

APPENDIX A: GAMES & EXERCISES

BORING MCDONALD'S SCENE

Purpose: Demonstrates the importance of details in a scene.

Instructions: Have two mentors act out a short scene taking place at McDonalds. One person is the cashier and the other is the customer. Follow this script:

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

The CUSTOMER walks up to the CASHIER.

CUSTOMER
Can I have a cheeseburger?

CASHIER
Sure. That'll be \$1.50.

The customer pays the cashier. The cashier gives them a cheeseburger.

CASHIER
Here's your order.

CUSTOMER
Thanks.

The customer walks out.

After the scene is performed, ask the group what they thought of the scene and ask them how they can make the scene more interesting the next time around (more details!). Do one or two more performances of the scene, each time adding more and more details/story elements. By adding details slowly, your writers will be able to clearly see how each addition enriched the scene. Make sure the mentor actors stick to the script to show how writing these things into the story and action lines changes the delivery even if the dialogue stays the same.

2nd time: Give the customer and cashier a goal, motivation, and/or obstacle.

3rd time: Give them both character traits and descriptions.

Helpful Tips:

- Before adding details during the last two performances of the scene, take

suggestions from your writers. It's important for them to be a part of the ideation process. It will give them an opportunity to see a creative idea come to life, which is a vital part of our work!

- Pick fun and expressive mentors with acting experience. They're going to have to take direction on the spot.

COLOR THE WORD

Purpose: To encourage making individual creative choices in front of a group.

Instructions: Have the entire group sit in a circle. Ask the group to give suggestions for an interesting word, something they won't get bored of saying. Have each person in the circle say the word with no inflection or expression, one at a time, to the person next to them while making eye contact. Next, the game leader should say the word while expressing a specific emotion, everyone else should say the word while mimicking the emotion and expression of the leader, one at a time, to the person next to them. For the third and final round, pass the word around the circle (just as before) but encourage each person to color the word any way they want by using an emotion of their own choosing.

[ALTERNATIVE] Instead of an emotion, you can use a specific inflection or hand gesture with the word to make it fun and different from the first round. Then, in the third round, encourage each person to try their own inflection or hand gesture.

After the game is done, ask the group which was their favorite round and why. Oftentimes, the group enjoys the last round the best because they were able to make their own creative choices and see a variety of expressions from their peers. You can connect the game to the program by letting your writers know that this program is an opportunity for them to do just that, to make and share creative ideas/choices, and celebrate the value of unique storytelling.

Helpful Tips:

- If you notice that the group is getting tired of saying the same word, pick a different word for each round. Every group is different so feel free to adjust things in order to make them work for your writers.
- Some Head Mentors like to have their writers say "I am a storyteller" instead of picking one word to pass around the circle. Enhancements intended to build the confidence of our writers are always welcome.
- Have the game leader be the first one to say the word each time—it keeps things consistent and helps the game run quickly and smoothly.

EMOTIONS GAME

Purpose: Help students brainstorm dialogue that might arise from certain emotions.

Instructions: Ask one student or mentor to name an emotion. Then, ask another student to share a word, phrase, or sound they might make when they are feeling that emotion. If they are stuck, you can ask them what scenario might make them feel that emotion and what words or sound they might use in that situation. Finally, ask a third student or mentor to say the word / phrase or make the sound, and then act out a movement that they might make to embody that word / phrase / sound. Repeat this process 2-3 times with different people naming an emotion, naming a word / phrase / sound, and adding a movement.

I AM A TREE

Purpose: To encourage and practice brainstorming as a group (accepting and adding onto ideas).

Instructions: After gathering the group in a circle, ask for one volunteer to stand and say, I AM A TREE while taking on the physicality of a tree. The next volunteer adds on to the tree, something that would be in that world (i.g. a leaf falling from the tree, an acorn under the leaves, a squirrel eating a nut). The third volunteer adds a third element just like the one before. Each of these volunteers should state what they are and physicalize the object/animal they have become.

After the third person has added their element, ask the first two to leave. Have the “third person” restate what they are and ask for two more volunteers to add to the new image.

Helpful Tips:

- *If your writers catch on to the game and are ready for more, include story elements. Point out which story elements are in the tableau and ask for the next player to add a specific story element. Or, after a three person tableau has been completed, ask the writers questions that get them thinking about potential story elements (What is the goal of this character? Why does he/she want that? What's the setting?).*
- You can do a round of this game where you don't stop after the third idea and everyone in the group adds an idea. This can be great in groups where the same set of writers always volunteers as it forces everyone to contribute. It also encourages creativity as more and more ideas get taken in a scene.
- If you have a writer who is hesitant to share an idea with the group or perform in any way, they can always share their ideas with their mentor and have the mentor go up for them (and give the writer credit for the idea). Since many students are selected because they are shy/struggle with confidence, it's always a good idea to think of different kinds of ways students can participate in our games.

I LOVE

Purpose: To model a type of brainstorming process while providing time for mentors and writers to connect with each other.

Instructions: Have your writers and mentors pair up with each other for this game. First, the mentor and writer will each spend 60 seconds verbally listing all the things they love. The mentor should go first, modeling speaking off the cuff for their writer. During the writers round, have the mentors write down all of the things their writer loved. Then, the mentors will show the writer their list and work with them to pick the one thing that means the most to them. It's ok if they decide on another word connected to things they love. For example, if a writer brings up multiple family members in the game, they might decide the family is the most important thing to them.

Helpful Tips:

- Connect this game to the day by telling the group that they just went through a process that helped them brainstorm around an idea and select one main idea. During the writing process, they will need to come up with various ideas and then eventually decide on one idea. If this process worked for them, they can use it while writing.

THE LINE UP GAME

Purpose: Multimodally explores story structure with all the basic story elements.

Instructions: After the group conversation in Session Two about story elements, have the mentors line up holding the elements in a random order. Ask mentors to hold up their signs. Ask the writers if they are in the correct order, and if not, have one or two writers move them into the correct order while still holding their cards up. Ask different writers to arrange the elements into a classic story structure order. The structure/order we are looking for is: Setting, Character, Goal, Obstacles, Climax, Resolution, Lesson

(Writers may put character first and then setting. They may also place lesson last with resolution as the second to last element. That's okay!)

Helpful Tips:

- You can let the writers know that this is the classic story structure order, and their stories should have all these elements. If they want to change the order around a little bit, that's ok! Many movies break these "rules" and it's a natural artistic impulse to challenge conventions. Sometimes the lesson is something a character learns in the middle and it helps them overcome their last obstacle. Sometimes the protagonist realizes their goal after overcoming an obstacle. Let them know that we can be creative with how we present our elements but we should still try to think of them

during the brainstorming process. Before we start to break the “rules,” we have to learn them.

- *If the group needs more context to understand the order, ask for examples from stories they know like “Coco”, “Finding Nemo,” or “Zootopia” of the elements as you go through the order. You can also ask your mentors to do this with their writer during one-on-one time.*

NAME GAME

Purpose: To get to know the group.

Instructions: Have each writer pair up with the mentor next to them so they can work together to come up with an adjective and gesture. Ask everyone in pairs to think of an adjective (a descriptive word) that starts with the same first letter as their first name (or the same sound) and a gesture that fits their adjective. Go around the circle and, one at a time, have each person say their name and adjective while doing their gesture (e.g. “Hi, I’m Laughing Lexi”). After each person shares, the entire group should repeat their intro and gesture together (“Hi, Laughing Lexi”).

Helpful Tips:

- It’s okay if writers struggle a bit with this. Struggling a little can be part of the learning process and it’s okay if writers need help (that’s why we’re here).
- Another way you can do this is by having everyone create a “middle name” with a word, phrase, nickname, or superlative in between their first and last name. (“Hi I’m Netta ‘Angel Voice’ Most” “Hi Netta ‘Angel Voice’ Most!”)
- Some Head Mentors choose to play a different kind of name game, called **PASS THE NAME CLAP**. While standing in a circle, the Head Mentor begins by passing their name and a clap to the person on their left. They should say their name and clap at the same time as the person on their left (go as slow as needed the first time around). Once it goes around the circle, with each new person passing their name to the person on their left, then you can switch directions and see who has been paying attention.

OBSTACLE GAME:

Purpose: To physically demonstrate the importance of having obstacles in our scripts.

Instructions: Have one mentor play the protagonist on one side of the room and ask them to walk to the other side. Easy. Boring. Now, have the writers come up with an imaginary obstacle for them to get over, under, or through. Have another mentor physically represent that obstacle, and have the first mentor try to cross over to the chair again. See how much more interesting that is? Have the writers add two more obstacles (one at a time, played by two more mentors) and repeat.

Helpful Tips:

- Encourage writer ideas and opinions throughout the game.
 - Ask them if it was interesting to watch someone just walk over to the other side of the room (no!) and why. They might not remember the word obstacle, but we all know that the struggle is the most interesting part.
 - Have the writers come up with the obstacles that the mentors will perform. Challenge them to come up with obstacles that aren't easy to overcome. This will encourage them to pick strong obstacles in their scripts.
 - Ask the writers to come up with how the mentor will overcome the obstacle. This will encourage them to come up with creative solutions in their scripts.
- Make sure the mentor you have selected for this game is comfortable improvising, as they will have to figure out how to deal with multiple obstacles in front of the group.
- Do not let the writers participate in this demonstration, as this is an important lesson and they will retain it better if they watch than if they participate. If you have an eager group, allow them to be sound effects but encourage them to watch the mentor-protagonist struggle. As much as we love involving our writers, they learn these important technical concepts better if they are observing the action rather than participating.

Alternative:

- If you have an especially excitable class that may have trouble focusing on too much action in the middle of the circle, have one mentor play the protagonist and simply mime the obstacles.

PARENTHETICAL GAME

Purpose: To illustrate how and when to use specific instructions for the actors.

Instructions: After you have taught screenplay format by adapting the paragraph about Madison into screenplay format, you may excuse mentors and writers to break into pairs and play the parenthetical game.

- Have the mentor and writer act out the Madison scene with absolutely no emotion.
- Ask the writer if that was interesting (no!) and what would have made the scene more engaging to watch (some feeling/emotions).
- Mentors introduce and explain parentheticals: we use them to direct actors on how to read certain lines. They can be emotions, attitudes, or even silly accents. We place them in between parentheses, below the character name and above the dialogue.
- Come up with a list of potential parentheticals (ex. quietly, boldly, sarcastic, yelling).
- Perform the scene one or two more times using parentheticals decided on the page. Each time they do it, encourage picking parentheticals that will change the scene to show the impact they can have.
- Have mentors let the writers know that they don't need to use parentheticals all the

time, just when they want to make something especially clear to the actor or the audience.

TAGLINE OFF!

Purpose: Teach taglines in a fun and engaging way.

Instructions:

- This is a mentors vs. writers game, so to play, the mentors and writers line up across from each other.
- Tell writers that a tagline is a short “hook” to get people excited about their scripts by giving them a sneak peek into their story.
- Choose a word they need to shout before they get to answer (so they don’t just yell out the answer).
- Let them know that you will read a tagline from a famous movie and the first mentor or writer who says the word will get to answer. If the answer is right, that team gets a point. If it’s wrong, the first person on the other team who said the word gets a guess. If they miss it, neither team gets a point and you move onto the next tagline.
- The first team to get 5 points wins!

Helpful Tips:

- Remember, this game is meant to teach the writers about what a tagline is. Remind your mentors not to get too competitive.
- Pick movies that both writers and mentors would know (like superhero movies or Disney movies from the last 5 years).

Here are some PG tagline you could use:

- “There’s magic in all of us...almost all of us.” -Encanto
- “Growing up is a beast.” - Turning Red
- “Sit. Stay. Save the world.” -DC League of Super Pets
- “Meet the little voices inside your head.” – Inside Out
- “There are 3.76 trillion fish in the sea. They’re looking for one.” – Finding Nemo
- “A long time ago in a galaxy far far away...” – Star Wars

TAGLINE WORD WEB

Purpose: To brainstorm titles and taglines.

Instructions: In the group, after the Boring McDonald’s Scene, talk about how details and story elements feed into the tone and themes of a movie or script. Ask the writers to list words or ideas related to the theme of the Boring McDonald’s Scene and things the scene reminded them of. Using those, brainstorm some titles and taglines that could tease the McDonald’s scene the way it was with the details.

[word web from writer workbook]

Break everyone off into their mentor/writer pairs. Writers will now list words or ideas related to their own scripts or story ideas. Using those, they'll brainstorm some working titles and taglines for their script. Let the writers know they can revisit and change these next week.

THE WIND BLOWS

Purpose: To connect with the group.

Instructions: In the circle of chairs, have everyone stand up and remove one chair from the circle. One person stands in the middle and says something that the wind blows away that is true about themselves personally ("The wind blows anyone who loves chocolate"). Everyone in the circle who loves chocolate must switch places with someone else who also loves chocolate. Whoever is left out takes the middle place.

Helpful Tips:

- As the group becomes more comfortable with the game, you can encourage them to say more personal things like things they value and care about.
- You can connect the game to our work by pointing out that some of the things we shared are character traits. When it's time to come up with characters, encourage them to think about the kinds of things the characters in their stories would share in this game.

APPENDIX B: WARM UP GAMES

BIPPITY BIPPITY BOP

Purpose: To loosen up and energize.

Instructions: Stand in a circle. One person (start with the facilitator) stands in the middle. The person in the middle has the goal of switching spots with someone in the circle. They can do this one of two ways:

- The person in the middle can point to someone in the circle and say "bippity bippity bop!" If the person they're pointing to says "bop!" before the person in the middle can finish saying "bippity bippity bop!" then the person in the middle must find another person to switch with. If the person in the middle can say "bippity bippity bop!" before the person they point to can say "bop!" then the two must switch places.
- The person in the middle can point to someone in the circle and say only, "bop!" and if the person they point to responds, they must switch spots. If the person they point to can stay silent, the person in the middle must find someone else to switch spots with.
- When two people switch spots, the NEW person in the middle must try to switch

spots with another person.

Helpful Tips:

- At any point (perhaps if your group plays this weekly), you can add a new rule to the game, such as:
 - *Toaster: The person in the middle can point to someone and say “toaster!” and the person they point to must jump up and down saying “ding ding ding!” while the people on either side stick their arms around the person being pointed to. If any of those three fail to do so, the person in the middle switches spots with them.*
 - *Mermaid: The person in the middle can point to someone and say “mermaid!” and the person they point to must sing a song while the people on either side pretend to be waves splashing the person being pointed to. If any of those three fail to do so, the person in the middle switches spots with them.*
 - *Elephant: The person in the middle can point to someone and say “elephant!” and the person they point to must wave an arm like a trunk while the people on either side pretend to be the elephant ears of the person being pointed to. If any of those three fail to do so, the person in the middle switches spots with them.*

8'S

Purpose: Energy building.

Instructions: Everyone stands in a circle and identifies four things that are stressing them out and assigns one to each limb to shake off. One person starts the countdown with their right hand, shaking it 8 times while counting aloud (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). The group also shakes their right hand and counts along with them. Then do the same with the left hand, then right foot and left foot. Then it's back to the right hand for a seven count, then left hand, right foot, left foot, etc.

Helpful Tips:

- The game leader can encourage the group to get louder and faster with each round to build energy.

NASA SHAKE OUT

Purpose: To loosen up and energize.

Instructions: A Young Storytellers classic. This activity makes the space and time special, ultra-creative, and different from everywhere else they go during the day. Everyone stands in a circle and puts their hands in the air, stretches up, counts from 3, bends over, yells, and shakes their hands out.

Helpful Tips:

- Before doing the NASA Shake Out, introduce it by emphasizing its importance. The more serious you take the intro, the more fun the exercise. Something like—“This is a special activity developed by NASA for astronauts when their heads were too clogged with science and information. You all have been in school all morning and your brains are filled with smart stuff, so we use what NASA developed to clear out the brain fog and make room for fun and imagination”.
- If your group or you like how 8’s allows the group to identify and release a point of stress, do the same in this game. Ask everyone to think of one thing they would like to shake out before doing the shake out.
- After you have played this game once, ask for writers to assist the leader and eventually have them lead on their own.
- Some Head Mentors like to do the countdown in another language. Ask your writers if they speak another language and have them teach you how to do the countdown in their language of choice.

WHIP IT

Purpose: To get to know the group, learn names, and encourage teamwork by competing against the clock rather than each other.

Instructions: Ask everyone to say their names out loud. Then, break out a timer and have everyone go around the circle saying their names as quickly as possible. Play three rounds, trying to get faster each time.

Helpful Tips:

- To help group members remember other names, play the game where each person has to say the name of the person to the left or right of them.
- Alternate versions of the game can include trying to answer a different prompt as quickly as possible (e.g. favorite food, first language, favorite color, hometown, etc.).

ZIP ZAP ZOP

Purpose: To energize and focus as a group.

Instructions: Invite students to stand in a circle. Ask the group to repeat the words “zip, zap, zop” three or four times, all together. Tell everyone that you have a bolt of energy in my hands. To start the game, you will send the bolt out of energy out of your body to someone else in the circle by facing them, making eye contact, clapping one hand straight towards them with a strong forward motion (use hands, body, eyes, and voice to make contact across the circle), and saying “zip.”

Explain that the next person takes the energy and passes it immediately to someone else in the same way, EXCEPT they will say “zap.” That person passes it on to another participant

the same way with a “zop.” Then that next person passes it on to another participant the same way with a “zip” once more. The game continues and the “zip, zap, zop” sequence is repeated as the energy moves around the circle.

Helpful Tips:

- Encourage all players to use their whole body to send energy and to make eye contact.
- They can send the energy to whomever they want but the goal is to include all players. Practice the game and encourage mentors beforehand to send energy to students who may not have received it yet.
- If there is a mistake, encourage students to simply resume playing without discussion.
- The group challenge is to go very quickly and stay consistent in rhythm; if students struggle, pause the game, discuss strategy, and try again.