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## **Get in on the Act V: Improv Role Plays**

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## Introduction

**Task: to perform improvisational role plays**

**Level: intermediate to advanced**

**Duration: varies**

**Materials: a cookie tin or container and assorted props**

If you want to try something that's daring and lots of fun, improvisational role plays are just the thing. Of course you need a class of students who interact well with each other, demonstrate some acting talent (and here you'll be surprised to find out who the really good actors are), and have an active imagination. When I've done this activity, the results were truly amazing.

This activity can be done:

- To practise or review specific conversational phrases
- To provide a fun break from the rigours of classroom learning
- To give students a chance to use language and have fun

It's well worth the try!

## Lesson Plan

### 1. Warm-up

- Introduce the idea of improv roles plays as situations created by the participants "on the spur of the moment"; that is, there is no preparation.
- Introductory exercise: Collect the same number of objects as students (include yourself); have the students sit in a circle with the objects on the floor in the middle and have them grab an object. The stranger the objects the better. Tell them that they have to use their imagination and perform a scene in which they use their object as something completely different. For example, a telephone book could be a laptop or a bathroom scale, a hat a bowl from which you are eating soup, a ruler an electric guitar. This exercise will get students in the groove and stimulate their imaginations.

### 2. Preparation

- Hand out slips of paper and have students write down 3 sentences or questions each. Tell them their sentences can be crazy, but should not contain bad language or swear words. Collect the sentences, and the

ones provided with this activity, and put them in a container.

- Have students write their names on a piece of paper, and put them in a separate container.
- While the students are writing their sentences, write a number of settings for the role plays on the board. You can have students add their own suggestions. Mine are (and there are lots more):
  - In a noisy bar
  - On a roller coaster
  - Stuck in an elevator
  - On a campsite
  - In a canoe
  - On an airplane
  - In a library
  - Standing in a line-up
  - In a movie theatre
  - At an exciting hockey/soccer/tennis game
  - In a fancy restaurant
  - At the zoo
  - In a taxi or car
  - At the hairdresser's
  - In a doctor's or dentist's waiting room or office
  - On the dance floor of a disco
  - At the top of the Eiffel Tower / Statue of Liberty
  - In the jungle or forest
  - In a dark room
  - In a hot tub
  - On the beach
  - At the bus stop
  - In an alien spaceship
  - On a desert island
  - On television
  - At the hospital
- Encourage students to use the collected objects, and any others in the room, as props.

### 3. Performance

- Students are chosen by drawing names out of a hat. When each pair is

finished, they draw the next two names, but to begin ask for a volunteer and perform the role play with him/her.

- Have the class decide:
  - Where the participants are (from the scenes on page 3)
  - Who they are and what they are doing or which problem they have to discuss or solve
- Once you get going, students are usually pretty good at thinking up their own situations, particularly if they know each other well. My suggestions are:
  - boyfriend/girlfriend: breaking up, proposing marriage, accusing one of cheating, decided where to go on a date or a holiday, meeting parents for the first time
  - husband/wife: discussing money problems, announcing pregnancy, complaining about working long hours, mother-in-law problems, celebrating an anniversary, having a newborn baby
  - sister/brother: having a fight, decide what to buy Mom for Christmas, asking to borrow something, complaining about something missing
  - parent/child: discussing problems at school, getting grounded, asking for money or the car; planning a camping trip, punishment for lying
  - teacher/student: late or missing homework, cheating on a test, sleeping in class, giving back an assignment or test
  - doctor/patient: a bad stomach or headache; receiving test results, asking for medication; having a check-up
  - friends: telling a secret, asking for advice, going to a movie
  - neighbours: complaining about loud music,
  - complete strangers: asking personal questions, asking for directions, offering help, one thinks he knows the other person; one is afraid of the other
  - server/customer: complaining about bad service, accusing someone of stealing,
  - interviewer/interviewee: interviewing the President, an Olympic athlete, Formula 1 driver, rock or movie star, famous writer or artist
  - roommates: complaining about smoking, messy room, noise, dirty bathroom; planning a party; paying the rent
- Give each pair a time limit of 2 minutes to perform their role play. The length will depend on the class size, their proficiency and

creativity

and available time.

- After they begin their role play, the other students in the class call out the participants' names at any time. Each time a student's name is called, he/she must draw from the collected sentences and use it in the role play. The idea here is for them to try and fit the sentence into their conversation. They don't have to use it *immediately*, but they do have to use it. Make sure the class doesn't call out names in rapid succession so that the role players actually have time to develop their conversation.

4. Evaluation and feedback

- Have students discuss which role plays were the funniest, most creative, most realistic, etc.

Why are you looking at me like that?

Have you seen my monkey?

I think I'm going to throw up.

What's that between your teeth / hanging from your nose?

Oh dear, I forgot to take my medication.

Oh, my God, it's on fire!

What's that terrible smell?

I have a confession to make.

I'm a vegetarian.

You can sleep at my place.

Is that your real hair?

I've got a gun.

What's the password?

You'd really look better with a moustache.

Just hold your breath and count to ten.

Are you drunk?

Do you think you could lend me a \$100?

I think we should call the police.

How big is it?

You remind me of my grandmother.

This is too much! I really need a drink.

Where did you get that funny scar?

How do you spell that?

Why are you telling me this?

I'm sorry, but I've forgotten your name.

Is it full moon tonight?

We all live in a yellow submarine.

Do you believe in magic?

That sucks!

Maybe we should cool off first?

Did you say today's your birthday?

You're pulling my leg!

That really freaks me out!

I think someone's trying to kill me!

Is that spinach?

Congratulations!