



Acting 1 & 2 (Introductory Acting)

Creating Warm-ups

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Learning Objective:

The student will explore warm-ups for the actor's vocal instrument.

Bell Ringer:

Have you ever been to a play or presentation where you could not hear the actor or presenter?

Why could you not hear them?

Besides adding a microphone, what are some things the actor or presenter could have done that would have helped them?

Lesson Steps:

In this lesson, we will focus on breathing.

As an actor, your voice is a crucial element in your performance. First, it must be heard by everyone in the audience; not only because some of your lines contain information necessary to their understanding of the plot, but also audiences justifiably become annoyed when they have to strain to hear an actor. Second, it must convey the kind of character you are playing. Third, it must convey what your character thinks and feels about the events that are taking place. Just as you train your body to gain strength, flexibility, and endurance, you can train your voice to gain these same qualities.

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Proper breathing is as essential for a stage voice as proper posture is for stage movement. For effective use of your voice as an actor, you need to learn diaphragmatic breathing. Your diaphragm is the connective muscle and tissue between your abdominal and chest cavities. In diaphragmatic breathing, your diaphragm contracts when you inhale, causing your abdomen to expand. This forces your rib cage to expand as well, enlarging the chest cavity. Air rushes in through your mouth or nose, down your windpipe, or trachea, and into your lungs. When you exhale, the process is reversed: your diaphragm expands and your abdomen and rib cage contract, forcing air out of your lungs.

Practice:

Let's do some exercises!!

1. Lie on the floor. Place a book on your stomach. Let your back widen as you relax in this position. Breathe deeply. The book should rise and fall as your abdomen moves in and out with the movement of your diaphragm.
2. Repeat the aforementioned exercise with some modifications:
 - a. Sit, putting your hands on your stomach instead of a book. You should be able to feel your hands move in and out if you are breathing from your diaphragm. Be sure to keep your shoulders level.
 - b. Now stand, keeping your hands on your stomach. You should experience the same results.

VOICE WARM-UPS

1. Pinch your face in toward the center – think of it shrinking together. Your eyes should be squeezed shut, your lips puckered, and your eyebrows pushed down. Hold for 3 counts.
2. Open up your face. Lift your eyebrows, open your eyes wide, drop your jaw and open your mouth. You should look like you are very surprised! Hold for 3 counts.
3. Repeat 1 and 2 several times.
4. Now stick your tongue out as far as you can. Roll it. Then flick it. Vocalize the syllable “la.” Find as many variations on that sound as you can make with your tongue. For example, you can make trills or rolls.
5. If you feel any stress or tension in your face, lightly massage your jaws, cheeks, and temples.

PROJECTION

If you use your normal conversational level of speaking onstage, no one will be able to hear you except your fellow actors. Actors need to project their voices. To project your voice is to use it in such a way that it fills the performing space so that every member of the audience can hear and understand you. Merely increasing the volume of your speaking voice may not be sufficient. Shouting is not projecting. You need to focus your voice to a particular spot and to speak clearly with sustained control. Diaphragmatic breathing is important to projection.

Let's do some exercises!!

1. Standing in a large space (basement or garage), visually choose a spot on the back wall. Get into a comfortable position, take a deep breath, and project just the vowels of your name to that spot on the wall. Then project your whole name.
2. Lift your arms over your head and try number 1, again. You should notice that your sound is louder because you have more air power. The increase comes when your ribs are expanded, making more room for air in your lungs. Your objective is to achieve this increase from a normal position through diaphragmatic breathing.
3. Standing in a large room or theatre space, choose a point midway between you and the back of the room. Using diaphragmatic breathing, project your voice to that point. Speak nursery rhymes, lines of poetry, or song lyrics that you may not know. After practicing several times, ask

a partner (someone at home!!!!) to sit in that spot and give you an evaluation of how well you are projecting.

Good job today! In the next lesson, we will focus on articulation and enunciation.