

ACTING TIPS SHEET

Dear Parents,

For many of you this will be your child's first experience in a big production. Your child may need help to memorize lines, develop character, and work on vocal projection. While a great deal of this technique will be taught in our day-long camps, it is crucial that homework is done through out the rehearsal process to ensure the success of each child and the production as a whole. You will no doubt become your child's acting coach away from camp. Don't panic! Below are true-blue techniques that will help you to help your child in preparing for his/her role.

Memorization: "How will my child learn all these lines in time?"

You needn't worry. Most children have a great capacity for storing lines. The real trick is to encourage the your child to learn a portion of his/her lines each evening. By working at the lines a little at a time, you are helping your child achieve optimum story, plot, and line retention.

Your child may find it very helpful if you discuss with him/her what is really happening in a scene: *what* does his/her character want or need? This will assist your child in understanding the context of the lines, which makes remembering a great deal easier.

Of course, there are other techniques that a child can do on his/her own, too. . .

For many children, writing down the lines on a separate piece of paper a few times a week is a productive exercise. This alternate method of information processing reinforces other memory techniques and practice. I have personally seen this work well for many students.

One final technique that I, as well as many of my former students, have used with great success, is tape recording lines into a tape or CD recorder. Play back the lines while doing some other task, like drawing, painting, or falling asleep. This allows the mind to process the material on a different level, and it can be especially helpful if your child is feeling frustrated and needs a break from other methods. This method can also come in handy for remembering cue lines. Having a sibling or parent record the cue lines that come before a child's lines can be a great help.

Characterization: Drama Queen to Dramatist

Children have an innate sense of imaginary play. Creating characters is not a difficult concept for them. The one difficulty is trying to stay in character throughout the performance.

To prevent character breaks, help your child to do a little research. Take a vested interest in your child's part! No matter how small or big, every part counts! Go online, rent a period movie, or visit a local library or landmark to investigate the world of small-town, USA in 1912. If you're lucky enough to have a grandparent or older relative who could provide some insights, pay them a visit!

As your child gets a sense of the historical, technological, and social realities of that time period, he/she will assume the character's persona with greater ease.

Another technique, improvisation, works like a charm! To improvise is to make up a story, plot, and/or lines for a character, and let the character and story evolve. For example, if your child's role was that of Train Conductor, you as a parent could help make up scenarios for a train conductor. Pretend that you are various characters interacting with the conductor. You could even assume characters from the play, if you feel so inclined.

Projection:

With the advent of technology, speaking loudly on stage is not as imperative as it once was. However, even with a microphone, one's voice needs to convey presence. Encouraging your child to project will serve him/her not only on stage, but also in life. There are a couple of very good techniques for teaching this concept.

The first technique is called *The Moving Beanbag*. Essentially how it works is a beanbag or other object is placed at a location directly in front of the actor. The actor must then speak his or her lines to the object, as if the object were listening. After the actor has read a few lines, the beanbag is moved a few feet back, and the actor must read his/her lines, again, this time a bit louder so that the beanbag can still hear what he/she is saying. This continues for a few more times until the beanbag is now 20 or 30 feet away from the child, and the child must allow himself to raise his decibel level so that the beanbag can hear him/her. Be careful that the child doesn't mistake making his/her voice louder for the beanbag to hear him, as the same thing as screaming. IT IS a difficult concept for children to grasp, but not impossible.

The other technique that works well for teaching projection is that of diaphragmatic breathing. Sounds pretty complicated, huh? Well, it's not. It is something we all do everyday when we sleep. Our diaphragms are located directly above our belly buttons, and when filled up with air, give us powerful vocal power. A good way to teach this kind of breathing to a child is to have them lay on the ground with his/her right hand placed on the stomach directly above the belly button. Have them just relax and pretend like they're about to fall asleep. If they become easily relaxed, they will just start to breath diaphragmatically with ease. The belly should rise a fall like a balloon being filled up with air then deflated. After a few moments on the ground, see if your child can stand up and breathe in the same manner. If they can, have them try using this diaphragm breathing while saying their lines. You will notice the difference! Many children may not get the concept on the first try, but it is one that works extremely well, and after several attempts is easily attainable.