

## Modifying Acting Exercises to Incorporate University-wide Cognitive Goals of Freshmen Instruction From “Teaching First-Year Actors: Knowing, Choosing, and Doing”

### Standard Physical and Vocal Warm-ups:

In addition to guiding students through a standard physical and vocal warm-up, students might engage their minds as follows:

- Students commit a movement sequence to memory, and then do the movement sequence backwards.
- Students commit a poem or child’s nursery rhyme to memory while the body is moving through the warm-up.
- Students assess their physical state and call out adjectives or verbs describing their current state of mind or physical condition.
- Students commit random vocal patterns to memory and gradually speed up the tempo of the vocal exercise as they are memorizing it.

### Discovering Stanislavski:

In exercises involving the Stanislavskian playing of objectives, actions, or obstacles, students begin the exercises with no information and proceed to a state of knowing and doing fully. Examples of modifying objective-based exercises include:

- 2 students are secretly given conflicting objectives (for example, one student is given the objective “I want to ask my boss for a raise” while the other is given “I need to fire this employee”) each actor needs to discover what the other is doing
- Drawing obstacles: Students enact a scene in which they are randomly given obstacles by another student (for example, a student may draw out of a hat the internal obstacle of “If I say the wrong thing, it will ruin everything” and hand it to one of the performers).
- Students play relationships and given circumstances with side coaching from the instructor, who calls out verbs, objectives, and changes in relationship status.
- Students combine or alternate between physically demanding objectives, i.e. doing an exercise workout, and mentally demanding objectives, i.e. reciting the alphabet backwards.

### Beating the Scene Coaching Blues

In scene study classes where students have to spend extended time periods sitting and watching other students act, they can analyze, discover, and interpret without criticizing or directing one another. Students can identify, either verbally or through keeping an in-class journal, specific moments in another student’s performance including:

- Moments of active listening
- Words spoken when the actor is playing the deepest objective
- Words spoken when the actor is playing the strongest obstacle
- Movements made by the actor that most clearly communicate the dramatic action
- Moments similar to the audience member’s own scene work

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