



Purpose

By working together in a theater and drama setting, students are able to internalize what is meant by “working as an ensemble.” They build skills around sharing time, listening to each other, and taking turns. They also begin to understand the rewards that come along with cooperation and teamwork. These games are designed to get students acquainted with the physical feeling of working in a circle and working together. Each game helps them feel successful at simple tasks and feel invested through the possibility of “winning” a game as a community. The games invite students to stretch their capacity for working together by listening to one another, asking for help from their classmates, and engaging with agreed-upon norms. These are skills that translate into all aspects of life, and teachers can cite the games when encouraging students to practice teamwork throughout the day.

Introduction

Define *ensemble*

Say: *We are going to work today as members of an ensemble. An ensemble is a group of people working together.*

Show a hand motion for “ensemble.” For example, bring your hands together so your fingers are intertwined. Have students repeat this back.

Teach *actors’ neutral*

Say: *Actors are often all over the place when they are in a play. It can be helpful for a director to use the term “actors’ neutral” to bring actors back to a starting place. To stand in actors’ neutral, keep your feet hips’ width distance apart and put your hands at your sides. Relax your body and your face. Your face should not look like it has any feelings on it.*

Model standing in actors’ neutral.

Have student practice wiggling or dancing around, and then returning to actors’ neutral when you clap your hands or say “actors’ neutral” loudly.

Set norms and expectations

List expectations for keeping the theater space safe, kind, and productive. It is best if students can brainstorm this list together, but here are some ideas for norms and expectations:

- Listen when others are speaking.
- Raise a hand to speak in a group setting.
- Return to actors' neutral when the teacher gives the signal.
- Respect others' ideas by refraining from laughter or teasing.

Transition to theater space

Say: *When I clap my hands three times, stand up, tuck your chair in, and move into a circle silently. When you get to the circle, stand in actors' neutral. Let's see how swiftly we can do this as an ensemble!*

You may want to set a timer to see how fast students can move into a circle. Once there, the teacher can report the time back and celebrate the students for moving so quickly into a circle.

Note: It can be helpful to leave an option open for some students to participate in the ensemble by watching as an audience member. You might say, "You can either play the game, or watch the ensemble play the game from your seat. If you choose to be an audience member, you may contribute to the ensemble by providing feedback after the activity." Be sure to let students who choose to be audience members give compliments to the group after the game is over, during student reflection. Do not have audience members provide criticism; just positive comments about what the ensemble did well.

Unit 1: Name Patterns

Level 1

Students stand in a circle. One student says her name and adds a word that starts with the same first letter as her name. For example: Sophie Spaghetti. Everyone in the circle echoes back the first student's name and word. The second student repeats this activity. Continue until every student has had a chance to say her name, a word, and have it echoed back.

Level 2

Repeat Level 1, but add a movement to the name and the word. For example: Sophie Spaghetti might stomp her foot while saying her name and word. Students can pick a new word for their name if they'd like.

Level 3

Repeat Level 2, but add an inflection to the name, word, and motion. For example, Sophie Spaghetti might say "spaghetti" in a particularly high-pitched voice, she might choose to whisper her name, or she might choose to add some rhythm to the way she says it.

Level 4

Repeat Level 3, telling students to try to remember some of their classmates' words, motions, and sounds. Once everyone has had a chance, the first player (for example, Sophie Spaghetti) says the name, motion, and inflection of another player somewhere else in the circle (for example, James Jar). The second player repeats his own name (James Jar), and then says the name, motion, and inflection of another player somewhere else in the circle (Abigail Ant). Repeat until everyone has had her name, motion, and inflection "passed" to her.

Level 5

Have students attempt to play this game in groups of seven without the teacher's intervention.

Unit 2: What Are You Doing?

Level 1

Students stand in a circle. The teacher is the leader. Introduce the vocabulary word **pantomime**: To pantomime is to act out an activity without making any sound. The teacher says an action (for example, jumping rope). Students practice pantomiming the action until the teacher says, “Neutral.” When they hear the word “neutral,” students return to actors’ neutral. Teacher says a few more actions (such as talking on the phone, dribbling a basketball, brushing your teeth, making a pie, eating a pizza, etc.). Students practice transitioning from one action to another and occasionally returning to neutral.

Level 2

Students stand in a circle. Each student thinks of an action. Start with one student (Player A). That student asks the person to her left (Player B), “What am I doing?” Player B gives an action (for example, playing a guitar). Player A pantomimes playing a guitar until Player B says, “Neutral.” Then Player B asks the person to her left (Player C), “What am I doing?” Player C gives an action. Player B pantomimes the action until Player C says, “Neutral.”

Level 3

Repeat Level 2, except have the entire group say “Neutral,” instead of a single player. This means the group will need to develop a rhythm so that they can all say the word “neutral” in unison.

Level 4

Students stand in a circle. Each student thinks of an action. The first player (Player A) begins pantomiming an action (for example, washing a dog). The player to her left (Player B) asks, “What are you doing?” Player A says an action that does NOT match the action she is doing (for example, “I’m dancing ballet”). Player B begins pantomiming that action (dancing ballet), and Player A stops pantomiming. The player to Player B’s left (Player C) asks, “What are you doing?” Player B gives a new action (for example, “I’m coloring in a coloring book”). Continue around the entire circle.

Level 5

Have students attempt to play this game at Level 4 in groups of seven without the teacher’s intervention.

Unit 3: One-Word Story

Level 1

Students stand in a circle. The teacher directs. The first student (Player A) begins telling a silly story about anything. The teacher taps Player A (or otherwise directs her) to indicate that she can stop talking. The teacher taps the next student in the circle (Player B). Player B should pick up where Player A left off as best she can. (For example, maybe Player A said, “Once upon a time there was a mean pig named Danny.” Then Player A’s turn ended, as indicated by a tap by the teacher. Player B might say, “Danny was mean because he always ate his brother’s slop, no matter what.”) Continue around the circle until everyone has had a turn.

Level 2

Students stand in a circle. Player A says one word (such as “Once”). Player B says the next word (such as “upon”), that connects to Player A’s word. Continue around the circle, telling a story one word at a time. When the story reaches the end of a sentence, a player may say “period,” “exclamation point,” or “question mark” in lieu of a word in the story. Continue around the circle a few times so that a cohesive story can form.

Level 3

Repeat Level 2, except rather than saying one word at a time, have students say three words at a time.

Level 4

Repeat Level 2, except that students do not have to speak in order. Rather, whenever a student has said a word, she puts one hand in the circle. Students each get two words in the story, one word for each hand. The student who has the last hand must also say the last word in the story.

Level 5

Have students attempt to play this game at Level 4 in groups of seven without the teacher's intervention.

Unit 4: Zip Zap Zop

Level 1

Students stand in a circle. Player A says, "Zip." Player B says, "Zap." Player C says, "Zop." Go around in a circle saying these words as fast as they can, taking turns. Students should look to the student next to them when saying their word, like they are "passing" the word around the circle. See how fast they can get around the circle saying "Zip," "Zap," and "Zop."

Level 2

Students stand in a circle. This time, instead of passing the words "Zip," "Zap," and "Zop" around the circle, have students make eye contact with each other and pass the words across the circle. They can clap in the direction of the person they are passing the word to.

For example, if the circle included, in order, Abby, Britney, Carl, Deante, Evan, Faye, and Gene, this might happen:

Gene (looking across the circle at Deante): Zip

Deante (looking across the circle at Britney): Zap

Britney (looking at Evan): Zop

And so on. See how quickly students can pass the word, and remember, eye contact matters. It's easy to get confused when students are standing across from each other.

Level 3

Incorporate "Elephant." Students may still send "Zip," "Zap," or "Zop" across the circle, but at any given time, they may also send "Elephant." If a person receives an "Elephant" command from across the circle, they must put their hands in front of them like a trunk, and the people on either side of the trunk must each become ears (by stretching their arms over their heads). The elephant trunk then gets to decide if she would like to send a "Zip," "Zap," "Zop," or "Elephant."

Level 4

Incorporate "Racecar," "Bunny," and "Palm Tree":

Racecar: The middle person is the driver, the people on either side are the wheels on the car.

Bunny: The middle person is the bunny face and legs, the people on either side are the tall ears.

Palm Tree: The middle person is the trunk, the people on either side are swaying leaves.

Now the middle person may choose to send “Zip,” “Zap,” “Zop,” “Racecar,” “Bunny,” “Palm Tree,” or “Elephant.”

Level 5

Allow a few students to invent their own additions to the game and add them to the options of things to send around the circle. Students can come up with anything from “Gym Teacher” to “Pokémon,” so the sky’s the limit. As long as they can teach their idea to everyone, anything’s game. Try just three additions, or have students break into small groups and invent their own version of the game to play with each other.



Abstract Art: Art that does not attempt to represent external, recognizable reality but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures.

Anime: A style of Japanese animated film and television.

Annoyed: Irritated.

Binding: The way a book is held together.

Brainstorm: A way to list and produce ideas before coming up with a final concept.

Character: A person in a novel, play, or movie.

Collage: An art form that brings together paper and other matter to form a new, unique whole.

Coloring: When a comic artist strategically adds color to a black-and-white panel.

Comfortable: Having positive or neutral emotions.

Comic: A story told with multiple pictures, panels, and words, usually in a book format.

Compassion: Concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.

Complementary Colors: Colors directly opposite each other in the color spectrum, such as red and green or blue and orange, that when combined in the right proportions, produce white light.

Composition: An arrangement of artistic components to form a final body of work.

Conflict: A disagreement between two or more people.

Cool Colors: On a color wheel, violet, blue, and green; contrast with warm colors.

Draft: A version of an artwork that is created before the final version.

Emotions: Feelings.

Emotions Cards: Set of flashcards that are printable through this curriculum demonstrating a face to go with different emotion words.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Ensemble: A group that works and creates together.

Excited: Enthusiastic and eager.

Frustrated: Expressing distress and annoyance.

Group Write: The whole class contributes to the writing process. The teacher usually transcribes on a white board.

Hurt: Feeling emotional injury.

Inking: Going over a pencil sketch with an ink pen in order to complete a final draft.

Landscape: An image of a place in wide view, usually of a natural place.

Layout: How a comic or page is designed.

Manga: A style of Japanese comic books and graphic novels.

Marionette: A puppet worked from above by strings attached to its limbs.

Neutral: Not comfortable or uncomfortable.

Norms: Rules that everyone in the class agrees to adhere to.

Panel: An individual frame, or single drawing, in the multiple-panel sequence of a comic strip or comic book.

Portrait: A work of art that represents a human or animal.

Resolution: An agreed-upon solution for a conflict.

Self-Compassion: Extending compassion to oneself in instances of suffering.

Setting: The place or type of surroundings where something is positioned or where an event takes place.

Shadow Puppets: Figures that are placed between a light and a screen. Moving them creates the illusion of moving images on the screen. Shadow puppets have historical significance in China, Africa, and Europe. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_play)

Shape: Area in two-dimensional space defined by its edges. Examples include square, rectangle, rhombus, circle.

Sketch: A rough or unfinished drawing or painting, often made to assist in making a more finished picture.

Storyboard: A sequence of drawings, typically with some directions and dialogue, representing a plan for a comic or a movie.

Sugar Skull: Also known as a calavera, a representation of a human skull made from either sugar or clay, which is used in the Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead.

Symbol: A recognizable shape that stands for something else.

Talking Piece: An object used during an opening or closing circle to indicate whose turn it is to speak. The talking piece can be anything, but try using something that is unique and special that you can tell a brief story about. When a person has the talking piece, it is her chance to speak. When she does not have the talking piece, it is her chance to listen.

Thought Journal: Made during the first lesson of the first unit, thought journals may be used for written extensions throughout the units.

Topographical Map: A two-dimensional or three-dimensional map that shows elevation in an area.

Uncomfortable: Having negative emotions.

Unfinished Object Day (UFO Day): A single day at the end of a unit to complete unfinished work. Try including one day in the unit—usually the lesson before the last one, but it’s up to you—where students can revisit all their work and spend an entire work period just finishing what they have not yet finished. If they are done with everything, give students an opportunity to make a portfolio (usually out of parchment paper) to hold their work.

Unique: All one’s own.

Warm Colors: On a color wheel, yellow, red, and orange; contrast with cool colors.

Watercolor: Artists’ paint made with a water-soluble binder.

“Would you rather” question: A simple question that involves asking a student which of two options she would prefer. Used during circles

SEE / THINK / WONDER

A routine for exploring works of art and other interesting things

- What do you see?
- What do you think about that?
- What does it make you wonder?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry.

Application: When and where can it be used?

Use this routine when you want students to think carefully about why something looks the way it does or is the way it is. Use the routine at the beginning of a new unit to motivate student interest or try it with an object that connects to a topic during the unit of study. Consider using the routine with an interesting object near the end of a unit to encourage students to further apply their new knowledge and ideas.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Ask students to make an observation about an object – it could be an artwork, image, artifact or topic – and follow up with what they think might be going on or what they think this observation might be. Encourage students to back up their interpretation with reasons. Ask students to think about what this makes them wonder about the object or topic.

The routine works best when a student responds by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., “*I see...*, *I think...*, *I wonder* “ However, you may find that students begin by using one stem at a time, and that you need to scaffold each response with a follow up question for the next stem.

The routine works well in a group discussion but in some cases you may want to ask students to try the routine individually on paper or in their heads before sharing out as a class. Student responses to the routine can be written down and recorded so that a class chart of observations, interpretations and wonderings are listed for all to see and return to during the course of study.

Name: _____

Date: _____

With Feeling Think Sheet

What did you do today?

What did you learn?

What questions do you still have?

Draw a picture of your work: