

# The Reality of Doing

**Educational Objective:** The students will demonstrate their ability to create “the first time” by performing a short scene three times in a row.

**Materials Needed:** None.

**Hook:** Write a large multiplication problem on the board such as 7948 times 6988. Tell the students to look at the numbers and then close their eyes and multiply them. Give them twenty seconds or so, then ask, “Did you really try to multiply them?” “Was it difficult?” “Did you try your best?” “Did you get the answer?” Now explain that it doesn’t really matter what the answer is but the important thing is, IT IS ALL IN THE ATTEMPT.

**Step 1:** Ask the students what is meant by “acting is doing something.” Discuss The Reality of Doing. Have them talk about this situation: Your character must read a letter on stage. Should he write the letter down and actually read it? Or should he have it memorized and pretend to read squiggly lines on the paper? Which is more in line with the Reality of Doing or Doing Something? Whenever an actor can do something for real it should be done.

**Step 2:** Split the class into groups of 4–7. Teach them how to play “Story Story.” Sit in a tight circle. Each person can only say one word. Go around the circle and tell a story. If there are any mistakes like saying two words you must start over and tell a new story. Do it for 5 minutes. Don’t stop.

**Step 3:** Have them do it again but tell them this time their mission is to become like one person telling a story. No pauses. Let the story whip around the circle. You must not *take the story* but *let the story take you*. Don’t let silliness get in the way. No pauses for laughter. Do it for another 5 minutes.

**Step 4:** Do it again with two new requirements. First the story must include two main characters. Discover them while telling the story. Second, get really close and tighten the circle. Close your eyes. Do it for another 5 minutes.

**Step 5:** Now ask, “What happens when you try to prepare a word ahead of time?” A big part of the game is about giving up control and not anticipating. The more you prepare the less you are able to tell the story. So the most important thing you can do is LISTEN. The more you really listen the more you are doing something and the less you are trying to control.

**Step 6:** Have each group perform a one-minute story for the class. Have them stand in a line and go down the line doing the same exercise. Discuss as needed.

**Step 7:** Split the students up into groups of three. Have them choose an “Actor A” an Actor “B” and an Observer. Tell them that “Acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances.” Have them repeat this. This is what they are going to do right now. The two actors sit facing each other about 4 feet apart. The observer watches. Actor A looks away from B. Then the Observer says “Go.” Actor A looks back at B and says the very first thing he notices on B. It must be a physical thing like “eyes” or “green shirt” not “you had a bad day.” Try it a few times. The Observer always says “Go.” Then switch so B looks at A. Then switch so Observer is an actor and take turns so that all have the chance to be the Observer.

**Step 8:** Try it again and remember that you must say the first thing you become aware of. This is called *taking the first thing*. You must also become aware of when you don’t do that. When you see something and you don’t take it but look for something else to say. The Observer should help identify these moments. See if you can tell when the actor does not take the very first thing. If so, say “start again and take the very first thing.” Try this for 1 minute with each person.

**Step 9:** Next have Actor A start with a physical observation as before. But this time Actor B repeats whatever he hears. Then partner A repeats whatever he hears and so on until the Observer says stop. So Actor A may say “Green Shirt” so B while repeat “Green shirt” then A repeats “Green Shirt” then B then A then B and so on. Let each Actor start a repetition at least three times. The Observer should make vary the length of the repetitions. Some can be painfully long and others only a few seconds.

**Step 10:** Ask if anyone made a mistake? Did one person change the word? If so, you must follow. Try to repeat exactly. If he accidentally said “Breen Shirt” then you must say “Breen Shirt” Don’t try to work back to “Green Shirt.” The past is dead. Only work with what’s now. If it is not repeated exactly the Observer should stop them and ask if they were aware of the change. Tell them what they missed. IMPORTANT! Don’t try to mimic how it is said, just repeat what you hear. If one person laughs then laugh and repeat. Observer must keep them repeating. Don’t let them stop repeating. ALSO, DON’T INTENTIONALLY MESS UP THE WORDS. Just listen and repeat. Don’t anticipate. Don’t repeat before your partner has finished saying the words. An Actor should never assume anything! Now do the repetitions for about 20 minutes. Switching off Observer.

**Step 11.** Discuss the exercise. Taking the first thing. Ask them to practice taking the first thing in their lives. Everything and everyone they come in contact with. Practice consciously noticing the first thing. The first thing on a tree, food, sky, people. Do it a few minutes a day. Tell them we will do the repetition for ten minutes each day with different partners.