

Check Your First Moment

Scenic Improv

Grades 11-12 & up

Educational Objective: The students will demonstrate their ability to see the roadmap of the scene by performing the first moment of a scene and checking out what they did.

Materials Needed: None

Hook: Have two players start a scene by doing something. As soon as they do something stop them abruptly. Ask them what they have done.

Step 1: Have everyone do something to start a scene. It could be rubbing your eyes and saying “Boy, am I sleepy.” Now have each one of them stop and asses what they have done. Just check it out. Take one second to examine what you’ve done. Don’t ask any questions, don’t think about why you did it, just think “I rubbed my eyes and said I’m sleepy.” That’s it. Nothing else. This is the roadmap to the scene. This is where it starts and where it will take off. Let each player start doing something and then check out what they just did. It maybe helpful to have them think out loud so everyone gets it. Have them say what they are thinking. “I just rubbed my eyes and said ‘Boy, am I sleepy.’”

Step 2: Tell the players that the reason why they did something is not important at all. The important thing is that they did it. Who cares why? No one. Don’t ever ask why you did it. You did it and it’s out there. Don’t ask why because it gets you in your head, thinking too much. There is one thing you can ask while you are checking out what you did. That is “How.” How did I do it? I rubbed my eyes SLOWLY and I said “Boy, am I sleepy,” AS A SURFER DUDE. Have everyone start a scene again by doing something and have them again asses or check out what they did by telling the audience out loud again but this time add the “How.”

Step 3: Explain that the words we say in improv are usually not as important as the “How” we say them. The how is the emotion, state of being, intonation, character attributes, etc. The “How” is your deal in the scene; the roadmap to the character that you must keep and play out to the fullest. Put them in pairs and give each pair three slips of paper. Have them write down three “Hows” to start a scene. Have them trade their “Hows” with another pair. Have them perform the beginning of a scene without a specific how. Then have them perform the same thing with the three “Hows.” So each pair will perform four times right in a row.

Step 4: Never let go of what you did. Keep this throughout the scene. If you rub your eyes and say that you are sleepy then you need to be sleepy and keep that point of view. Sometimes we think that if we keep pushing our point of view we are being selfish and ruining whatever our partner is doing. Not so. In fact, our partner wants to count on it and use it in the scene. So if I am sleepy but the scene takes us to a rock concert or into a volcano I still must be sleepy. Have one person start a scene by doing something and giving it a “How” and then have several others join the scene and try to take it somewhere else. The starter must stay on his POV. So if he is writing a letter yet the others take him sky diving he must still continue with writing the letter. Have everyone try it.

Step 5: Discuss what they’ve done and learned. What was good and bad?