

Lesson Title:**Actors Toolbox**

Description: This class is designed as a basic acting class that will teach students and participants an understanding of how an actor utilizes his/her body, voice and imagination in an active and engaging environment.

Age: 3rd to 5th Grade

Participants: 10-30

Time: 90 Minutes

Materials Needed: Drum (wooden sticks will work), Slips of Paper, Pencil or Pen, Tongue twisters, a ruler

Objectives:

To introduce the actors tools of body, voice and imagination

To challenge participants to open their imaginations

To create a safe environment while strengthening the sense of ensemble within the classroom

Introduction:

As participants enter the classroom, have them place all belonging against the wall or on a table and join you in a large circle (you will need a good amount of open space for the lesson). Once all participants have joined the circle, introduce yourself and your co-teacher/assistant teacher. Next, explain what they are going to learn about today using the following template:

“So we are here to learn how to be actors, right? Did you know that actors have tools that they carry around with them every day, just like a cop has a badge and a doctor has a scalpel? Now, the cool thing about our actor’s tools is that they are ALWAYS with us, no matter what. Can anyone guess what one of these tools is?”

If they are struggling to guess them all, help them along until they get all three: body, voice and imagination.

“Now, before we can learn to be actors, we must warm up like actors so that our actor’s tools will work nice and properly when we need them to!”

Warm up’s:**Name Wave:**

Start this activity by asking the students if they know how to do the wave. If they do, perfect, if they don’t, they are going to learn. Have students put their hand on their knees and designate a starting point. *“Ready, set, GO!”* Challenge students to go as quick as they can, or else this activity could take a while. After they get the wave down, explain that each participant will then start the wave by saying their name and adding a physical movement (i.e. jumping up, clapping hands, jazz hands). Once introduced, they whole circle will then pass that participants name and physical movement around the circle until it makes it back to the owner. Repeat until each student has started the wave.

Natural Disasters:

Start this activity by having students find their own place in the room, arm's length away from any wall or any other participant for this activity is very active. Ask the participants if they know what a natural disaster is (definition: a natural event such as a flood, earthquake that causes great damage). Each natural disaster that you add to the activity will have a physical movement or a sound that they will act out as you shout the name. Begin by giving them an example: I like to start with "firestorm," where all participants will then say, "Stop, drop and roll!" and then proceed to stop, drop and roll. Have the participants come up with the movements as a challenge. Once you have introduced three or four, begin repeating ones already created to really warm up their body's and voices. You can add as many as you want, but be wary of time.

Transition:

"Now that we are all warmed up, it's now time to get those actor's tools out and learn how to use them!"

Body:

Begin by asking the participants why they think their body is an important actor's tool and respond accordingly. You can add on to the results by giving a brief explanation of why you think your body is an important actor's tool, *"Your body is what the audience sees and is what you use to create the physical world of the play."*

Shape:

"One of the most important things you can create using your body are interesting shapes. Is a straight line interesting? Sometimes, but rarely."

Activity: Pop a Shape:

You will need the drum (or wooden blocks) for this activity. Tell the students that they will need to keep their voices off and work as a team to accomplish the goals of this activity. You will be using the drum to beat out a number of beats and each number will correspond to a physical movement that the participants will do. Every time you introduce a new movement, repeat it a couple times. Mix and match the beats to see if the participants can keep up and recognize which movement corresponds with what number. The numbers and movements are as follows:

- One: Create a straight line (as a group)
- Two: Create a circle (as a group)
- Three: Everyone stand back to back with a partner
- Four: Everyone touch the floor
- Five: Touch the wall
- Six: Freeze in place

Levels:

"Another important way that you can make in interesting picture is by having different levels. Does anyone know what a level is?"

If they do not guess, explain what levels are and how a low, medium and high level can make a picture more interesting. Give an example: Bring you co-teacher or assistant teacher over and stand side-by-side at a high level. Ask the participants if they can guess what you were doing: the answer will most likely be, "No!" or, "Standing there." Ask if it is interesting. Then explain how one simple change of level can create a scene. You will then get on one knee and hold your hands up to "propose" to the other teacher. Then ask if the students can tell what was happening in the scene. They will guess instantly, thus proving how important levels are.

Activity: Sit, Stand Lay:

Having three volunteers come up. Have one sit on their bottom (medium level), have one lay on their back (low level) and have one stand (high level). Explain that they must change levels all at the same time, but no two actors may ever be on the same level. You can facilitate this by pretending you have a magic remote and every time you press the button they must change. *"If any two actors land on the same level, the world will explode."* You can further challenge them by seeing if they can do it without your signal and watching each other.

Culminating activity: Frozen Fairytales:

Split the group up into smaller groups of four or five. Explain that each group will be getting a piece of paper with a fairytale on it. Each group must create a frozen tableau of that fairytale, using interesting shapes and levels to present to the room. They will have four minutes to create the tableau. Once finished, have each group present and see if the other groups can guess which fairytale they had. Compliment good levels and interesting shapes that you see.

Voice:

Begin by asking the participants why they think their voice is an important actor's tool and respond accordingly. You can add on to the results by giving a brief explanation of why you think your voice is an important actor's tool, *"Your voice is what the audience hears and is what you use to create the vocal world of the play."*

Pitch:

Ask if anyone knows what pitch is. If they do not, define it as how high or low your voice can go. Explain that using different pitches can create interesting and fun characters on the stage. You can give a few examples by presenting an old age voice (low pitch), a British dialect (medium pitch), a valley girl (high pitch).

Activity: Chocolate Bunny:

Have participants return to a standing circle. Teach them the following call and response: You, "Someone stole my chocolate bunny." Them, "and I don't think it's very funny." Tell them they you will be using different pitch with the first part and they will mimic the pitch used to respond with the second part. Give a few examples and then pass it around the circle. Each participant will begin by choosing a pitch and saying the first part and the rest of the group will respond with the response using the same pitch that was given.

Diction:

Ask if anyone knows what diction is. Help them out by explaining that it is the act of speaking clearly using consonants so that the audience can understand what you are saying.

Activity: Tongue Twisters:

Simply teach them a few tongue twisters and really emphasize the use of diction. See what happens when they over-exaggerate. See what happens when they use no diction at all and ask if they can tell the difference.

A couple example tongue twisters: "Red leather, yellow leather." "Unique New York, New York's Unique, You know you need unique New York."

Culminating Activity/Projection:

Have participants stand in a line against one side of the room and you stand on the opposite. Teach them the phrase, "My name is _____, and I am an actor." Have all the participants practice saying this together a couple times. Explain that they will then say the line one at a time. If you can hear them and understand every word, you will raise your hand and then they may have a seat. Explain that they must project in order to be heard. Ask if anyone knows what that means, then help them out by explaining it is using your body to speak loudly so that the audience can hear you. You may need to explain the difference between projecting and screaming and how screaming can damage your voice.

Imagination:

Begin by asking the participants why they think their imagination is an important actor's tool and respond accordingly. You can add on to the results by giving a brief explanation of why you think your imagination is an important actor's tool, *"Your imagination is the most important actor tool of all, because if you cannot imagine that you are a character, the audience won't be able to either."*

Activity: Feather/Brick:

Begin activity by having participants stand in a circle. You will then tell them that you have magic clay that can be turned into anything in the whole world. You will reach deep down in your pocket and pull out your imagination goop. Turn the goop into a big boulder, pick it up and show the participants how you have to really believe and feel how heavy the boulder is. Then have them pass the boulder around the circle so everyone has a chance to interact with it.

Once the goop gets back to you, turn it into something else (i.e. bubble gum, a feather, a bubble, a bouncy ball). Make sure it is something that will challenge the participants to get creative with their interactions. See if they will taste the gum, ask them the flavor. If they pop the bubble, they have to blow a new one; they must go get the bouncy ball if it bounces away. Really engage their imaginations.

Activity: I am a Tree:

Participants should be standing in a circle, if they are getting antsy, have them switch spots and find a new spot in the circle. As the facilitator, go into the middle of the circle and use your body to become a tree and state, *"I am a tree."* Find a participant (while staying a tree) and ask them what the first thing that comes to their mind when they see a tree. If they respond, "an apple," have them come tap you while stating, "A tree reminds me of an apple." They must then become an apple using their whole body and wait until someone comes and tags them out. The goal is to get around the circle as fast as possible. Challenge them to become the first thing that comes to their mind.

Activity: Object Transformation:

Participants should sit as an audience and facilitator designate a performance area. Explain that you have the coolest toy in the entire world and that it beats any toy that the participants have at home. Get a drum roll before pulling out a simple ruler. (They will most likely "boo" at you.) Explain though, that the "ruler" is the coolest toy in the entire world because using your imagination, it can become anything in the entire world [except something that can hurt another human or animal (no weapons)]. Give a few examples of how to turn the ruler into something by pantomiming. (i.e. a toothbrush, a comb, a tie) and then call on a volunteer to come up and transform the "ruler" into anything in the world. If participants are having trouble getting ideas, give them a couple to help them out. This can be a stressful thing to do in front of your peers. Make sure you remind them to make the movements very clear so the audience can guess what it is.

Transition:

"So now we have learned about all three of our actors tools. Let's review what they are." Have them repeat all the actor's tools to you.

Conclusion:

"So now that you know what your three actor's tools are, you are all ready to start your journey and adventure as an actor, right? Let's review why these tools we just learned about are import." _

Review why each tool is important, thank them all for coming and dismiss the group.