

How to Adapt 4 Improv Theater Games to Virtual Facilitation

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Tips for online facilitation of Improv games: (use all, some or none in each session).

1. Practice using the meeting platform as much as possible.
2. Give each participant a unique number before the session starts. This expedites putting people into groups when using randomization of numbers.
3. Have an activity ready for folks who arrive early, on time or filter in. Think of how you prepare your in-person meetings (games, puzzles, activities, tactile objects on the tables).
4. Very helpful to have dedicated people for the following tasks: a: Monitor chat room and collect questions. b: Tech support from someone who has experience with the platform and its idiosyncrasies c: Greeter/Host to welcome new/late arrivals and update them as necessary. Done through chat. This person can introduce you and into the session.
5. Consider choosing a demo volunteer for each activity (if needed) before the session so save time during the session. It's optional whether you play a practice round with the demo volunteer before the meeting.
6. You can still ask for volunteers for the demo. Pick the pre-selected one or another of your choosing.
7. Familiarize yourself with your platform's ability to use breakouts. Some platforms such as Zoom will randomize participants automatically, others have another procedure. Some, such as Skype, don't allow for breakouts.

Name of Game: **One Word at a Time**

Objective: Co-create a story that has never been told before.

Players: 2- 6

Time Needed: 2-3 minutes

Process: Players alternate adding 1 word at a time to the story.

Directions: First choose a title of a story that has never been told. Player 1 starts by saying a word. Player 2 add a second word with the understanding that the players are working toward making sentences. Any player can add punctuation words, (“period”, question mark”, exclamation point”) to indicate the end of a sentence. The punctuation mark DOES NOT constitute that player's turn as adding a word. Game continues until it reaches a natural conclusion or either player says “The End.”

Variations: Group of 3-5; After whole group debrief following the first round, send duos back to breakout to play another round. Debrief with whole group.

Hints: Title of story has no bearing on the game. Any title will work. Easiest way to start is for Player 1 to say “Once.” Then Player 2 adds “upon”, and so on. Don’t try to control story or judge whether it is going well or not.

Tips for Using in Online Meeting. Demo with the whole group, using one volunteer. Then send duos or triads to breakouts. Debrief with the whole group.

Name of Game: What Are You Doing?

Objective: To quickly respond to verbal cues without allowing physical cues to distract.

Players: Any number in duos

Time Needed: Untimed

Process/ Directions: Player 2 must differentiate what Player 1 is saying from what they are miming. Then Player 2 must mime what Player 1 **said**. Players then take turns using this process.

Player 1 begins by miming a physical activity while Player 2 asks observes the behavior. After a few seconds of observation, Player 2 asks Player 1, “What are you doing?” Player 1 answers with anything that is NOT what they are actually miming. For example, Player 1 mimes brushing their teeth. Player 2 asks, “What are you doing?” Player 1 answers, “Reading a book.” Player 2 immediately mimes book-reading by holding up their hands as if they were holding a book or perhaps, mimes turning pages. Player 1 asks, “what are you doing?” Player 2 answers anything but “reading a book.”

Round continues until either player mimes what was done rather than what was said; takes too long to respond; repeats an action that has already been offered or any other restrictions group decides on.

Hint: No need to think of a “best answer” when asked “what are you doing.” The fun is in watching players recreate the actions to be mimed.

Variations: Make it an elimination game so anyone who repeats, stumbles, or pauses too long is out, and another player takes his/her place.

Tips for Using in Online Meeting: Demo using one volunteer with whole group observing on mute. Then send duos to breakouts. Debrief with whole group. This is a way to add physicality to virtual meetings since miming is physical behavior. See if anyone actually stands up or moves around while miming. Use this as debrief inquiry about how we consciously or unconsciously set our boundaries.

Give each player a number. This makes it easy for players to know the order.

Name of Game: **Limerick**

Objective: Players construct a limerick using a random topic suggestion

Players: 5

Time Needed: 5 minutes per round

Process: Limerick is a form of poetry, consisting of five-lines with a strict rhyme scheme (AABBA). Lines One, Two, and Five all rhyme with each other, and Lines Three and Four rhyme with each other. The first, second and fifth lines are usually longer than the third and fourth. Each player contributes one of the five lines in sequence and, depending on their position, with a specific rhyme structure.

Examples: Topic: “Man in the Moon.” Player1: There once was a man in the moon. P2: Whose birthday was on the 30th of June.” P3: “The man had no hair.” P4: “He’d never breathed air.” P5: “But, boy could he carry a tune.”

Directions: Players stand shoulder to shoulder facing the same direction. A topic is chosen, either at random or from a non-player. Player 1 speaks first line using the correct pattern. P2 adds line 2 which uses the same pattern as line 1 and also rhymes with it. P3 adds line 3 which is a different pattern. P4 adds line 4 which is the same pattern as line 3 and rhymes with it. P5 adds line 5 which uses the same pattern as lines 1 and 2 and also rhymes with them.

Hint: 1. Limericks need not be NSFW. 2) When rhyming with an earlier line, think of a rhyming word first, then complete the sentence.

Variations: 1. With fewer than 5 players, several players get to add lines of varying length. 2. Do round 2 allowing players to change their position if all agree.

Tips for Using in Online Meeting: 1. After explaining how a limerick is constructed, give an example by reciting one, using PowerPoint or screenshare, asking group for examples or showing a video, (EX: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-rN3DGMCSsE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-rN3DGMCSsE;);; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3OeU8GGusM>)

2. Send randomized groups of 5 to breakouts. Make sure each person in each breakout group knows where they are in the limerick order. Debrief with whole group after 1 or 2 rounds for each breakout group.

3. Debrief whole group including asking whether any position was easier or harder than another?

Name of Game: **Alphabet Game**

Objective: To engage in a conversation with each participant restricted to begin their part of the conversation with the letter following the one the previous speaker used to kick off their contribution.

Players: Any number in duos

Time Needed: 3-5 minutes

Process: Players hold a conversation in which the first letter of the first word spoken by each player in turn has to start with the letter following the letter of the other previous player. For example, Player 1 starts and says, "All history is exciting to me. Player 2 replies, "But you must have a favorite person or time frame." Player 1, "Civil War era is most interesting to me." Player 2, "Did I ever tell you I have a picture of a Union soldier?." And so on until letter "Z."

Directions: "The idea of the game is that the person who starts the conversation begins his part of the conversation with a word that begins with the letter A. When it's the other person turn, she begins her part of the conversation with a word that begins with the letter B. This isn't a word association game nor is it one word at a time. Only the first letter of the first word in our part of the conversation starts with the needed letter. The goal is to see if we can have a conversation and get to the end of the alphabet."

Variations: 1. Use 3-4 people, each coming into the conversation popcorn style but still using the next letter to start the conversation. 2. Start at "Z" and work backwards. 3. Pick a letter at random, start there and go all through the alphabet (if you start a "Q" you end with "P.")

OnLine Tips: Demo with a volunteer in front of whole group. Then send to groups of 3-5 to breakouts.