

FUZZY IMPROV

Lesson 101-02



Attention & Memory

CW4SP.com

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To Do:

NAME TAGS

CHECK IN WITH TEAMMATES – What fears or concerns might hinder your improv experience?

CLASS RULES:

HELP CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

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

BOUNDARIES - PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL. Be gentle and appropriate.

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

Note: [G X] at the beginning of 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] at the beginning of the topic indicates materials that I have added.

HAVE FUN! Harold Dreibelbis

2.0 Warm-Up exercises:

Revisit names, build energy and concentrate energy.

[HD]

Stretch: Get Centered, focus on Improv!

Instructor (I) and 3 teammates (TMs) each lead a short stretch.


[G 15}

Crazy Eights: To get the blood flowing.

21 –

- The TMs huddles in a tight circle
- TMs contribute one number at a time.
- Taking turns in random order, TMs count to 21.
- If any TMs speak at once, the group must start over.

Lessons:

- **Breathe;** Don't rush to speak; Share focus.
- **Don't rush to 21.** Make each step based on the trajectory laid down ahead of you. Just build each move on top of the one before it.
-  **Don't emphasize failure;** there are no “mistakes” on stage, only what happens.
 - The audience only knows you've “messed up” if you tell them you have.

[G 15]

Objective for this session: Be Attentive. We are creating collaboratively. Ensure you hear each other's contributions. Focus outward to hear. Project out to be heard.

Remember what you hear: You are building on your TMs contributions. Remember those contributions.

2.1 Concentration: A lot can get lost on a crowded improv stage. Ensure you HEAR and ARE HEARD – listen and project.

Suggested Exercises:

RED BALL, RED BULL, BREAD BOWL – a word/energy passing game.

Lessons:

- **Listen** to words closely.
- **Be attentive** to more than words.
- **Pay attention** to physical motions. They will be different in each sequence,, don't miss it.

RED BALL, RED BULL, BREAD BOWL, the game–

- TMs form a circle.
- A TM starts by saying, "TM's name, Red Ball" then mimes throwing to that TM.
- TM2 catches it, says "Red Ball, Thank you" then throws it, saying "TM's name, Red Ball."
- Add more pretend balls/objects and try and keep them all going.

Variations: "Green Ball, Purple Ball, Bouncy Ball."

"Thread Ball, Party Hat, Smart Cat."

[G 16}

CIRCLE OF SEQUENCES – A word memory game that includes simultaneous sequences. It gets complicated!

Lessons:

- Focus outward –
 - 🧠 Don't be in your head overthinking the game.
 - ★ Be ready to take your turn.
- Be sure you're heard – Enunciate, make eye contact, and point. This helps your TMs.
- Each TM is 100% responsible for the success of the group – If a sequence is dropped, even if you didn't drop it, pick it up.

CIRCLE OF SEQUENCES, the game –

Sequence 1

- A TM points to another and says any word.
- That TM points to another TM and says another word inspired by the first.
- Continue until every TM says a word and points to another TM.
- The final TM contributes and points back to the first TM.
- Repeat Sequence One until the group is comfortable with it.

Sequence 2 & 3

Establish Sequence 2 & 3 the same way.

When TMs are comfortable with each Sequence, keep all three going simultaneously. Start with Sequence 1 and then tap the TM starting Sequence 2 on the shoulder, then tap the TM starting Sequence 3 on the shoulder.

[G 17]

2.2 Listening to Build: Build collaboratively, hear so you can accept. Show you accept your fellow TMs' contributions by heightening them with our own.

Suggested Exercises:

YES, AND IT IS ____ -

Lessons:

- **Focus outward** – Don't be in your head thinking about what you'll say. Focus out. Listen to what your TMs say. Build on that. SEE the object – use your *imagination* to visualize the object to inspire details. Get specific.
- **Build in the same direction** – Follow the group: if the subject is an *old* toaster, build out all the things that make it “old”; don't give new features to an old toaster.
- 🦋 Avoid contradictions.
- **Jokes** – Those made by building off each other's contributions will be funnier than those you force.
- **Dig deep into the details** – If the object is “An Asian elephant,” stay focused on an *Asian* elephant. Get more specific: “A Japanese elephant,” “An elephant whose tusks work as chopsticks when eating sushi.”
- **Setting, not spiking** – Don't worry about thinking of the funniest detail to add. Whatever you add could set up your TM for a humorous detail, made funnier because it appeared through collaboration.
- **Trust the direction of the group** – Commit to your TMs. 🦋 Don't force something totally new because you think the group needs a change.

Game on next page.

[G 17]

YES, AND IT IS ____ , the game –

- TMs are in a circle.
- The first TM investigates the empty space inside the circle and says, “I see a ____.”
- The next TM around the circle says, “Yes, and it is ____.”
- Play continues with each TM building in turn on top of *all that came before*.
- The first TM is the last to contribute a “Yes, and it is ____” (their first description).
- then that second TM begins a new “I see a ____.”

EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE – Somewhere around the midpoint of the exercise, I will focus TMs on having the SAME *EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE* toward the object; if the first TM hates this toaster, ALL hate the toaster.

- It is easier to heighten details when you agree to an emotional perspective. “See” the object through that emotional perspective.

Options:

- Instead of following the order around the circle, TMs can wipe the slate clean and start with a new object when *they* feel it’s time to move on.
- **Share the air** – Hesitators, contribute! Stage hogs, give someone else a chance!

[G18]

PHRASE PASS – Like Action Pass, but with a Self-Contained Emotional Statement to start.

Lessons:

- All TMs create a Positive Feedback Loop. It will heighten everything you do. It will take you places no one could imagine or achieve on their own.
- **Allow evolution** – If all TMs concentrate on heightening what they see and hear, the phrase will naturally change. Embrace small changes to foster evolution.
- ☠️ Avoid forcing mutations that separate an individual from the group.

PHRASE PASS, the game –

- In a circle, a TM turns to his left and says a Self Contained Emotional Statement (SCES), any SCES.
- The next TM sees and hears the SCES – head to toe.
- Turning to the TM to their left they try to recreate it EXACTLY.

Progression:

- Focus on exactly what was given to you.
- Pick just *one thing* (one word, emotion, inflection, character) and heighten it by 2 notches.

[G18]

2.3 Memory: listen and *retain* so YOU can return to and heighten established information. Memory is muscle exercise.

Suggested Exercises:

STORY STEALING – TM’s tell personal stories which are remembered and retold by another TM.

Lessons:

- **Don’t mock; mirror** – This is not about making fun of TMs. it’s about making each other look good by remembering their story.
- **The more you remember, the more options you have** - You might not get the chance to revisit the story you remember best so you need to work to remember *everything*.
- **Remember specific** – Remembering specific details will be more powerful than remembering everything generally.
- **Remember reactions** – Your emotional reactions are improved; focus on those when setting other TM’s stories to memory.
- **See what’s not shown** – Recreating what your fellow TMs initially did subconsciously is great fun. How do they stand? How do they move? What do they sound like?

STORY STEALING, the game –

- ~ 6 TMs form a backline.
- One at a time, TMs enter centerstage and tell a true, personal, 30 second story.
- It can be as simple as “Something that happened today that you cared about.”
- Once all TMs have told a story, each TM enters the stage and recreates another TM’s story.
- Every story should be revisited once by another TM.

[G 19]

2.4 More than Words: Share focus with the group. Be aware of your physical position in relationships with one another. This is a critical part of hearing and being heard.

Suggested Exercises:

ONE PERSON WALKING, A game of trading the power to walk.

Lessons :

- Make eye contact.
- Give and take focus.
- Be willing to surrender focus to your scene partner.

ONE PERSON WALKING, the game –

- TMs spread out through the room.
- One TM starts walking around the room. All other TMs stay frozen in space.
- Without talking – with one TM walking at any given time – TMs take and give the power to walk. One TM starts, the other stops: one TM stops, the other starts.
- See each other to know when to trade the power to walk.
- Now *two TMs* walk at a time. Now three. Build to where half the class should always be walking and then work back down to one person walking.

[G 19]

2.5 Rhythm and Pacing: You can use pacing to evoke audience reactions if you can find the rhythms. Short Form game mechanics have an inherent rhythm you can use to ramp up, slow down or otherwise oscillate pacing.

Suggested Exercises:

FOUR CORNERS – a game of switching scenes by assignment of space.

Lessons:

As you switch squares:

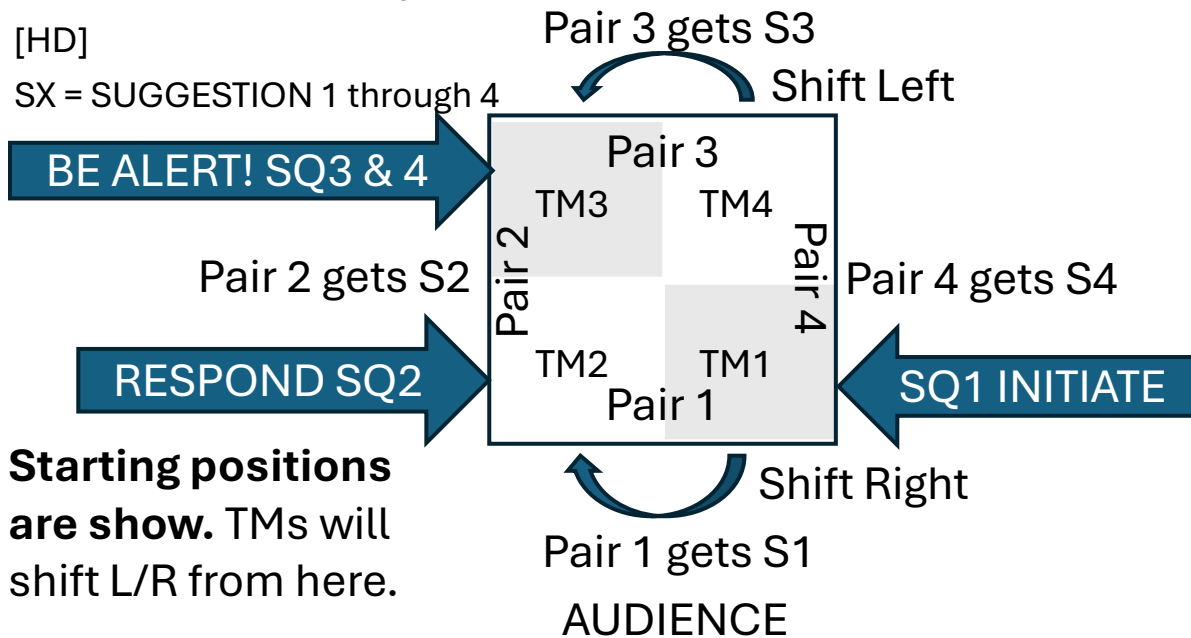
- **Make quick choices** – The more TMs on stage the less time there is to “figure out” what’s happening. Everyone is better off if each TM is committed to “feeling something about something” as soon as possible.
- **Play to the moment, not for the Edit** – The “danger” of being aware of Short Form’s dictated mechanics is the temptation to play for the joke. Instead, trust that in-the-moment emotional reactions to imagined stimuli are the biggest laughs. **Play the long game of investing in the moment even if the moment is not very long.**
- **You can but don’t have to return where we left off** – More important is to follow the characters’ reactions. That can mean **following a timeline** (Ex: “Hi, I’m your babysitter,”/ “Please go to sleep,”/ “How are you still not asleep?”) or **bouncing through time** (Ex: “Hi, I’m your babysitter,”/ “Hi, I’m your TA,”/ “Hi, I’m your nurse.”)

Game on next page.

[G 19]

FOUR CORNERS, the game -

- Four TMs stand in a square, two facing the audience with the remaining two behind them.
- Each pair gets a suggestion to inspire that pair's scenes (Suggestions: Relationship, Period in Time, Object, Occupation, Location.)
- When I shout, "Shift Right/Left" TMs rotate and switch to the scene of the pair front stage.
- The TM now in SQ1 initiates with a stand-alone scene with a SCES and her partner in SQ2 joins with an emotional reaction of their own that can be anything except contradictory .



Starting positions are show. TMs will shift L/R from here.

[G 19] A Pair's suggestion stays with them throughout the game.


The "Shift Right/Left" directions help pace the collection of scenes

- I will allow each pair more time for dialogue at the outset and then make switches more quickly.
- As the game proceeds I will change the direction and order of switching. Be ready to oscillate energies according to scene.

[G 20]

SPACE JUMP –A sequence of changing scenes based on TMs physical position.

Lessons:

- **Silence is fun – Put more focus on embodying your reactions than explaining them.**
- **Enthusiastic acceptance of your TM’s contribution is your superpower.** Immediately accept whatever world you’re brought to, and the audience will love you for it.
- **More people on stage necessitates more agreement –**
 Several TMs on stage all with different perspectives and characteristics get messy.
★ Agree with each other’s perspectives and mirror each other’s physicality. This will minimize the amount of “stuff” on stage and focus the scene.
- **MORE PHYSICAL THE BETTER** – Justify your physical position/pose. Moving back and forth through scenes adds to the fun.

SPACE JUMP, the game -

- TM1 initiates a physical scene based on the audience’s suggestion of a “chore” like doing laundry, raking leaves, etc.
- TM2 enters, signifying a new scene and takes TM1’s physical position but transports all to a new place (Ex: *TM1 was bending down to pick up a dollar, TM2 makes them both field hands with hoes*).
- TM3 enters and sets up a *new* scene based off the poses of TMs 1 & 2.
- Repeat with a TM4 & TM5.
- TM5 leave stage. The remaining TMs return to the fourth scene.
- TM4 leaves, returning the scene to the third environment.
- Repeat until the first TM is back in the first environment.

[G 21]

HOMEWORK –

Steal a story: Pick a friend who would not mind this. Steal one of their stories and retell it with heightened details and emotion. Pacing can help reveal that you are purposely stealing her story. Try to tell her story soon after she originally told it.

Notice Beat Structure in your favorite TV shows: Pay attention to progressions that show and heighten a behavior. Notice how those behaviors are flipped or addressed. Most TV comedies rely on arcing and resetting characters' behaviors in each episode.

Go see shows! Report back to me next week with examples of when the pacing of shows you saw engaged you and when it lagged.

[HD]

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 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 #2, **FLIGHT**.

Fleeing is abandoning a scene by leaving the stage, skipping from topic to topic, or not being fully present.

The #1 reason students drop out early from an improv class is the Flight response.

Students perceived risk of failure is so intense they would rather quit than experience the potential embarrassment of “failing.”

Age is a case of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it don't matter.

—Satchel Paige:



Material for this lesson is based on
Improv As Improv Does Best

Curriculum,

Introduction to Improvisation by Patrick Gantz 2020.