



## **improv basics**

Knowing and understanding basic improvisation rules are key to the success of individual scenes and overall growth in skill for young actors. As you begin exploring improv at camp, here is a list of 5 rules that you and your participants should be familiar with in order to create interesting and well developed improv sketches and scenes. You may choose to introduce these rules one-by-one and then test participant's knowledge in a competitive "game show" style activity, or you may integrate these rules as they naturally come up in the course of exploring the world of improv. Each rule is followed by a suggested mainstages' improv games that will help highlight that rule.

### **1) Don't Deny, say "Yes, and..."**

Denial is the number one reason most scenes end quickly or fail to flourish. Any time you refuse an offer made by your partner your scene will almost instantly come to a halt. Example: Participant A) "Hi, my name is Jim. Welcome to my store." Participant B) "This isn't a store, it's an airplane. And you're not Jim, you're an antelope."

*(mainstages games: co-counselors, field trip)*

### **2) Don't ask open-ended Questions**

Open-ended questions, like "Who are you?" "Where are we?" When you ask your partner an open-ended question, you put the burden of coming up with something "interesting" on your partner and you are forcing them to do more work than you are willing to do. Provide information to your partner as an alternative.

*(mainstages games: ask away, kitchen staff)*

### **3) You don't have to be funny.**

The very best kind of improv scene you can do is an "interesting" scene, not necessarily a "funny" one. Committing to a character with a voice, body and personality while telling a story with a beginning, middle and end, you will have a scene that is both interesting and funny.

*(mainstages games: make it happen, super bunk)*

### **4) You can look good if you make your partner look good.**

When you are in a scene, the better you make your partner look, the better the scene is going to be and the better you are going to look. Often, participants enter with some really character or idea they want to do. This is wonderful, but your partner probably has no idea what's cooking in your interesting mind, and so has no idea how to react. Set your partner up for success and you will be successful too.

*(mainstages games: helping hands, awkward position)*

### **5) Tell a story.**

Storytelling is probably the easiest rule to remember but the hardest one to do. The real magic of improv is when we see the participants take totally random suggestions and somehow "make it work". Remember: Beginning, Middle and End; Conflict, Character and Emotion will help deliver a well told story.

*(mainstages games: late for lineup, lights out)*