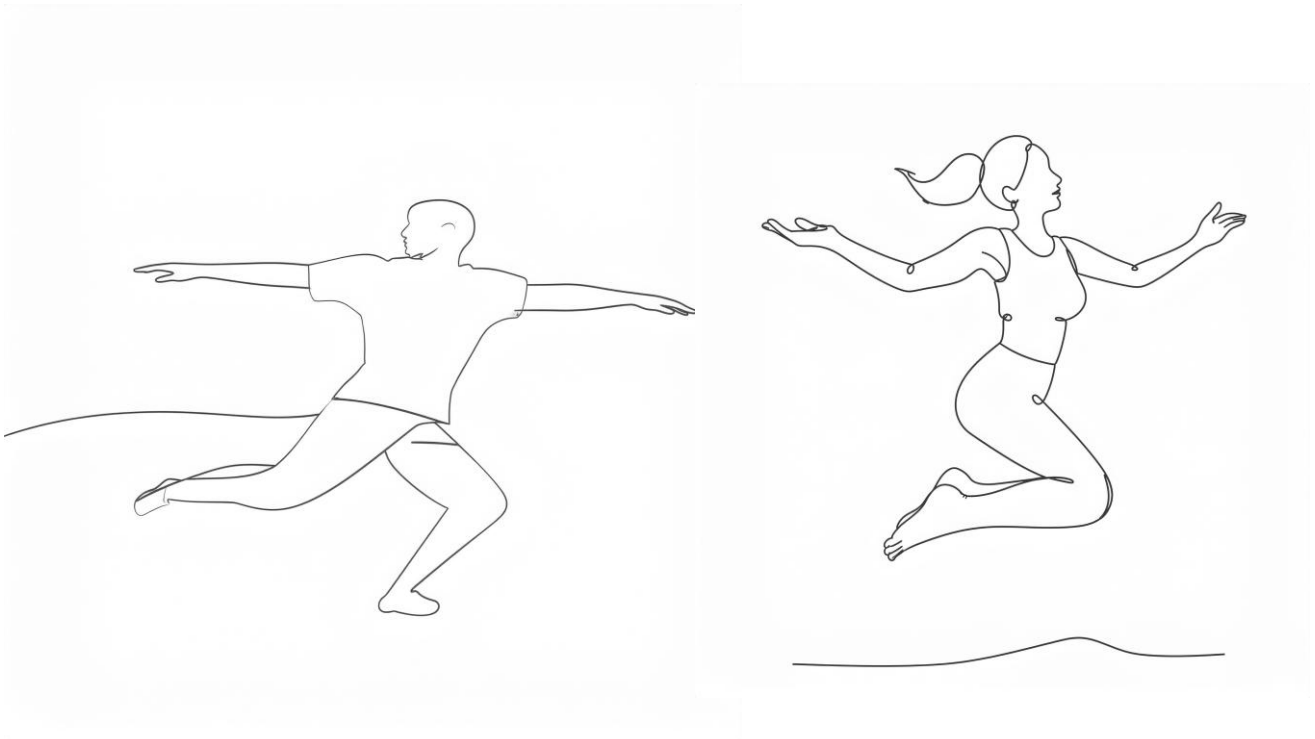


# FUZZY IMPROV

## Lesson 101-03



## Playing in Space

## To Do:

### NAME TAGS

CHECK IN WITH TEAMMATES - What takeaways or comments do you have from our previous classes?

## CLASS RULES:

### HELP CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

BE KIND: NO ISM, NO POLITICS. Do not be offensive or insulting to your teammates.

BOUNDARIES - PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL. Be gentle and appropriate.

NEW CHOICE AND TIME OUT. Use these to steer away from (or stop) anything you find upsetting or out of bounds.

Note: Gx (where x is the page number) near an item indicates the page of [Improv As Improv Does Best Curriculum](#), Introduction to Improvisation, *Patrick Gantz 2020* at which the topic can be found.

HD near the topic indicates materials that I have added.

# HAVE FUN!

### **3.0 Warm-Up exercises:**

**Build and concentrate energy. Emphasis on mime (object work in silence).**

**Stretch:** warm up muscles.

G 22

**Crazy Eights:** to get the blood flowing.

**21:** exercise hive mind.

**MAGIC CLAY:** practice Object Work –

- TMs circle
- TM1 builds a mimed object “out of clay” and then hands the object to TM2.
- TM2 interacts with that object and then molds the “clay” into a brand-new object. TM2 passes her object to TM3 and so on. All TMs get to play.

**Progression:**

- Care about the thing you give – Show how you feel (without words) about the thing you crafted out of clay.
- Care about the thing you receive – Show how you feel about what you’re given.
- Think about oscillation of reactions – An extreme example: I receive your clay tiara joyfully, mash it into a wad and then angrily force it on the next improviser like its garbage.

**Objective for this session: See, touch, smell and REACT to the active imagined elements your environment.** Then the audience can also.

### **3.1 Mime (Object Work) G22 : Weight, Volume and Tension are the key characteristics of a mimed object. Express these characteristics to help TMs and the audience “see” the object.**

**Find Reference Points for Mime Object.** Because our improvised reality is thin air, it can be difficult to confidently engage imagined objects your TMs interact with.

The Keys are:

- **Note where TMs’ feet are when they interact with the imagined object.**
- **Note how high TM’ limbs rise to interact with imagined objects.**
- **Multiple TMs can engage with the same objects.** Too often you may mime in solo. Get confident engaging in the objects/environment that someone else creates.
- **If something’s not clear to you, don’t avoid it;** feel the responsibility to make it clearer for everyone else. Go slower. Give “it” more Weight/Volume/Tension.
- **With practice, mime work becomes instinct – So practice.** When you’re engaged in an everyday action (brushing teeth, doing dishes, etc.) be conscious of your movements and the objects’ characteristics. Then try to mime those activities without the physical objects in hand.
- **Really picture what you’re creating.**
















**Weight, Volume and *Tension* are the key characteristics of a mimed object.**

**HD NOTE on TENSION:** I was unfamiliar with Gantz’s concept of tension as a characteristic of mime. Thinking of what that might look like, I came up with these examples:

Tension exists because of a mimed object’s assumed “physical” characteristics. There also is an emotional tension, depending on the object and situation. Play with these when interacting with an object.

HD

**Weight & Volume and *Tension* are the key characteristics of a mimed object.**

| <b>Attribute</b>      | <b>Low</b>   | <b>Medium</b>   | <b>High</b>   |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Weight</b>         | Weightless<br> Small balloon    | 1 person job<br> Dining room chair | Immoveable<br> Brick barbeque                |
| <b>Energy</b>         | Almost none<br> Bump with atoms | Intentional effort<br> Grab and go | Extra-human effort<br> Powerful tractor beam |
| <b><i>Tension</i></b> | <i>A little</i>  | <i>As expected</i>  | <i>Massive straining</i>  |
| <b>Volume</b>         | Microscopic<br> Nanoparticles   | 1 person job<br> Bread box         | Gigantic<br> Saturn including rings          |
| <b><i>Tension</i></b> | <i>Delicate</i>  | <i>As expected</i>  | <i>Intense</i>  |
| <b>Size</b>           | Tiny<br> Doll house door      | Normal<br> Closet door           | Oversized<br> Troll's front door           |
| <b>Posture</b>        | Scrunch down   | As expected   | On tippy toes   |
| <b><i>Tension</i></b> | <i>Awkward position</i>  | <i>Normal</i>   | <i>A long stretch</i>   |
| <b>Texture</b>        | Soft and gushy<br> Slime ball | Normal<br> Basketball            | Hard and spiney<br> Medieval mace          |
| <b>Reaction</b>       | Disgust  | Normal  | Fright  |
| <b><i>Tension</i></b> | <i>Avoidance</i>   | <i>Normal</i>   | <i>High danger</i>  |

*Suggested Exercises:*

## **BUILD A ROOM – G22**

*Lesson:* remember **Weight, Volume and Tension**

### **BUILD A ROOM, the game –**

- Enter and exit the stage by 2 doors on opposite sides of the stage.
- TMs are the audience
- TM1 enters the stage through a door Consider these factors: Does the door push in or pull out? What is the doorknob height, the door's weight?
- TM1 creates one mimed object somewhere in the space and then leaves through the door.
- TM2 enters, interacts with TM1's object, creates their own new object, and then leaves.
- TM3 enters, interacts with the TM1 & TM2's objects, creates their own new object, and then leaves. Etcetera.

**DO WHAT YOU DO WHERE YOU DO IT – G23** Engage in a mimed activity based on your life.

*Lessons:*

- **Leveraging your personal life will make being specific easy.**
- **What you do / objects you have inform your character –** Strive to find an **emotional perspective** through your actions and details.
- **“Sense Memory”** – Greg Travares of SC's Theatre 99 talks about sense memory; that if you really concentrate on “seeing” and “feeling” what you're engaged with on stage, then you can channel the emotions you've felt while engaged with those things/actions off-stage.

Game on next page.

## **DO WHAT YOU DO WHERE YOU DO IT, the game – G23**

I will moderate as TMs from the audience ask questions that the TM has to respond to in mime (“What else is around you?” / “Is it hard to do or easy?” / “Do you like it or do you hate it?”) – ***you want to drive toward specifics.***

*Variations:*

- **Inhabiting other spaces you know** – A coworker’s office space, a friend’s house, a business you frequent.

**DO SOMETHING TOGETHER APART** – G24 3 TMs mime different objects

*Lessons:*

- **If you commit, it doesn’t matter what you’re doing** – Three TMs can all be doing very different things but if each TM’s move is accepted in each other’s space, then the audience accepts it. If you’re okay with it, they are.
- **Commit harder in the face of uncertainty** - Don’t know how to fix a carburetor? Fake it with commitment and at the audience will follow you whether you get it wrong or right; they want to see you try, the more boldly the better.

**DO SOMETHING TOGETHER APART, the game –**

- 3 TMs up at a time.
- Each thinks of a manual task to engage in.
- I say, “Go,” the TMs each silently engage the action they thought up: Paint a fence, fix your spaceship, save your favorite zoo animal, build an instrument from scratch, etc.
- As the activities are mimed, there is little to no interaction between the TMs – act like you are in your own world, like a split screen.

## INVISIBLE TUG-OF- WAR – G24

### *Lessons:*

- **Give and take** – Follow the TM in front of you. In Tug-Of- War, the sequence of following looks great – it's really a two TM scene with the two TMs facing each other in the lead for making decisions (though they also must follow each other).
- **Funnier when you lose** – Giving way is funnier than forcing someone to your will.

### **INVISIBLE TUG-OF-WAR the game –**

- All TMs play tug-of-war with an imagined rope.
- The rope must act real; it can't stretch or be elastic. Mime the **Weight, Volume and Tension** of the rope.
- The point is to have a scene where we look like we are having an actual tug-of-war.
- BUT we aren't on opposing teams; we're all on the same "doesn't this look like a real tug-of-war?" team.

### 3.2 You Are Not What You Do: G24

**Mime supplies Improv's scene props: *Miming (object work) is not what the scene is about.* Miming inspires a scene but should not dictate the scene.** When you and a friend engage in an activity, do you only discuss that activity? Do you talk about doing the dishes while doing the dishes? **Mime gives you scene props to interact with so you're more than talking heads.** Object work should free you, not confine you.

*Suggested Exercises:*

**The WHAT ARE YOU DOING? loop** – Exercise of doing one thing and thinking another.

*Lessons:*

- **Activities gain weight from your dialogue –**
  - 🦴 Don't undermine subtext (what you are not saying out loud) by making it explicit.
  - ★ Let the audience make connections between what's being done and what's being said.
- **Stage pictures make scenes more interesting** – Move around your space and engaging in your environment. This will make TMs engaged in dialogue and will be more interesting to watch.
- **Engage environment, rest your tongue** – If you have something to do, you don't have to rely so hard on your words.

Game on next page.

## The WHAT ARE YOU DOING? loop, the game – G24

- TMs form a back line. 2 TMs enter stage. I get an audience suggestion of an action/activity (“Milking a cow.”)
- TM1 mimes that action.
- Going against the general Improv rule of not asking questions, TM2 asks, “What are you doing?”
- TM1 say something that is **not** what they are doing and **not** what the action could also be construed as doing (“Flying two kites.”) Anything different works: “I’m rinsing rutabagas”; “I’m wrestling sea monkeys.”
- TM2 mimes that action. TM1 asks, “What are you doing?”
- The **TMs repeat this loop** until I call scene. Then that pair steps out and another TM pair steps in.
- As rounds progress, the rhythm should get faster and the judging of TMs’ contributions should get more critical.

## MIMED SEQUENCE / DIALOGUE SEQUENCE – G25

Lessons: Same as above.

### The game –

Two TMs on stage are given a suggestion of location.

TMs - *without interaction or telling a story*- each define multiple objects in space.

TMs go back to their starting positions and go through their sequence of mimed interactions adding *dialogue and reaction to one another*, **but without talking about what you are doing.**

### **3.3 Beyond Objects: G25**

**Environment is about more than objects. What sounds fill the space? Ambient noises? Loud music? A series of unexpected explosions?**

**What about the atmosphere? Is it hot? Raining? Low gravity?**

*Suggested Exercises:*

#### **SOUNDSCAPE and more, the game –**

- TMs in a circle.
- Define a location by the sounds you hear.
- Take turns around the circle building out the noises of the location.
- Explore all the different types of sound: words, mechanics, organics, ambiance, etc.

### 3.4 More Rhythm and Pacing: G26

The Short Form games you have been working on have mechanics that lend an inherent rhythm. To create tension and interest, you can ramp up, slow down or otherwise oscillate pacing.

**Adding pacing to your object work allows you confidence.**

**Your silent engagement with objects creates tension in your scene.**

**Sharing that tension gives your team focus rhythm and pacing.**

*Suggested Exercises:*

**BIOSPHERE** (a tweak of SPACE JUMP) – A short form game focused on exploring different Biosphere Zones, each with its own atmosphere.

*Lessons:*

- **Atmosphere is the least utilized active element in improv** – engage it.
- **Explore the options** – explore each Zones atmosphere: temp, precipitation, pressure, dust, fog, etc.
- **Feel it, just don't speak to it** – Feel the drops of rain, become crippled by the cold, sweat in the heat, etc.
- **Silence is fun** –put more focus on embodying your reactions than explaining them.
- **“Yes, And, “is improv’s superpower.** Immediately accept whatever Zone you’re taken to. The audience will love you for it.
- **More TMs people on stage requires more agreement** – in each Zone, find an emotional perspective and share it, else the scene can get lost. **Agree to each other’s perspectives and mirror each other’s physicality.** This adds focus to the scene.
- **MORE PHYSICAL THE BETTER** – justify your physical position/pose/motion moving back and forth through the Zones. This is part of the fun.

Lessons continue next page.

## Biosphere Lessons continued:

- In the sequence's ascent, it's fun to transpose TMs' physical positions into new Zones. *Ex: Shielding your eyes in the Desert Zone becomes waving away mosquitoes in the Jungle Zone.*
- In transitioning back through the Zones, a scene that falls into the doldrums gets a spark when TMs leap to their previous stage positions *in a prior Zone.*

## **BIOSPHERE, the game – G26**

- TM1 enters stage, miming their reaction to the Zones atmosphere (temp, precipitation, pressure, etc.) – ex: shivering and saying, “It’s so cold in the arctic zone.”
- TM2 enters and changes which Zone of the Biosphere they are in – ex: trying to cover her head while saying, “Stupid rainforest area.” TM1 must immediately accept TM2 new reality.
- TM3 enters and establishes a new Zone whose atmosphere all three TMs accept and react to.
- Repeat with TM4 & 5. Then have TM5 leave stage to return the remaining TMs to the fourth atmosphere/environment. Then the TM4 leaves, returning the scene to the third atmosphere. Repeat until the initial TM is back in the initial atmosphere/environment.

## **HOMEWORK – G26**

**Pay attention to what you do where you do it:** Take a moment during your life interacting with everyday objects to:

- **Feel the weight.**
- **Notice the dimensions.**
- **Play with the tension.**
- **Extra credit to putting the thing down and trying the same action in mime.**

**Pay attention to Atmosphere and how it affects how you carry yourself:** Our environment shapes our posture. Notice it to use it on the improv stage.

**Go see shows! Report back to me next week with examples of a moment that really came to life because TMs with engaged in their active environment.**

**Overcoming fear**, a summary of pages from *Overcoming Fear, A guide for Budding Improvisers*, by Colin Thornton and Jon Ulrich. Visit the Fuzzy Improv page on [CW4SP.com](http://CW4SP.com) for its Amazon link.

> **Fear happens to everybody.** > You may fear several things: the unknown, losing control, public speaking, past negative or critical experiences or not being accepted.

> Three expressions of fear that are toxic to improvisors are *Fight, Flight and Freeze*.

*Fear Expression #3, FREEZE.*

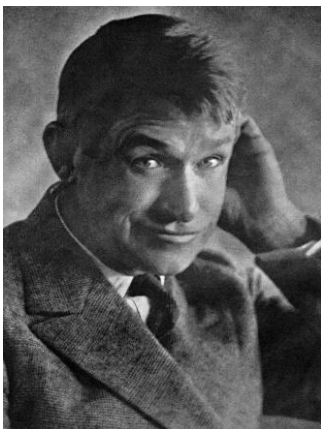
**Freezing** is not responding or not building onto a partner's ideas

Research shows that our minds can be blank from 5 -20% of the time!

Students freeze because nothing comes to their mind. They can't think of anything to say or do in their scene because the imaginative part of their brain has shut down.

Improv's warm-up exercises and games can help us overcome freezing on stage.

**"Eventually you will reach the point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it."** — Will Rogers



Lessons are based on:  
**Improv As Improv Does Best**  
*Curriculum*  
Introduction to Improvisation  
*Patrick Gantz 2020*