

# Preconceived Ideas

Scenic Improv

## Grades 11-12 & up

**Educational Objective:** The students will demonstrate their ability to play the first moment of an improv scene by using preconceived ideas and then forcing themselves not to use preconceived ideas.

**Materials Needed:** None

**Hook:** Ask this question: When doing improv can you use preconceived ideas?

**Step 1:** Let them discuss the question. And have them discuss if it is true improv if they use any preconceived ideas. Tell them that the answer to the question is Yes. Even if it was no it would still happen. Everyone does it to some degree. Discuss the degrees of preconceiving ideas.

1. Preconceiving the entire scene, all the beats, characters, conflict, etc.
2. Preconceiving a funny line, and then forcing it into the scene.
3. Using a character that has worked before.
4. Choosing an emotional state before the scene starts.
5. Thinking of a line to start the scene.

**Step 2:** Preconceiving the entire scene. Give them a one word topic and have each player preconceive an entire scene in their mind. Give them about a minute. Choose two of them to perform using their preconceived ideas. They will be contradicting each other a lot and the scene (although it may be amusing to watch them fumble over each other) will not be successful. Have as many perform as you need to make the point. Now have two perform but instruct one to use the preconceived ideas and have the other to improv and use any ideas that come (don't follow blindly but improv). The scenes still will not work. Have as many perform as necessary to make the point.

**Step 3:** Preconceiving a funny line. Give everyone a slip of paper. Have them write a line that could be funny. No topic, just any line (it doesn't even have to be funny). Give a one word topic and have pairs come up to perform a scene. Before they perform, have them draw a slip and try to work the line into the scene. Discuss afterward how the lines just seem inappropriate and stick out like a sore thumb.

**Step 4:** Using a character that has worked before. The last two concepts never seem to work when preconceived. This one can. Have each player make up a character who is based on someone they know in real life. It could be a real person or a make believe character. Have them each come up and introduce themselves as that character. Now give a one word suggestion and have volunteers come up and perform a scene using the character they've created. Change the topic often and same players can come up again but must use the same character.

**Step 5:** Choosing an emotional state before the scene. This one can work too because an emotional state suggests nothing of the content of the scene. Have everyone choose an emotional state. Have two players perform a scene with a one word suggestion. Player A uses his preconceived emotion. Player B is emotionless. After the scene Player A leaves the stage, Player B becomes Player A (using his own preconceived emotion) and a new player becomes player B (emotionless). A new suggestion is chosen and the scene commences. Do this until everyone has performed both A and B.

**Step 6:** Thinking of a line to start the scene. You can do this but why? Most of the time a preconceived line gives too much information and doesn't give room for discovery. Have each player think of a line that will not give away too much info but is intriguing yet leaves room for discovery. Like "You're late again." Or "I didn't know you would be here." Or "I hate you." Have them all give their lines. Have them perform with the best lines.