**Improv Vocabulary**

**Accepting**: Embracing the offers made by other performers in order to advance the scene.

**Advancing**: The process of moving the scene forwards.

**Beat**: A unit of action in a scene. A scene is made up of a series of beats.

**Black Out:** A blackout is when the lights in the theater are turned off and the stage is dark.Blackouts can be used by a director to indicate the end of a scene.

**Bulldozing:** Bulldozing is moving through a scene with attention to the other players` Offer `s and to push only your own ideas into the scene. Not a good thing.

**Conflict**: Many (but not all!) scenes are about a conflict of some sort. If there's no conflict, the scene may still be truthful but somewhat dull.

**Context**: The broader setting for the scene (political, social, etc).playing a scene.

**Denial/Denying:** rejecting your scene partner’s reality

**Endowing**: Assigning attributes to another performer's character.

**Focus**: The audience's attention should only be in one place at any given time; that place (or person) is the "focus" of the scene. If more than one thing is going on simultaneously, the focus is split. Experienced improvisors will smoothly share focus, less experienced improvisors often steal or reject focus.

**Gibberish**: A nonsense language.

**Give and Take:** Improvised dialog going back and fourth between the players. In scenes where players interrupt each other, ignore each other, does not show good Give and Take.

**Gossip**: Talking about things instead of doing them. Also, talking about things that are offstage or in the past or future.

**Handle**: The premise for a scene or game.

**Hedging**: Making small talk instead of engaging in action.

**Objective**: The thing that a character in a scene is trying to achieve.

**Offer**: Any dialog or action which advances the scene. Offers should be accepted.

**Physicalization**: Turning intent into action and movement.

**Plateau**: A period during which a scene is not advancing. Usually a bad thing.

**Platform**: The who, what and where of a scene. The success of a scene often depends on having a solid platform.

**Questions:** Questions are generally frowned upon in improv, though they are not always a bad thing. A question that gives no information and leaves the rest of the action/the story to be defined by the other players is a form of Wimping . But a question that implies a lot of information about how the story might continue can be quite useful - assuming of course, that all replies to questions are positive, in the sense of Accepting the information in the question.

**Setup**: Explaining the handle of the scene to the audience before the scene starts. Also involves doing an ask-for. The performer who does the setup usually shouldn't start off on stage in the scene.

Stage Picture: Can the audience see everyone in the scene? Are there levels? Are actors balanced on stage?

**Status**: A character's sense of self-worth. Many scenes are built around status transfers, in which one character's status drops while another's rises. Physical environments and objects also have status.

**Stepping out**: Breaking the reality of the scene.

**Upstaging:** blocking a scene mate or doing something that upstages the central focus or conflict of the scene.

**Waffling** Failing to make decisions. Talking about what you're going to do instead of doing it.

**Wanking** Doing something cute and silly that makes the audience laugh but doesn't do anything to advance the scene. Very annoying for the other improvisors.

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**Basic Improv Rules**

1. *The first rule of improvisation is to AGREE.*
2. *The second rule of improv is to not only say YES, say YES, AND*.
3. *The next rule is MAKE STATEMENTS.* (Neeson does great in this department)
4. *THERE ARE NO MISTAKES only OPPORTUNITIES.*

The brilliance of the scripted scene recalls late improv guru [Del Close](http://ioimprov.com/chicago/about/about)'s Eleven Commandments:

1. *You are all supporting actors.*
2. *Always check your impulses.*
3. *Never enter a scene unless you are NEEDED.*
4. *Save your fellow actor, don't worry about the piece.*
5. *Your prime responsibility is to support.*
6. *Work at the top of your brains at all times.*
7. *Never underestimate or condescend to your audience.*
8. *No jokes (unless it is tipped in front that it is a joke.)*
9. *Trust... trust your fellow actors to support you; trust them to come through if you lay something heavy on them; trust yourself.*
10. *Avoid judging what is going down except in terms of whether it needs help (either by entering or cutting), what can best follow, or how you can support it imaginatively if your support is called for.*
11. *LISTEN*

**History of Improv**

The earliest well documented use of improvisational theatre in Western history is found in the Atellan Farce of 391 BC. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, commedia dell'arte performers improvised based on a broad outline in the streets of Italy. In the 1890s, theatrical theorists and directors such as the Russian Konstantin Stanislavski and the French Jacques Copeau, founders of two major streams of acting theory, both heavily utilized improvisation in acting training and rehearsal.

**Definition of Improv**

Swedish actors performing in theatresports, a competitive form of improve/Improvisational theatre, often called improv or impro, is the form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted: created spontaneously by the performers. In its purest form, the dialogue, action, story, and characters are created collaboratively by the players as the improvisation unfolds in present time, without use of an already prepared, written script.