



The drama games and activities described here help to build students' confidence and ability to contribute effectively in a drama classroom. Drama teachers will be familiar with most of the games and activities but non-drama teachers and student peer teachers participating in the program will find them useful when introducing drama to their students.

Of particular significance for the *Cooling Conflicts* program are the two playbuilding techniques. Either or both can be used to assist students formulate the stories for their enhanced forum theatre pieces. The collaborative story development technique is exemplified in the *Cooling Conflicts* video.

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## Warm-up games

### Throw the ball

Students stand in a circle. One student throws a ball to another student and says their own name.

When students are familiar with each other's names, the thrower calls out another student's name and throws the ball to that student.

**Extension:** a second and third ball can be added to the game to increase the drama and the spontaneity.

**Discussion:** At the end of the game, ask students what they have learnt from this activity. There may be a useful discussion about the ball as a metaphor for communication and what happens when the ball is dropped.

A question could be asked: The intention of the activity is to learn each other's names, how well has the activity this succeeded?

### How do you feel?

Students stand in a circle and each student says their own name and mimes a feeling in sound and movement. (This may be how they feel at the present moment or an imaginary feeling)

The other students listen to the student's name and watch the student's feeling being mimed in sound and movement.

The other students repeat the student's name and repeat the mime, while naming the feeling.

The first student watches and listens to the other students.

**Discussion:** At the end of the game, ask students what they have learnt from the activity. There may be a useful discussion about how we communicate feelings through particular actions accompanied by particular sounds, i.e. in sound and movement. For example, sadness is often expressed by the action of crying accompanied by a sobbing sound. The feeling of excitement may be expressed by flinging the arms into the air accompanied by a joyful exclamation.

### I like mime

Students stand in a circle and each student says: "My name is (their own name) and I like (mimes something they like doing)".

The other students in the circle listen to the student's name and watch the student's mime.

The other students repeat the student's name and mirror the mime, while naming the activity.

The first student watches and listens to the other students.

**For example:** first student says "My name is Fred, and I like...(miming the activity of swimming)". Circle replies "Your name is Fred and you like swimming," - while they mime the action of swimming.

**Discussion:** At the end of the game, ask students what they have learnt from this activity. There may be a useful discussion about how it made students feel to hear their name and watch the circle repeat the activity they liked doing. There may be a sense of affirmation of each student by the other students in the circle.

### Sing your name

Students stand in a circle and each student sings their own name.

The other students listen and pay attention to the way they sing it.

The students repeat the student's name in the same way they heard it sung in response.

The first student watches and listens to the other students sing their name.

**Extension:** Student adds a gesture to their song and the circle repeats the gesture in their response.



## Warm-up games

### Same sequence game

Go around the class giving each student a number up to four in sequence. Ask the students to form their same groups – that is, all the number 1s together, 2s together, 3s together and 4s together.

In their same groups, tell the students to make four different shapes.

**Circle** – hold hands in a circle

**Star** – remain in a circle holding hands but turn their backs to the centre of the circle and stretch out, making the shape of a star

**Stretch** – hold hands in a straight line and stretch the line

**Scrum** – arms around each others shoulders in a huddle.

Now get the students to form their sequence groups, so that each group of four has numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 in it.

In their sequence groups, get the students to practice making the different shapes – circle, star, stretch and scrum.

Now have a competition, calling out different group types, either same or sequence and different shapes – circle, star, stretch or scrum. The winners each time are the students who get into the right type of group and form the right shape first.

Repeat the competition a few times and then ask the students to sit down in their same or sequence groups depending on the size of groups you wish to work with.

### Clumps

Ask the students to form groups of four to six.

Tell the groups to make a particular shape such as a pineapple, a horse, a jet ski, a tadpole etc.

Ask them to form another group which does not include anyone from their first group, or only one or two people depending on numbers.

Get them to form a different shape from the first group.

Repeat the exercise two or three times.

### Body parts

Ask the students to walk around the room and touch hands with someone else.

Repeat the exercise a couple of times, in turn touching elbows, knees, fingers, backs, etc. Each time the students must make contact with someone different.

Now tell the students to touch elbows in groups of three, with students they have not contacted so far.

Now tell them to touch hands or knees in groups of four with students they have not contacted so far.

Start work with them in their groups of four.



## Building focus

### Relaxation

Ask the students to lie on the floor and close their eyes.

Tell the students to take a deep breath in and as they breath out to relax their arms. Repeat the instruction for the arms and then twice each for the back and the legs.

Ask them to breathe in up to a count of five, hold the breath and then breathe out quietly. Count for them two or three times and then instruct them to continue the breathing for themselves.

### Active listening 3-2-1

Ask students in pairs to sit opposite each other and at some distance from other pairs. Ask one student to be A. The other is B.

Ask student A to tell the story of a conflict situation for about 3 minutes to student B, who practices active listening.

Student B re-tells the same story for 2 minutes in the first person as if it were their story.

Student A has 1 minute to give feedback on how that was to hear their story and any comments they wish to make about details.

Repeat sequence with B telling the story.

**Comment** It could be useful to have a discussion about active listening with the students before this activity begins. It is also important for students to correct details of their story that the listener heard differently in a non-judgemental way.

### Visualisation

Do the relaxation breathing first.

Ask the students to imagine they are lying on a warm beach. Tell them to sense the sun on their faces, to hear the sound of the water lapping on the shore and to see the sail of a boat out to sea and to feel the sand under their bodies.

Alternatively, suggest another peaceful physical context.

### Circle of attention

Ask the students to sit still, close their eyes and do the relaxation breathing.

Tell them to open their eyes and focus on a single spot on the floor or wall in front of them.

Instruct them to widen the focus to take in everything within a metre circle around the spot.

Now ask the students to widen their circle of attention to take in the whole room.

### Trust walks

Ask students to form pairs. One student has his or her eyes closed or is blind folded. The 'seeing' student leads the 'blind' student around the room.

**Extension 1** Go outside in the playground or a park where the 'seeing' student stops occasionally and gets the 'blind' students to touch objects.

**Extension 2** Create an obstacle path in the room using chairs or furniture. The 'seeing' student leads the 'blind' student around the obstacles.

**Discussion** Ask students how it felt to be 'blind' and dependent. Discuss how building trust in the group is important for drama improvisation work.



## Movement

### The big wind blows

One student stands in the centre and says “the big wind blows for everyone who...?”.

Everyone who fits that description changes chairs.

The student in the centre tries to get a chair while the other students change chairs

**For example** “the big wind blows for everyone who is wearing black.” Then everyone who is wearing black change chairs and the centre person has a chance to get a chair.

**Extension** The centre person calls a cyclone and everyone has to change chairs.

**Comment** This game works successfully in a variety of contexts. For younger students the game *Fruit Salad* is a simpler version. For drama students the game *Everyone who* may be a familiar variation of this game.

### Mirror images

In pairs the students sit facing each other and choose who is A and who is B.

A acts as the person and B as the mirror. A begins by moving only one hand whilst B mirrors this hand movement. A then begins to move both hands at the same time while B mirrors.

A and B swap roles but this time standing up. B begins by moving one hand, then both, then some whole body movements such as miming getting dressed or playing a sport. A mirrors all the actions.

Now B stands behind A whilst A moves around the room miming different movements. B attempts to shadow A's movements.

### Machines

Form groups of six to eight and give each member of the group a number. Number One stands in the centre of the group and begins to make a machine-like movement.

Number Two joins on to Number One physically and picks up the machine movement and extends it.

One by one the other members enter in turn and add onto the shape and movement of the machine until the entire group is part of it.

### Yes let's

The students stand in a circle and the leader calls out an instruction like “Let's raise our arms” and raises his/her arms.

The circle responds “Yes let's!” and follows the instruction.

The leader calls out another instruction and the circle responds appropriately with “Yes let's.”

**Extension** Once the leader has called out a number of instructions other members of the circle are encouraged to become the leaders.

**Comment** This game works well at all levels from primary to high school.

### Frozen sculptures

Working in pairs, one student freezes and is sculpted into different shapes by the partner. Swap.

Ask the pairs to create a series of images as freezes, giving them titles such as Trapped, The Pickpocket, Disco Dancers, The Rescue, The Dinosaur. Count down from five to one, then call Freeze and ask them to hold the frozen image for a few seconds.

Pairs create a five second piece of movement entitled *The Accident* which begins and ends with a freeze.





## Improvisations

### What are you doing?

Students stand in a circle and one goes into the centre and begins to mime an action, eg riding a bicycle.

A second student walks up to them and asks: "What are you doing?"

The first student responds with something they are not doing, like "I'm cleaning my teeth".

The second student begins to mime the action of cleaning his/her teeth.

The first student returns to the circle

A third student comes into the centre and asks the second student: "What are you doing?"

Again the student responds with something they are not doing and the third student does what they say.

**Comment** This game usually generates humour by the contrast of the difference between what is being done and what is being said.

### Creating scenes

Working in groups of four to five, the students form a circle and one member of the group steps into the centre of the circle and takes up a posture or mimes doing something.

A second member enters the circle and adds to the improvisation through movement and/or conversation. The other members of the group continue the process, adding to the scene until all members are involved.

### Space jump

As with creating a scene above, one member of a group enters the circle and starts the improvisation by saying or doing something.

This time when the second member of the group enters he or she tries to totally change the action and location of the improvisation. For example, the first student may lie down and mime sunbathing on the beach. The second student rushes in as a paramedic at a road accident and tries to revive the first student.

Each member enters in turn changing the action and location until all are involved.

They then exit in reverse order and as each one exits the improvisation reverts to the previous action and scene until the original student is left alone in the circle.

### Creating objects

Working in pairs, have one student mime the use of an object. The partner has to identify the object and then mime using it.

In pairs, one student sculpts an imaginary statue. The partner mimes making changes to the statue. The first student then mimes adding to the revised statue. The partner makes further changes to the enlarged statue. The partners describe to each other what they visualised as they sculpted and altered the statue.



## Characterisation

### Character walks and talks

Tell the students to walk around the room taking on the body shape and movement of different characters as you name them — a blind person, a very young child, a soldier, an elderly person, a shy person, a police person, someone vain etc.

When you call out 'talk', they must begin talking to the person nearest to them in the character they have created in movement.

### Bus stop

In groups one after another the students take on a character and walk up to a marked spot which is the bus stop and wait for the bus.

In character they must wait in the queue and talk to each other.

### Emotion memory

Tell the students to lie down and take them through the relaxation exercise.

Ask them to remember something really exciting that happened to them when they were younger, such as a party or Christmas or the Show.

Get them to re-enact the experience, trying to recapture the authentic excitement.

Repeat the relaxation and memory recall, this time remembering something frightening and ask them to improvise a situation where an adult character is in a frightening situation. The students enact the situation as the adult, trying to find the authentic emotion.



## Playbuilding - The headline technique

### Step 1

The teacher divides the class into groups of about six and asks each group to decide on a theme that is problematic and involves conflict that all the class is, to a degree, interested in. This is better done with speed (say give the group one minute only) and the teacher may prefer to give them a common theme. Each group is asked to appoint a 'narrator/scribe'.

### Step 2

Each group is to quickly identify a specific incident incorporating manifest conflict that encapsulates whatever is problematic about the theme and is newsworthy. This incident should be left as bald as possible. It is very important that the incident not be filled out and backgrounded more than a minimum.

The group has three tasks:

1. to write the first paragraph of a newspaper report about the incident – tabloid style if possible
2. to find a juicy headline that encapsulates the incident's significance
3. to prepare a 'news photo' (a freeze-frame or tableau) of a particularly sensational or problematic moment in the incident which illustrates the issue. This can include the entire group except the scribe.

Again, the teacher should give the group just enough time to do this and write their paragraph – no more than fifteen minutes.

### Step 3

The teacher focuses on one group at a time and stresses that in this step the audience is more important than the performers. The group is asked to set up and be prepared to hold their 'photo' for a long time while the scribe reads the headline and paragraph. The audience is to think of whatever questions this incident makes them want to ask. Usually it is a good idea to repeat the reading and display.

Then, with the group still frozen, and not able to respond, the audience asks all their questions, giving the scribe time to write them down. It may be helpful for the leader to paraphrase these and possibly to lead off the questioning.

The questions will usually start by being simple narrative details, such as 'Who is that person?', 'What is she doing?' etc. but should then start to dig deeper, 'When he goes home tonight, what will he tell his wife?', 'Why was the child by herself?' etc. Again, the leader may provide useful modelling.

The group may not reply, even if they have a reply. The teacher should explain that this is because the audience questions may lead to a more fruitful possibility than their original scenario.

The teacher does this for each group, so that all end up with a list of questions about their incident.

### Step 4

Each group is asked to identify a single question or a linked couple of questions that:

- interests them
- is clearly problematic, and
- when investigated, would shed light on the roots of this conflict.

They are instructed to identify a particular character who would be central to this question, but about whom they may know little. Knowing more about this character would assist in answering the question. This person will be the *protagonist*. The next two stages may be done in either order depending on the leader's purpose:

4a The teacher asks the group to identify a time, earlier in the context, when the conflict was either latent or emerging, then ask them to devise and rehearse an improvised scene which features the protagonist and is a key moment in escalating the conflict to the next stage.

4b The teacher instructs the group to background the protagonist very thoroughly; to avoid taking up judgmental positions and to try to create an authentic and consistent character. As soon as possible, the group members should *hot-seat* each other. (Members of the group take turns role-playing the character, while the others fire questions at him/her.) The leader may like to suspend the group-work after a while to let a volunteer from each group be *hot-seated* by another group.

### Step 5

This depends on the leader's purposes. The groups may show their scene and the original 'later' incident and then vote on which incident all the class

will now concentrate on, either to explore it further as process drama or as a playbuilt play for production. Alternatively, all of the group contexts can form a basis for forum theatre scenarios.





## Playbuilding - The collaborative story development technique

### Step 1 Forming groups

The teacher divides the class into groups of even numbers, if possible. Six or eight students is ideal. The teacher may wish to take care with the formation of these groups because they will be asked to collaboratively develop stories and workshop them into pieces of enhanced forum theatre. The forum pieces will then be presented to the other groups.

With groups of experienced drama students it is possible to start off with the pairs described in Step 2 below. Pairs, and then groups of four, can be brought together to share stories.

### Step 2 Sharing stories

Each group divides into pairs. Where the whole group has an uneven number, one group of three may be formed.

Each member of the pair takes a turn to describe a conflict that they are experiencing at present, or one they have experienced in the past, or one they have observed.

The teacher should give the pairs just enough time to share their stories (see the *Active Listening 3-2-1* above for a way of controlling the timing).

### Step 3 Retelling the stories

The teacher asks each pair:

1. to choose one of their two stories;
2. to choose who will retell the story of conflict to the other members of the whole group.

The designated story teller then retells the story to the whole group. Alternatively, two pairs can share their designated story and then choose one to retell to another two pairs. This is possible when there are whole groups of eight, or nine if there is one group of three.

### Step 4 Choosing one story

Each group is asked to identify a single question or a linked couple of questions that:

- interests them
- is clearly problematic, and
- has most dramatic potential.

### Step 5 Developing the story

The whole group then forms a circle. Each member is asked in turn to add something to the chosen story. The additions can be in a variety of forms:

- new information about particular characters;
- introduction of a new character;
- additional events involving the characters;
- information about the past that relates to the story.

### Step 6 Accepting the details of the final story

All members of the group need to arrive at a consensus as to which of the additions they will accept or reject. This step may require some time for negotiation and perhaps may also need the intervention of the teacher. In intervening, the teacher may wish to indicate which of the additions will help in creating an enhanced forum theatre piece and which additions may be difficult to present dramatically.

### Step 7 Preparing the enhanced forum theatre piece

The group needs to decide who will be the joker, or host. The joker is in charge of the performance, introducing the piece and the characters, providing narration where necessary, and inviting intervention from the audience, explaining how the interventions can take place.

The teacher should tell the groups that the following should be made as clear as possible in their performance and repeated during the performance:

- the dramatic context and setting;
- who is the protagonist;
- the relationships of all the characters seen or mentioned;
- the motives of the key characters;
- exactly what happened, what was spoken and what were the characters' reactions;
- how the conflict escalated from latent, through emerging, to manifest.

The teacher needs to insist on a time break between scenes – at least a day. But it is more effective to examine conflicts that have a longer break – a month, or even a year between stages.

### Step 8 The performance

Follow the steps described in *Enhanced forum theatre* on the website.