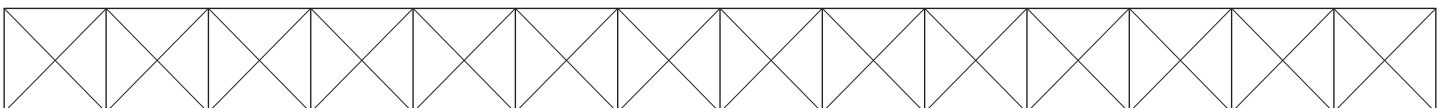
It is also vital that you get stuck in too, to challenge yourself to be first to demonstrate an exercises or game, and not to be embarrassed about looking foolish. You are allowed to play too and enjoy what you are doing, and I assure you that your students will follow your lead, even if it takes some more time than others.

The more confidence you gain in leading, the greater your students' confidence in your ability to lead and in theirs to follow suit.

Likewise, the more workshops you run, the more ideas you will have on how to work with a group, and the more inspiration you will have in the creation of new exercises to try in class.

It is vital that you, and your students, remember that there are no right or wrong answers within a workshop. Creativity and play should be encouraged, which will only generate greater imagination and willingness to explore new exercises and ideas. Some ideas will work, some will not, but it is only through trying them out that we can discover which is which, and even those that don't work may generate new ideas to be explored.

Therefore, learning how to be responsive to a group is vital in maximising your students' ability to grow and develop. By expanding your repertoire of activities with the below, this pack aims to help in you feel confident in responding to the group and the direction their work takes them.



## Top Tips



### Choosing your exercises

Each exercise should have a definite objective, a unique creative challenge which builds on previous exercises. It is important to choose the right warm up exercise for the workshop. Some exercises will allow you to create theatre which might be calm and focused, others active and physical, musical and rhythmic, slow and energised, fast and free, and anything in between. Each exercise below briefly explains what you can achieve with it.

While a certain amount of preparation is required before a class, your planning should not be too detailed, as this may only lead to frustration when the unexpected happens. Instead, it's useful to have a number of planned activities prepared, from which you can select as you move through the workshop, choosing the exercise which will lead you forward to achieve your objectives.

Having reserve exercises in hand will allow you to demonstrate a point, break through creative barriers and help you get where you want to go.

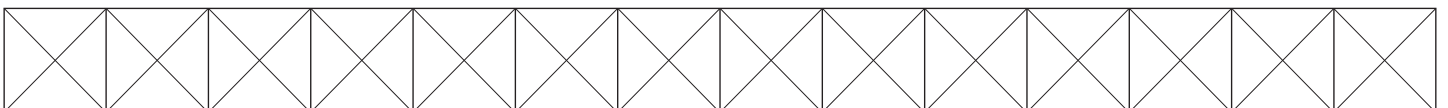
### Delivering your workshop

Some behaviour is to be expected in a drama lesson which would never be permitted in any other class. Laughter, being foolish and free are all perfectly natural. Many students who are new to drama may try to restrain themselves, becoming self-conscious and hesitant, which can be deadly for the creation of theatre. Many of the exercises you will find in this pack are designed to get students moving, making shapes and sounds, helping them understand that looking foolish and being free is a positive thing.

By keeping the general mood warm, light and fun, in time you will achieve a more heightened sense of focus than if you try to run a workshop like a regular academic lesson.

Three of the best tools you can employ to help you achieve better results, are to:

- ▲ Layer your exercises
- ▲ Use your voice (not speech) to engage your group
- ▲ Avoid discussion before getting started



## Top Tips



### Layering exercises

This is a technique by which you start with a simple exercise with basic instructions, then build onto it with more information and greater challenges. By layering instructions you are able to manage their experience, one step at a time, rather than leaping in head first into the deep end and risk losing them altogether.

See **The Picnic** exercise below for an example on how to apply this technique.

### Using your voice

Not to be confused with speech, your voice is one of the most powerful and influential tools you possess. It can help you control a class simply by adjusting the volume, tone and energy you use.

For example, if a group has low energy and is sluggish, using energised and excited tones can help get them motivated. However, if they come to you almost bouncing off the ceiling, a calm voice will help you bring them back down to earth. Learn to project your voice if working with a noisy group, but avoid shouting at all costs.

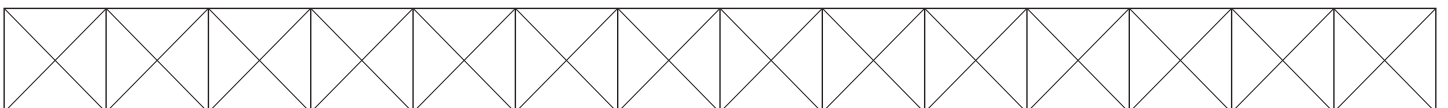
As in most teaching environments, using a warm, calm, authoritative yet friendly voice will reap better results with your students while keeping you calm and focused too.

### Avoiding discussion

Before doing an exercise discussion can be deadly to creativity; ideas can be talked through and exhausted. While in some cases a certain amount of discussion may be needed, you should be strict with how much time you allow before students must get up and start making something happen.

Post exercise, discussion is a valuable assessment tool for you and your group. It will help to clarify how well an exercise has gone, share discoveries and raise questions which may lead to new ideas for future workshops.

Discussions are also an excellent way to reinstate the concept of freedom of expression within your group. Not all techniques will work for all students, and in such cases it is good for those who found an exercise difficult to voice their thoughts. It can allow you to address any problems, hopefully inspiring you to try different techniques to achieve the same goal next time.



## The Warm-Up: The Walk



The warm-up is the most important part of any workshop for two reasons:

- ▲ It prepares the mind, voice and body for more challenging exercises to follow
- ▲ It allows you to develop a strong foundation on which to build a relationship with your group, giving you an opportunity to gauge your group's level of focus, energy, and their willingness to play, which may be different with each session you have with them

The most important warm up exercise at a workshop leader's disposal is The Walk, or "walking around the space". Attend almost any drama workshop and at some point you will be asked to do this.

The exercise allows the student to focus on one activity while you ask them to perform another. It is a distraction method which can generate more impulsive or instinctive responses. However, you need to layer this exercise to teach students how to do the basics first.

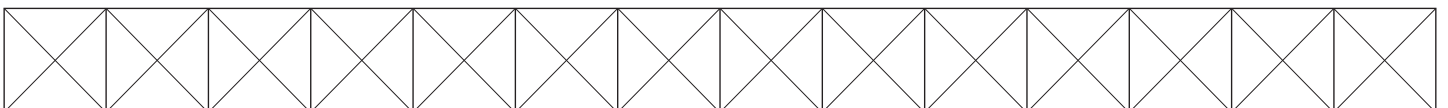
### The Walk

Ask your group to simply walk around the space and observe their behaviour. Most groups will, instinctively, clump together with their friends and walk, while chatting, in a circle around the room.

Now ask the group to imagine the floor of the space is balanced on a central pivot, and that by moving around the space they are keeping the balance. They must keep moving (calmly, not running) and look for empty spaces. If those spaces get filled by someone else, they must find a new empty space.

Weaving in and out of each other heading in all directions, they will gradually begin to anticipate where empty spaces will open up, developing a heightened sense of awareness of the rest of the group and their movements in the space.

Now you can add in additional instructions to explore a number of concepts. The suggestions below are some of the most common to drama workshops, but this activity can be adapted to almost any end.



## The Warm-Up: The Walk



### Energy

Energy is not necessarily about speed, more the internal gauge of focus, power or intensity with which we conduct ourselves.

Get the group walking at a natural, everyday pace; tell them that on a scale of one-ten this is level five. Bring the energy down, one level at a time down to one, at which point they should still be moving naturally, but with as little energy as possible.

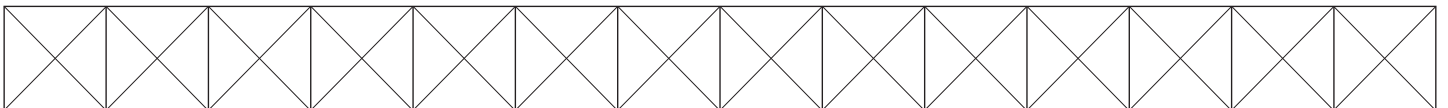
Reverse and continue up to level ten, at which they should not necessarily be running (depends on the size of space) but should certainly be moving with intense purpose.

Reverse back to five, then stop. Call out random numbers and ask the group to move at that level of energy, switching from 7 to 3 to 10 to 1, etc...

At each stage of this exercise, ask the group to be aware of how their body compensates for the energy. What are the physical differences in the body between the two extremes? At level one the body may have to work harder to keep balance, whereas at level ten the arms may be swinging more to propel the body forward, or they may feel more tension in certain parts.

The purpose is to develop an awareness of how the body moves, and the effect different energies has on it, the difference between stillness and motion.

Discuss what the group thought of when moving at different energy states. Some will have thought of strolling through the park or running for the bus as a way of controlling their movement. Others will have just focused on the physical movement with no emotional motivation. It is this sort of analysis post exercise which will help you to select proceeding exercises, to compliment or contrast the way your students complete this simple task.



## The Warm-Up: The Walk



### Physicality

Using the following instructions, take your students through the process of becoming aware of their physicality.

“Walking around the space, take time to focus on, and analyse, the way you move. Start at the feet, and be consciously aware of the distance of your pace, and the pressure with which you hit the floor with your heel. Feel how the floor passes beneath you, being aware of the texture, temperature and pressure of the floor.

“Bring your focus gradually up through the body, questioning and analysing the movement of each part. Feel and register the pressure in the knees as your feet hit the floor; the movement of the hip joint and how the muscles in the legs and waist support you; the air passing through your fingers; the space behind your ears; the gentle sway of your shoulders; the subtle movements of the spine, etc.

“Send your focus out into the space, and pick someone at random. Without letting on who you have chosen, observe the way they move. How are they different to you? Do they have any distinguishing characteristics in their walk? Is their energy different to yours? Build up a sense of how they move, see it in your mind. Without following, mimic this person’s walk”

NB at this point the students’ subjects will no longer be able to be observed, as they too will be mimicking someone else.

To conclude this activity you can ask students to exaggerate the new walk, make it grotesque. Ask for volunteers to walk normally, then adopt their chosen walk and ask the rest of the group to guess who they are copying.

Our individual walks are as unique as our fingerprint. By developing an awareness of how we move, we can more easily, as actors, adopt an alien physicality, allowing us to create new and exciting characters.

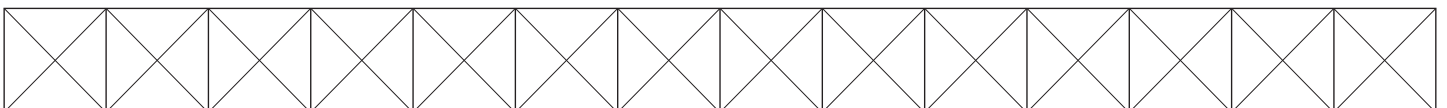
### Listening and impulsive reactions

Whilst students are walking around the space, provide the group with a variety of instructions. The group should react immediately to each instruction as quickly as possible. This exercise will develop focus, awareness, listening skills and impulsive reactions to instructions. The following instructions can act as a starting point:

- ▲ **Wall** – run and place both hands flat on the wall
- ▲ **Centre** – gather in the centre of the room
- ▲ **Jump** – jump once then continue walking
- ▲ **Floor** – touch both hands on the floor, then continue walking
- ▲ **Stop** – stand still
- ▲ **Go** – move again

You can add different instructions to fit the space you are in or theme you are working with. Once the group are confident, you can complicate matters to challenge them further

- ▲ Change the words into numbers
- ▲ Reverse instructions (stop means go, jump means floor, wall means centre, and vice versa)





## The Warm-Up: Other Games and Activities



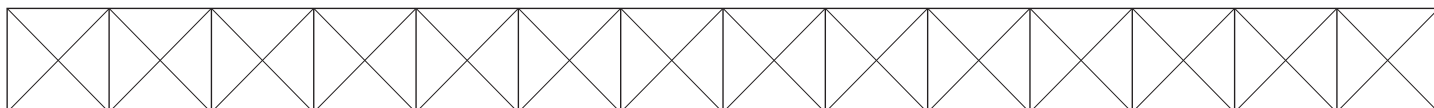
### Pass the clap

This is a famous exercise which is extremely simple, yet incredibly versatile. It will develop team-work, focus, eye-contact and awareness.

- ▲ Stand in a circle
- ▲ You have a ball of energy in your hands, and you pass this around the circle by turning to the person on your left and clapping once
- ▲ They then turn to the person on their left and continue to pass the energy around the circle until it gets back to its starting point
- ▲ Repeat a few more times, building the speed to become fast-paced and fluid. You will hear where it slows and speeds up, who over-anticipates the clap, who isn't paying attention etc
- ▲ To change direction, simply turn and clap back at the person on your right, who can then continue passing the clap back in an anti-clockwise direction
- △ You will immediately notice that the clap will get stuck between a few people on one side of the circle who find it hilarious to try and catch one another out, while it becomes dull for the rest of the group
- ▲ To open the game to the rest of the group and keep the energy moving, the third element to the game is that the clap can also be passed across the circle
- △ It is VITAL that when passing the clap across the circle eye-contact is made by the sender and receiver, who can then send the clap in either direction, left or right as they choose
- ▲ At all times, try to keep the energy moving

There are hundreds of variations on this exercise. Here are a couple:

- ▲ Instead of clapping, introduce words and an action
- △ Use "Zoof" when passing in either direction, "Back" to change direction, and "Have It!" when passing across
- △ Give it a Shakespeare theme with "To thee", "The Bard says No" and "Wherefore art thou?"
- ▲ Introduce a competition element, making people sit down if they say the wrong word, take too long to decide where to send the energy, or do a lazy action/speak too quietly



## The Warm-Up: Other Games and Activities



### Counting

This exercise will challenge the group's focus, listening skills, team work and non-visual awareness.

- ▲ Standing in a small circle, focus on a central feature on the floor (place an item there if it helps)
- ▲ As a group, count from one to ten, one person at a time in a random order
- ▲ Return to the start when more than one person speaks at the same time

### Voice

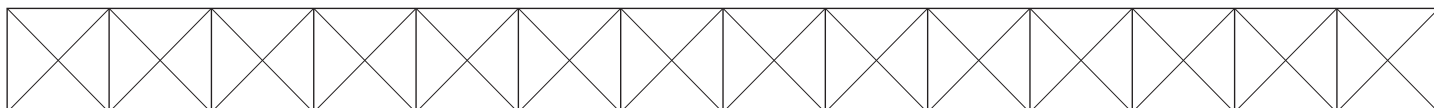
Useful for you and your students, these exercises will help develop an awareness of how the voice sounds, build vocal strength, aid breathing and relaxation and build confidence.

Remember, voice is different from speech. It is about making sounds to communicate emotions, energy, intention etc, not shaping words.

Throughout the following exercises, try to generate a feeling of relaxation and calm in order for the voice to be clear and free. Listen to the sound you are making, and the sound of the rest of the group. Smile, breathe and engage the voice with each exhalation – allow the group to make as much sound as possible without turning it into speech.

- ▲ Breathe into the diaphragm, controlling the outward breath on a hum, on “Ahh”, “Ohh”, “Mee” and “La”. With each, extend the length of the breath, increasing volume
- ▲ Rub the hands together while swaying from side to side, breath in and release on an audible sigh
- ▲ Tap the whole body with the palms of the hands and sigh out as you exhale
- ▲ Roll the shoulders backwards, then forwards, then in alternative directions to each other, relax and sigh out
- ▲ Roll the head from side to side and sigh out
- ▲ Turn the head to look behind on each side and sigh out
- ▲ Drop the head and clasp your hands behind it, allowing the weight of the arms to gently stretch the neck and shoulders and hum as you exhale
- ▲ Move the face as if chewing. Hum/sigh as you exhale
- ▲ Massage the face with the heel of the hand, paying particular attention to the jaw
- ▲ Clasp the hands together, bring elbows in to the side, relax the jaw, exhale on an “Ahhh” and shake
- ▲ Circle the tongue round teeth in both directions until it hurts
- ▲ With a relaxed jaw, lips together make a sound like a car revs, raising and lowering the pitch of the voice as you exhale
- ▲ Tap the chest and sigh out on long ‘maa’ feeling vibrations in the chest and hearing the voice shake

Repeat the first step, breathing in the diaphragm, controlling the outward breath on a hum. See if you notice any difference.



## The Warm-Up: Other Games and Activities



### Speech

Once the voice is warm, speech exercises can be used to improve articulation and the all-round shaping of words. You can use tongue twisters, rhymes and more in a fun and entertaining warm-up.

With exercises such as this, try to teach the rhyme or tongue twister aurally, rather than handing out sheets of text. This will focus and engage your students, and they will learn it faster if they are unable to rely on, or hide behind, text.

Try out some of these:

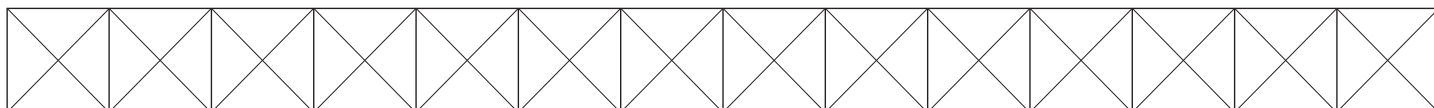
She sells sea shells on the sea shore,  
The shells she sells are sea shore shells she's selling I'm sure

One man felt smart  
Two men felt smart  
Three men felt smarter

Round and round the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran

Red lorry, yellow lorry  
Red lorry, yellow lorry...(repeat)

Betty Botter bought a bit of butter  
But she said "This butter's bitter!  
If I bought some better butter  
Better than the bitter butter  
That would make my batter better!"



# Improvisation and Storytelling



Children play. Children use their imagination to create entire worlds out of nothing, but as we get older we censor and edit our behaviour. Drama is about playing, so both you and your students need to feel secure that play is good, that it is allowed, and that you are not judged for it.

Many of the exercises below have roots in improvisation, which is at the heart of all drama, and the philosophy is simple: the secret is to say “yes” to any situation which arises – without self-censorship. This one step will allow your students to go on a journey, move forward with a game and to create fantastic characters, stories and worlds.

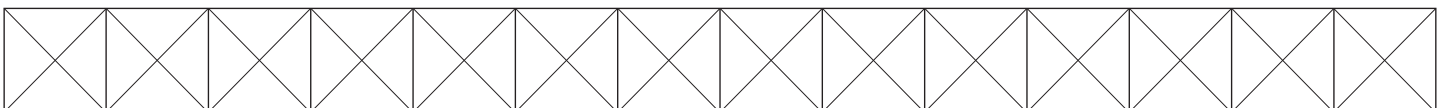
“No” is deadly to theatre. It blocks and censors ideas and restricts what we can do! These games and activities teach the basics to get your students improvising and being creative.

## The picnic

Get your group into pairs, sat on the floor facing one another. They’re going to pretend to be on a picnic with the following restrictions.

- 1 **“No”**: A conversation begins. Person ‘A’ offers ‘B’ something like cheese sandwiches, and ‘B’ must reject it, say something like “no, I can’t eat cheese. Would you like a scone?” This, in turn is rejected by ‘A’, and so the conversation continues with each offer being rejected by the other person.
- 2 **“Yes, but...”**: As above, but instead of rejecting the offered food say something like “I like cheese, but I’d rather have ham, do you have any ham?” The idea is to reject, but offer an alternative. Every offering is rejected but with an alternative being proposed, which is then rejected, and so on...
- 3 **“Yes, and”**: As above, but accept it and add to it – “Yes, I love cheese, and I have some delicious pickle that would go with that”. Every offering is accepted and added to.

Discuss the differences between each exercise. How does saying “yes” change things? How does it boost the flow of creativity. Repeat the last version but plan a holiday. See how far and fantastical their adventure becomes.



## Improvisation and Storytelling



### Eating lemons

This exercise involves engages physical storytelling through mime.

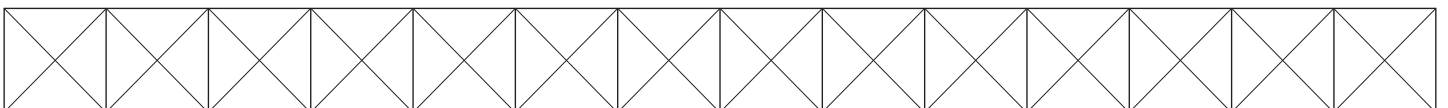
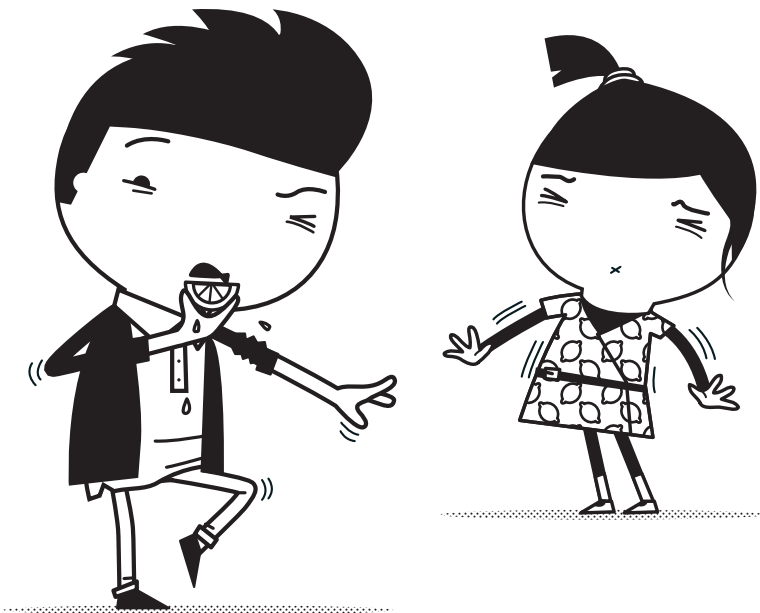
Stand the group in a circle then enter the space. Explain what you are about to do and what should happen next:

You mime eating a lemon for about five seconds, ensuring you add detail like cutting it open, smelling it, tentatively taking a taste before biting down and reacting to the sour shock.

Someone asks "What are you doing?". Tell them a different action, which they must do in the centre of the circle as you rejoin the circle.

Encourage detailed mimes which tell a story, giving at least 5-7 seconds to establish it before someone asks "What are you doing?" Try to avoid mimes like "going for a run" which are too simple, opting instead for "running for the bus", which has more of a story.

Ask the group not to plan what action they're going to suggest to the next person. Try to be impulsive, to say the first thing that comes to mind when asked the question. This will keep the game fresh, more spontaneous and creative.



## Improvisation and Storytelling



### **“Once upon a time...”**

This exercise is excellent for both thinking imaginatively, but also listening to the rest of the group.

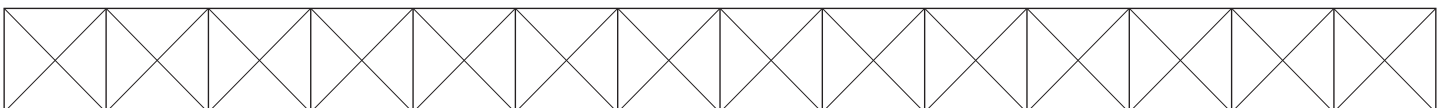
Sit or stand in a circle, and begin a story with ‘Once upon a time...’ When you get to the end of a sentence or paragraph when a change is about to happen, the next person continues the story. This continues around the circle, with each person adding to the story.

Inevitably, on the first attempt, it will change direction several times, going in all sorts of tangents. Discuss what happened, ask why it happened and when (they will know why). Pick up on creative storylines, for example you would “like to know more about that dog’s journey over the mountains” or “how Sarah escaped the spider’s web”, etc.

With all this in mind, try again and discuss the results using open questions to generate discussion.

### **“Once. Upon. A. Time”**

As above, but this time with each person only saying one word before moving on to the next person. Again, encourage the group to keep the story flowing and not to ‘think’ about what clever thing to say next. If someone goes blank, move on to the next person to keep the group’s focus.



## Improvisation and Storytelling



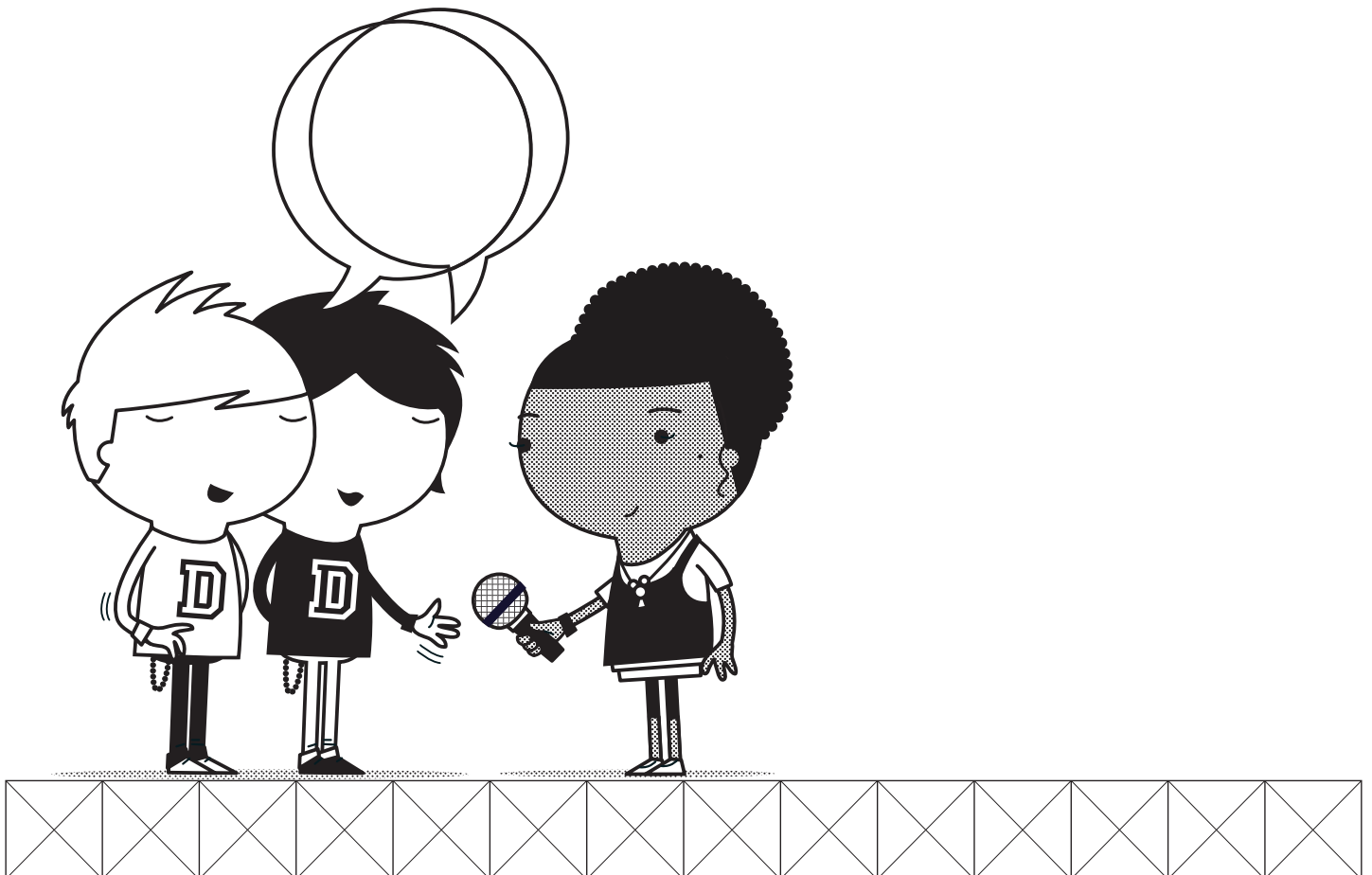
### Interviewing twins

An excellent exercise to develop listening skills, team work and openness.

In groups of three, one person acts as an interviewer, the other two have to answer questions in sync with each other, without discussing the answer between them. They have to listen to each other and speak at the same time with the same words to answer the question.

Allow groups a few minutes to practice, then have pairs volunteer with the rest of the group (and you) asking random questions.

Once a few volunteers have had a go at this, try moving on to do the same exercise with groups of at least five, using the same principles, allowing a group of people to respond to questions as a single person with you or the rest of the group asking the questions. Discuss the results.



## Expanding the Experience



Often in professional rehearsals, especially when a cast is tired of running through the text over and over again with no new discoveries being made, or without an audience to respond to, a director will ask the cast to do something different. They will throw in a new dynamic which will give the cast something new to focus on.

For example, you could sing the text, or do a 'speed run' in which you get through your scenes at break-neck speed, try a different accent or mime without words. These techniques can re-engage an actors' imaginations and help them find something new in their work.

This is a stealth method, the principle of which lies behind '**The Walk**' exercise, and which can be applied to any other drama game.

This technique is useful in workshops as it means you can take a simple exercise which appears to have a very simple point and expand it. You can do this by adding in a new instruction, or by changing the energy, style or mood of the exercise.

For example, take the '**Once upon a time...**' exercise above. This exercise does more than just get your group to create a new story, with each person only playing a very small role. In fact, it forces them to listen intensely to each other, processing a lot of information to build on earlier ideas, working together to develop a collective narrative with a series of characters and situations, charting their emotional and physical journeys. Each person's contribution is one cog in an ever-growing machine.

To expand on this exercise try the following ideas:

- ▲ Have several students mime the character's story created by the rest of the group
- ▲ After each new section of story, others act it out in the centre of the space with brief dialogue
- ▲ Change the stories genre – Hammer Horror, Eastenders, a Disney cartoon, a Shakespeare play, Comedy, etc

As mentioned previously, the only limits to what you can do in a drama workshop are those set by the limits of your own imagination. Try to keep a mental note of any ideas you get when running an exercise or game, then try them out.

Under no circumstances should you ever dismiss an idea without trying it. This would only censor where you can take the exercise. Do not be afraid that it will not work, that you will look like you don't know what you are doing, or that the group will find it ridiculous. If you don't try it, you will never know, and you will have only placed a restriction on yourself and limited your students learning experience.

All of the techniques in this pack can be further developed to channel your students' creativity in different ways, allowing you to expand the learning potential of all involved, including yours.

For more information visit [www.theatreworkout.com](http://www.theatreworkout.com) where you can get free acting lessons, advice by email, and access education packs from show partners.

