

IMPROV:

Theatresports

Some stuff you need to know!



Theatresports Workshop -
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The Ten Commandments



It is not known where the ten commandments originated. They came to Australia via Vancouver Theatresports, but no one knows who wrote them.

They are ten sensible, clear rules, essential for any creative teamwork enterprise.

The Ten commandments

1. Thou shalt not block.
2. Thou shalt always retain focus.
3. Thou shall not shine above thy team-mates.
4. To gag is to commit a sin that will be paid for.
5. Thou shalt always be changed by what is said to you.
6. Thou shalt not waffle.
7. When in doubt, break the routine.
8. To wimp is to show thy true self.
9. S/he that tries to be clever, is not; while s/he that is clever, doesn't try.
10. When thy faith is low, thy spirit weak, thy good fortune strained, and thy team losing, be comforted & smile, because it just doesn't matter!

The three main ones you should remember always are 1, 8, and 10!

Theatresports vocab

- **ADVANCING** - Advancing is developing the plot and giving new information. To advance we may: change the focus / change the status / introduce a new offer / introduce a new character / change the rhythm, mood, & timing of the scene. Remember - **Thou shalt not waffle**
- **BLOCKING** - a block occurs when an offer is stopped, rejected negated or ignored. Blocking stops the action. It breaks down the communication & steals the focus from another offer. It grinds the story to a halt. It is the opposite of "yielding", & usually occurs when a player is afraid of accepting another player's ideas. On many occasions a blocking player is afraid to share the responsibility of the scene and prefers total control. This shows a lack of trust and is based on fear.

- **BREAKING THE ROUTINE** - Breaking the routine creates an advance. It occurs when an offer is introduced to break the rhythm & action of the scene. The timing of knowing when to break the routine is important. Too often, players break the routine before a routine has been firmly established. Beware of players who continually break the routine for motives other than serving the scene.
- **FLAGGING A SCENE** - When players want to finish a scene, they use the arm signal.
- **BULLDOZING** - When players enter a scene & destroy the established ideas with their own, we say they are "bulldozing the scene".
- **ENDOWMENT** - When players endow offers they give them value - for example size, weight, shape, attitudes, relationships. They endow their environment, the weather, and other players. Endowment allows players to imagine.

👁️ EXTENDING - Extending occurs when players provide detail. It:

- ★ Supports & maintains the existing offer
- ★ Develops the current information in the scene
- ★ Supports & maintains the existing focus
- ★ Broadens the potential of the existing focus
- ★ Prolongs the moment
- ★ Maintains the existing status relationship in the scene
- ★ Establishes & continues a routine
- ★ Establishes & maintains a consistent rhythm

👁️ **GAGGING** - A gag is a line or physical action played for a laugh at the expense of the scene.

Gagging:

- ★ Blocks the action
- ★ Breaks the reality
- ★ Hinders or disrupts the storyline
- ★ Breaks, splits or destroys the existing focus
- ★ Breaks the dramatic tension
- ★ Disrupts teamwork, causing improvisors to compete with each other and play for audience approval
- ★ Breaks team trust
- ★ Encourages self gratification
- ★ E.g Offer - "That puppy's been hit by a car. Let's help it"

Gag - "What a dog of an idea"

The sign for gagging is made by cupping your hand around your own throat and opening your mouth to reveal your teeth and tongue ;)

- GIBBERISH - A language made up of vocal sounds of different pitches, accents and inflections. It is nonsensical in that no such language exists. But when players improvise in gibberish, they believe they understand everything that is said by themselves and the other players.
- IN THE MOMENT - When players are in the moment, they are not preplanning the future. They are genuinely responding to every offer as it arrives.
- OBJECTIVE - An objective is something to achieve. When a player wants something, they play an objective; e.g. To ask your Father for \$100.

- ⑥ **OFFER** – An offer provides a beginning as the first action which starts the scene. It may be verbal, non-verbal or both. An offer initiates a commitment to an idea. It needs to be clear, simple, & brief. Offers then continue to be made through the scene.

To make an offer is to make a positive suggestion, movement, physical shape or expression (silent or spoken) which starts or develops a story or scene.

Clear offers are simple responses. They are not clever , but obvious reactions or ideas. They build the foundation for basic communication.

There are six points to remember about an offer:

1. Make it
2. Yield to it
3. Name it
4. Extend it
5. Advance it
6. Shelve it

An offer is only as good as its yield

● **WIMPING** – A wimp occurs when a player refuses to take their share of responsibility for the developing scene. A wimp usually results in:

1. An offer not being named:

Offer: “Look at that thing”

Wimp: “Yeah...look at it”

2. The over-description of an offer, rather than the naming of it:

Offer: “Look at that! “

Wimp: “Yes... it’s green, hairy, brown and...”

3. An offer being watered down rather than being maximised

4. A lack of emotional commitment to an offer

5. Unnecessary questioning of an idea - passing the buck.

6. Unnecessary stalling, lack of physical commitment or lack of acceptance of the other player’s sense of reality of the developing scene.

**** A wimp is to show thy true self!**

● YIELD - A Yield is an acceptance of an offer. Yielding is saying "yes" to another person's ideas. Yielding allows players to share the scene. Yielding requires listening to an offer and giving an honest reaction. Yielding supports the focus & serves the scene.

"The art of improvisation is to make the other person look good."

Judging Theatresports

Three judges are each allocated one of the following categories:

- Technique
- Storyline
- Entertainment

They evaluate the improvisation and score the scenes between 0 - 5:

- 0 Leave the Stage
- 1 Poor
- 2 Just OK
- 3 A good scene
- 4 An excellent scene
- 5 Outstanding! Take it on a National tour

If a scene is boring, judges may 'honk' if off stage with a horn or gong it with a gong.

The judge who sounded the horn or gong must hold up a zero card. The other two judges must score at their own discretion.

Judges decisions are final.

The scores are tallied and the team with the most points wins.

Theatresports Games

