

M6 Youth Theatre

# Let's Play!

**Games and creative activities for theatre practitioners, youth workers, teachers, parents and anyone who likes to play.**



# Welcome

**Welcome to M6 Youth Theatre's Let's Play! We've searched through our session plans, notepads and brains to compile some games and exercises that we use on a regular basis with our groups of young people.**

As well as encouraging creativity and developing participant's drama and performance skills, all our work aims to develop social and personal skills. Our participants all agree to work together in accordance with our core values and the games and exercises we'd like to share with you enable us to do this successfully. Our core values are:

- Respect
- Team work
- Co-operation
- Inclusion
- Positive communication

The most important thing to us is that all our participants have a fun, positive experience whether they're with us for 10 sessions or 10 years!

The booklet contains games and exercises in the following categories:

1. Getting to know the group
2. Physical and Vocal Warm Up
3. Concentration and Passing Games
4. Improvisation
5. Cool Down

Thanks to all our friends who have taught us games over the years. We've listed some of them in the back so you can check out their organisations too!

**Have fun playing!**


*Caroline & Eleanor*

**Caroline Kennedy** Participatory Director

**Eleanor Samson** Participatory Projects Manager

# Useful things to know...

We call the people who run our groups **facilitators**, so you'll see that throughout the explanations. You might call them the leader, practitioner or teacher. We call the children and young people who take part in our sessions **participants**.

Games marked with  are suitable for social distancing. Spread your circle out, have partners standing at an appropriate distance, spread the audience out. Some of the moving around ones may only be suitable for those working in large spaces. For tongue twisters you may want to get all the participants facing away from each other. Make sure everyone uses their own chair throughout so you don't have any cleaning to do during the session – you could provide some coloured ribbons or name stickers so everyone can identify their own chair easily.

We have adapted these games to suit our groups but there are so many different ways to play the same game – these are not definitive, just how we play them. Please feel free to adapt them to suit your own group.

We're always watching for interesting characters or storylines that are created in the games. Although these are warm-ups, that doesn't mean to say that you can't use these as a starting point or find some gold that would be great in a performance. We've used a character that a participant created in Park Bench in a play and we created the whole storyline of a play from a frozen image game. Great ideas always come at the most unexpected times!

We've done our best to explain all the games in a way that should mean anyone can pick this up and play. But if there is anything that doesn't make sense or anything you'd rather have a video explanation of, please email [caroline@m6theatre.co.uk](mailto:caroline@m6theatre.co.uk) and we'll be happy to help!

# 1. Getting to know the group

## Good Week/Bad Week <sup>SD</sup>

At the start of each session we sit in a circle and everyone (including facilitators) takes a turn to tell the group one good thing about the week. They also have the opportunity to share one not so good thing if they'd like to - ensuring it is something that they are comfortable sharing and won't upset them to share. Depending on the group, we might stick with positive things only and sometimes we have to give a time limit!

## Name and Action <sup>SD</sup>

In a circle, everyone takes turns to say their name and do an action of something they like. Everyone else repeats what has been said. 'My name's Eleanor and I like drinking tea (action of drinking tea). Group: 'This is Eleanor and she likes drinking tea.' This game can also be done so that the person whose go it is says something that matches the first letter of their name e.g. 'I'm Eleanor and I like eggs.'

## Name, Name, Name <sup>SD</sup>

The participants are seated in a circle with a chair in the middle for one person. The person in the middle says the name of anyone in the group three times as fast as they can. If the person called out can say the name of the person in the middle just once before the three times are up they remain in the middle, if not the person called now sits in the middle.

## Name in Bucket <sup>SD</sup>

We learned this one from our friends at London Bubble through our Speech Bubbles programme which is aimed at Key Stage 1. These instructions come from their 'Drama at School' free downloadable resource. The link is in the back of this booklet.

This activity can be used to practise names and to build confidence speaking aloud. Tell the participants you have placed the bucket somewhere in the room and you need to collect it. This is an imaginary bucket so you can play around with the size and the weight when you pick it up and place it in the middle of the circle. Tell the participants that we are going to take it in turns to throw our names into the bucket. The facilitator models this first and then you go round the circle with each participant having a go. You can do this multiple times and each round the way you throw the name in the bucket can be changed. For example, quiet, loud, like a superhero, like a dog etc.

Once you have finished you can ask a participant to place the bucket somewhere in the room for next time and the other participants must remember as you can ask them to collect next time you play the game.

## Zombies

Everyone gets in a circle. The person in the middle is a zombie, they have to move slowly with their arms outstretched. To start, the facilitator calls someone's name for the zombie to move towards. The person whose name was called then needs to say someone else's name in the circle before the zombie gets to them and taps them on the shoulder. Once the new name is called the zombie then changes course and starts move towards that person. If the zombie gets to the person and taps them on the shoulder before they've called a name then they become the zombie.

## Name Arrange

When the group is familiar with each other's names, ask them to arrange themselves alphabetically by first name, WITHOUT TALKING! When they are done, or think they're done, get them to check by calling out their names. You could then ask them to get into a variety of shapes as a whole group, still without talking e.g. a circle/triangle/square/line.

This game could lead into QUEUES (below). The participants are allowed to talk this time.

## Queues

The facilitator calls out a variety of 'orders' for the group to organise themselves into as quickly as possible e.g. Line up from the oldest to youngest; in height from smallest to tallest; alphabetical by last name; house/flat number from lowest to highest, birthday date and month. The group have to quickly confer with each other to make sure they're in the right order. Go down the line and get everyone to say their number/date etc to make sure they've got it right.

## Same Difference <sup>SD</sup>

Split the group into pairs. Ask the pairs to find out two things they have in common and two things that are different. This can be anything from food they like, favourite colours, sports they play or watch, school subjects they enjoy, number of siblings etc. Set them a time limit so they know they have to chat quickly! Once the time is up, give each pair the opportunity to report back to the whole group what they've found out about each other.

## Anyone Who

The group is seated in a circle; one chair is missing and the person without a chair (usually the facilitator to start) goes in the centre of the circle. This person starts a sentence with 'Anyone who...' and then says something that is true about themselves e.g. 'Anyone who wears glasses.' If the statement is also true about other members of the group they must find a new chair as quickly as they can without bumping into anyone. Someone will always be left without a chair which means they are in the middle and it is their turn to say, 'Anyone who.....'. It is useful for the facilitator to give a few examples at the beginning e.g. anyone who likes chocolate, anyone who has ever been on a bus, anyone who has a brother.

## Two Truths and a Lie <sup>SD</sup>

Everyone sits in a circle. The facilitator asks each person in turn to say three things about themselves but two of the things must be true and one must be a lie. The rest of the group have to guess which one the lie is. Once the participant has given their three things then the facilitator can recap them all and ask for a show of hands of who thinks the first one is a lie etc. Then ask the participant to reveal the lie.



## 2. Physical and Vocal Warm Up Activities

### Splat<sup>SD</sup>

The person standing in the middle of the circle is the 'splatter'. The splatter randomly points to someone and shouts 'SPLAT!' The player pointed to must duck down; then the two players on either side of the 'ducker' must 'splat' each other by pointing to the other and saying 'SPLAT!' The last one to splat sits down, and the player ducking stands back up. When there are only two players left they stand back to back. The 'splatter' counts from 1, every time a number is said the remaining players take a step forward. At a random point while counting the 'splatter' shouts 'SPLAT!' the players have to turn around and 'splat' each other, the fastest is the winner.

### Splategories<sup>SD</sup>

Our facilitator Alice Bunker-Whitney taught us this when she joined M6. She now works at Writing on the Wall.

This is a development of Splat. This time the 'splatter' can interchange some 'splats' by saying a category e.g. type of chocolate bar/day of the week/mode of transport/musical instrument instead of saying 'SPLAT!', the players either side of the 'ducker' must now give an answer e.g. dairy milk/tuesday/car/clarinet. The quickest to answer (with a correct answer!) stays in the game.

### Beans

The participants move around the room with purpose, making sure not to bump into each other. The facilitator calls out different kinds of beans - each have an action and sometimes also a sound, which participants must do as quickly as possible.

**Broad bean** - stretch out wide

**String bean** - stretch up tall

**Baked bean** - curled up on the ground

**Beans on toast** - lie down on the floor stretched out wide

**Chilli bean** - pretend to be really cold and make shivering sounds

**Jelly bean** - wobble about and make wobble noises

**French bean** - do the Can Can whilst singing the tune

**3 bean salad** - get into groups of three

**Lifeboat bean** - group of 4 sitting down in a line singing row, row, row your boat

Between calling out each bean, get the group to return to walking around the room.

This is a good one to ask the group to make up some new ones. We've had Beyoncé bean and Mean bean and lots of other great ideas!

## Stage Left/Stage Right

This is the theatre version of Captain's Coming. First, go through the areas of the stage so everyone knows the right places to go – stage left (the actor's left), stage right (the actor's right), upstage (the back of the stage), downstage (the front of the stage), centre stage (the middle of the stage). When these are called, the participants must move as quickly as they can to these areas. Once they have got this, mix in the other instructions:

**Director** – the participants say 'lights, camera, action' (you can make up an action to go with this)

**Shakespeare** – the participants call out 'To be or not to be' in their best RP accent

**Dramatic Death** – the participants fall to the floor, dramatically dying

**Audience** – the participants sit in a row and give a round of applause

**Black Out** – the participants freeze and don't unfreeze until the facilitator says.....

**Lights Up** – you can trick them a bit by saying other instructions before you call lights up

We usually play this as a getting out game, so if a participant moves when they're supposed to be in Black Out or is slow in reacting or goes to the wrong place then they'd be out.

## Stop/Go/Jump/Clap <sup>SD</sup>

Participants find a space on their own and follow the simple instructions which the facilitator calls out:

**Go** – walk around the space

**Stop** – freeze as quickly as possible

**Clap** – clap once as a group all at the same time

**Jump** – jump once on the spot as a group so everyone lands at the same time

**Reach up** – stretch up and reach to the sky

**Reach down** – touch the floor

**Shout your name** – shout your own name as loud as you can

**Whisper your name** – whisper your own name as quietly as you can

Play the game this way until the participants feel really in sync with each other and everyone is focussed and listening. Then make it harder! The instructions now become the opposite so:

Go becomes Stop and Stop becomes Go

Clap becomes Jump and Jump becomes Clap

Reach up becomes Reach down and Reach down becomes Reach up

Shout your name becomes Whisper your name and Whisper your name becomes Shout your name

Start this section by saying 'This is the start of opposites.' When you're finished say 'This is the end of opposites' this way you won't get the opposite of all your instructions for the rest of the session!



## Grab the Flag

Split the group into 2 teams. Each team stands in a line, facing the opposite team. First pair facing each other from opposite teams is one, second pair is two, third are three etc. The facilitator stands at one end of the two lines in the centre, holding the 'flag' in their hand (you can use a scarf or jumper or a piece of material – whatever you have handy). The facilitator shouts out a number. Whoever's number is said, must run and grab the flag and get back to their place. However, once a player has touched the flag, their opposing player can tag them. If they are tagged before getting back to their place, the other team gets the point. If they make it back to their place without getting tagged, their team gets the point.

## Shake Out <sup>SD</sup>

The participants get into in a circle. They shake their right hands and count down with every shake from ten, fast and loud, then shake the left hand, then right leg, then left leg. Repeat but counting from nine, then eight etc. down to one.

## Poison Plant

Danielle Frame taught us this game while she was doing work experience with us from Edge Hill University. We are delighted that Danielle now works for M6 as a Youth Theatre Workshop Assistant.

One or two people sit on the floor in the middle of the room, they are the 'poison plant'. Everyone else circles around them, they are the inspectors. The facilitator says 'Inspectors inspect'. The inspectors move around the plant in a circle all in the same direction. They wag their finger towards the plant and have to be quite close – they are inspecting after all! When the facilitator shouts 'Poison!' the person or people who are the plant reach out and try and tag as many legs as they can. The inspectors can move back to avoid being tagged. If an inspector is tagged, they then become part of the plant.

Once there are fewer inspectors left, the facilitator can say 'inspectors inspect (something)...' and add something the remaining inspectors have to touch on the plant i.e. 'inspectors inspect an elbow/something blue/a shoelace.' The inspectors have to keep touching this thing on the plant until the facilitator shouts 'Poison!' this gives the plant more chance of catching inspectors. The game continues until there is only one inspector left who is the winner.

## Hum Singer

The facilitator whispers the title of a well-known song to each individual group member e.g. Happy Birthday, Twinkle Twinkle. There should be at least three or four participants assigned to each song. Everyone begins to move around the space humming or singing (no lyrics) the tune of their song. The goal is for each person to find the other people who are humming/singing the same song. Once all the groups have found each other they take turns to hum their tune all together and the other groups can guess what it is.

# Hula-Hula Venga-Venga <sup>SD</sup>

We learned this one on a training day with Graeae Theatre Company.

This is a call and response game. The aim is to create a fast, energetic rhythm within the room. The group gathers in a circle. The facilitator can call either the call or response, the group responds with the other half, constantly alternating to keep the group on their toes.

Call	Response
Two thigh slaps	One clap
High (in a high pitched voice)	Low (in a low pitched voice)
Hula Hula (while pretending to hula hoop)	Venga Venga (both hands move from left to right)
My hair is so soft and bouncy (think shampoo advert)	Innit though (your best 'cool' voice)
Taramasalata (index fingers moving side to side to the rhythm)	Hummus (miming taking a bite out a big sandwich)
Oh no he didn't (American accent)	Oh yes he did (American accent)
I'm looking for the man who shot my pa (walking into the middle of the circle, country and western style)	But darling, I love you (posh British accent, think black and white film)

This is a great game to give members of the group the opportunity to be the leader.

The group might also want to make up some of their own calls and responses. You can add them and keep the game growing each week!

**You can watch Eleanor demonstrating the call and responses [here](#)**

## Hey My Name is Joe

This is usually played in a circle so we can see each other being silly!

Hey, my name is Joe  
And I work in a button factory  
I got a wife and 3 kids  
One day, my boss says to me he says, "Joe, have you got a minute?"  
I said, "yeah"  
He said "Push this button with your right hand" (Push an imaginary button with your right hand)

Hey, my name is Joe  
And I work in a button factory  
I got a wife and 3 kids  
One day, my boss says to me he says, "Joe, have you got a minute?"  
I said, "yeah."  
He said "Push this button with your left hand." (Push imaginary buttons with right and left hands)

Hey, my name is Joe  
And I work in a button factory  
I got a wife and 3 kids  
One day, my boss says to me he says, "Joe, have you got a minute?"  
I said, "yeah."  
He said "Push this button with your right foot." (Push imaginary buttons with right hand, left hand, and right foot)

### **The verses continue as above with the following requests from the boss:**

"Push this button with your left foot." (Push imaginary buttons with right hand, left hand, right foot, and left foot)

"Push this button with your bum." (Push imaginary buttons with right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot, and bum)

"Push this button with your head." (Push imaginary buttons with right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot, bum, and head)

"Push this button with your tongue." (Push imaginary buttons with right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot, bum, head, and tongue)

Hey, my name is Joe  
And I work in a button factory  
I got a wife and 3 kids  
One day, my boss says to me he says, "Joe, have you got a minute?"  
I said, "NO!"

**You can watch Eleanor demonstrating the rhythm and actions [here](#)**

## John Kanaka

We learned this one from voice coach Beth Allen who came in to run some singing masterclasses with our Youth Theatre.

I heard, I heard the old man say,  
John Kanaka-naka tura ay,  
Today today's a holiday  
John Kanaka-naka tura ay,  
Tura yay, tura yay,  
John Kanaka-naka tura ay

### While you're singing John Kanaka.....

Start with one pair in the centre, everyone else sings in a circle around them. As they sing the song the pair stomp one foot when they say 'John' and slap their thighs when they say 'Kanaka-naka' on the rhythm of the word. They clap their hands when they sing 'Tura' and slap hands together when they sing 'ay'. Repeat these movements as the words are repeated in the song.

At the end of the first round the pair split and bring one person each into the circle and pair with the new person singing another round and so on until everyone is in a pair or a three.

Now everyone is in a pair or three start taking away words starting with 'John' so on that word just do the stomp. Then take away 'John' and 'Kanaka-naka', then 'John' and 'Kanaka-naka' and 'tura ay'. Then add them all back in for one final round!

You can watch Caroline singing and doing the actions [here](#)

## Building A Shed <sup>SD</sup>

The group gets into a circle. One person goes in the middle and mimes building a shed. A participant on the outside walks into the circle, and asks in their own chosen way e.g. quiet, angry, loud, American accent, singing voice etc. "What are you doing?"

The person in the middle adopts the same vocal tone/style and answers "I'm building a shed." The participant entering says "Can I help?" still in their chosen way. The person in the middle says "Yes." Both people now mime building a shed.

Then another participant enters and in a different way asks, "What are you doing?" both now reply adopting that manner, "We're building a shed." The person entering says "Can I help?" and they both reply "Yes." All three mime building the shed.

And so on until eventually whole group are all building the shed in what was once the middle of the circle.

## I Said Boom!

This is call and response. The facilitator calls out each line and then the group repeat back.

I said Boom (I said Boom)

I said Boom Chicka (I said Boom Chicka)

I said Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom (I said Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom)

Uh huh (Uh huh)

Oh yeah (Oh yeah)

One more time (One more time)

After 'one more time' the facilitator then calls out how they are going to say it next time e.g really quietly, really slowly, really fast, really loud.

## Slimy Snot

The group sit in a circle with their hands out to the side, palms facing up. As the song starts one person starts passing the imaginary slimy snot from their right hand to the person on their left's right hand and so on, this is done in time to the song. When the hands meet they should aim to make a gentle clap.

Down in the jungle where nobody goes,  
There's a big fat gorilla and he's picking his nose,  
And he picks it and he flicks it and he sees where it goes  
Who's gonna get that, who's gonna get that, who's gonna get that slimy snot?

[You can watch Caroline singing the tune here](#)

## Tongue Twisters <sup>SD</sup>

- Red Lorry, Yellow Lorry.
- She stood upon the balustraded balcony, inexplicably mimicking him hiccuping, whilst amicably welcoming him in.
- She sells seashells by the seashore,  
The shells she sells are seashells, I'm sure.  
So if she sells seashells on the seashore,  
Then I'm sure she sells seashore shells.
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- Unique New York, New York unique.
- Betty Botter bought some butter, but it made her batter bitter. So she bought some better butter and it made her batter better.

## 3. Concentration and Passing Games

### Riverbank <sup>SD</sup>

The participants all get in a line shoulder to shoulder. The facilitator explains that they are all ON the bank of a river. If they move forward one pace, they are IN the river. They can only move to 'IN the river or ON the bank' by moving one pace forward or back each time. The facilitator tries to trick the participants by saying ON the river, IN the bank. If a participant moves to the wrong instruction, then they're out. Once the participants are familiar with the instructions can be called really quickly!

### Bish Bash Bosh <sup>SD</sup>

The participants get into a circle. The facilitator stands in the middle and says 'Bish Bash' and then points at a participant who must respond by saying 'Bosh'. Go round the whole circle and make sure everyone has had a chance to practise this. The facilitator then introduces 'What are you doing?' If the facilitator points to a participant and says this, the participant must respond by saying they're doing an activity and mime an action of them doing it e.g. 'I'm baking a cake' while miming mixing something in a bowl. Let the participants know this could be ANYTHING. It doesn't have to be realistic, as long as they can mime it, they can do it e.g. I'm being chased by aliens, I'm juggling twelve chickens, I'm eating the world's hottest chilli!

Once the participants get quite fast at the game, the facilitator can introduce the rule that no activities can be repeated once they've been said. If someone repeats then that person could be out of the game.

### What's Changed? <sup>SD</sup>

The group sits in a circle. One person leaves the room after carefully observing the group's appearance for a few moments. The facilitator chooses three people in the circle to change one thing each about their appearance. They can make these as easy or as hard as they like. They could take off a jumper or roll up one sleeve or untie one shoe lace or swap something with another person in the group. The person outside is then invited back into the room and guesses what's changed. We usually give them 3 wrong guesses before any remaining changes are revealed.

You can also play this game in pairs with one of the pair turning their back and covering their eyes and the other making three changes. Once they have guessed all three, switch over.

## Servants and Masters

In a circle, servants sit on chairs with the master standing behind them. Masters have their hands behind their back with their eyes looking down at the servant's back. One master is left without servant; they must wink to get at a servant to get them to move over to their empty chair. All servants should keep their eyes on the master with the empty chair. If a servant attempts to move, their master can tap them (gently!) on the shoulder to stop them getting away. If they are tapped, the servant must go back and the master with the empty chair must wink at a different servant. If the servant manages to get away, the new master without a servant must wink to win back a servant and so on. Once everyone has had a few goes, switch over so the servants become the masters and the masters become the servants.

## Grandma's Footsteps with Extension

A participant is chosen to be Grandma. They stand at one end of the space with their back to the rest of the participants who are all in a line at the opposite end of the space. If the person who is Grandma has their back turned, the others can move towards them. If Grandma turns around, the others must freeze. If Grandma or the facilitator spot anyone moving, they are sent back to their start line. This continues until a participant reaches Grandma and gently taps them on the shoulder. That participant then becomes Grandma.

Once the participants are familiar with this version you can make it harder! Before being allowed to tap Grandma on the shoulder, participants need to complete a series of tasks, we usually do three. Tasks could include give someone a high-5, stand on one leg for 5 seconds, balance an object on your head, do three dance moves etc. This way when Grandma turns round the freezes are much more interesting and much harder! These tasks can be as silly as the group allows for and can change with each round. Once a task has been completed the participant doesn't need to do it again, even if they get sent back to the start line.

## Grab the Keys

This is the same as Grandma's Footsteps but now everyone is working as a team. There are a set of keys on a chair which are at Grandma's back when Grandma is turned away from the other participants. This time once the participants get to Grandma they must pick up the keys and get them back to the other side of the room without Grandma guessing who is holding the keys. Once the keys have been picked up and Grandma turns round, Grandma says the name of the person they think has the keys. If Grandma is correct, the keys go back on the chair and the game continues. If Grandma is incorrect, the game continues. The group should work together to cover up who is actually holding the keys by staying close together or all having their hands behind their back when Grandma turns round.

## Electricity <sup>SD</sup>

The group gathers in a circle. One person begins the game by doing an action with a sound which is sent around the circle; everyone takes a turn of doing this action. Once it reaches back to the person who started it, the person to their left then starts a new action to send round the circle. You can send two different actions round in the opposite directions.

## Pass the Mime <sup>SD</sup>

Get the participants in a line, one behind the other – depending on your group size you may want to split into two or three groups, but long rows do work well for this game. The person at the back of the row taps the person in front of them (or calls their name if you're socially distancing!) who turns around and watches them mime a simple series of actions. This might be a morning routine of brushing teeth, washing face, brushing hair or a mime of making a sandwich. They can only go through the mime once so the other person must watch closely. Once they have finished, the person who was watching turns round and taps the next person on the shoulder and shows them the mime they THINK they have just watched. This is repeated until the mime reaches the front of the line. Ask the person at the front of the line to show everyone the mime they watched and then ask the person at the back of the line to show everyone what they actually did – how do they compare?!

## Mirror Image <sup>SD</sup>

The participants get into pairs. Each pair labels one person A and the other B. They can either stand or sit opposite each other. Person A starts off by leading and B is the mirror image of all their actions. Encourage the participants to move fluidly. If there was an audience watching they shouldn't be able to tell who is leading. Swap over leader and mirror. Can they try moving around the room whilst mirroring? Or playing with the distance between partners?

## Count One, Two, Three <sup>SD</sup>

The group gets into pairs. The pair repeatedly count to three taking it in turns to say a number e.g.

**A:** 1

**B:** 2

**A:** 3

**B:** 1

**A:** 2

**B:** 3



Once they have had a few minutes trying this, ask them to replace the number 1 with a jump e.g.

**A:** Jump

**B:** 2

**A:** 3

**B:** Jump

**A:** 2

**B:** 3

Once they have had a few minutes trying this, ask them to replace the number 2 with a clap. eg

**A:** Jump

**B:** Clap

**A:** 3

**B:** Jump

**A:** Clap

**B:** 3

Then ask them to replace the number 3 with a spin.

You can choose any movements which will suit your group. You could also try replacing with a mix of movements and sounds. We like to check in with the group at the end and see who found the numbers the easiest and who found the movements easiest. This is just a great opportunity to have a chat about how all our brains work differently and some people will find being physical much easier than using speech and vice versa.

## Wink Murder <sup>SD</sup>

The group sits in a circle. One person is chosen to be the 'detective' and they leave the room. The facilitator selects a 'murderer' who kills people by secretly winking at them. When the detective returns they need to go into the middle of the circle and keep looking around to see if they can guess who the 'murderer' is before everyone dies. Encourage elaborate deaths!

We usually play it so the murderer then becomes the detective, but if you have a large group you may only have time for everyone to have a turn at being either the murderer or the detective.

## Master, Master Who Am I? <sup>SD</sup>

The participants are sat at one end of the room with a volunteer facing the wall at the other end. The facilitator quietly chooses one participant to say 'Master, Master who am I?' The participants must disguise their voice as much as they can by putting on an accent or silly voice. The volunteer calls out the name of who they think was saying it - they have three guesses. The person can repeat the sentence as many times as needed. The volunteer joins the rest of the participants and the person who was disguising their voice goes to the other end of the room to become the volunteer and so on.

## Big Chief Mime <sup>SD</sup>

Everyone sits in a circle. The facilitator simply says, 'copy me' and then demonstrates a range of movements for the participants to copy. It should feel and look as though everyone is moving as one. The transitions to the new movements should be smooth. This should give the participants a bank of movements to draw from in case they can't think of their own for the next part of the game. The facilitator then chooses a volunteer to be the 'guesser'. They are going to leave the room and when they come back in, they have three tries to see if they can guess who is leading the movements - aka Big Chief Mime. Once they have left the room the facilitator quietly chooses someone to be Big Chief Mime. Make sure they wave so everyone else knows who to copy. The group have to work together to make sure they don't give away who Big Chief Mime is so the facilitator might want to have a chat about some tactics to use! Get Big Chief Mime to start the movements with everyone else copying BEFORE the guesser is called back in. Once they have settled into the movements, call the guesser in. They must go into the middle of the circle and keep moving around trying to see who is leading the movements. They have three guesses.

## Wolf

This can be a long game. Our groups usually have around 15-20 participants and it can take 20 - 25 minutes, but the participants love it.

The groups sit in a circle. The facilitator asks everyone to close their eyes (no peaking) and says this script while walking round the outside of the circle. Keep walking until you have chosen the wolves and The Seer, it means no one will hear you walking to anyone in particular and guessing who you've chosen.

You are all villagers. You all work together, farm together and your children play together. Unfortunately there are wolves living secretly in your village and they have been eating villagers, tearing up your crops and scaring your children. I am going to tap up to three people on the back and those people are going to be the wolves (keep walking round and quietly tap three people on the back). Could those people AND ONLY those people I have just tapped open their eyes very quietly. Take a look at each other; you will be working together to try and win the game. Close your eyes. I am going to tap one more person on the back, that person is The Seer. They will get extra information throughout the game and they must use it wisely (tap one person while saying this). Could The Seer and ONLY The Seer open your eyes so that I know that you know you are The Seer. Thank you, close your eyes. Villagers you must work together to get rid of these wolves.

Good morning, everyone open your eyes. Unfortunately, in the middle of the night, the wolves ate another villager and I'm sorry to tell you, they ate Fred the postman (or say a member of your team or a celebrity they all love!) There are wolves living among you and you've got to get rid of them. Starting with (choose one person in the circle) 'Sam' start please 'I am not a wolf.' (everyone takes a turn going round the circle saying, 'I am not a wolf'. This is all they're allowed to say.) Someone's lying, you have to get rid of them. Who looks suspicious? Who looks like they might be trying to hide something? Point at that person. (Everyone points at someone they think might be a wolf, have a look around to see who has the most votes - it's a bit brutal but the groups love playing - you might have to ask for a show of hands e.g. how many people are voting for Morgan? How many people are voting for Hamad? etc. (once you know the person with the most votes....) Sorry 'Morgan' you have been voted out, please leave the circle. Say nothing. Everyone else close your eyes. Could the remaining wolf or wolves (always say both so the group don't know how many are left) please open their eyes. Choose one person you want to get rid of/eat (they all must silently agree on the same person - this might be someone who is onto them!) Thank you, close your eyes. Could The Seer please open their eyes. Point at someone you think might be a wolf. (If they point at someone who is a wolf) Yes, that person is a wolf, use that information wisely. (If they point at someone who isn't a wolf) No that person is not a wolf. (You always tell The Seer the truth. They don't want to reveal themselves as The Seer as the wolves will just get rid of them straight away. You may have to remind them of this.) Close your eyes.

Good morning, everyone open your eyes. Unfortunately in the middle of the night (build up the suspense) Myiesha was eaten (this is the person the wolves chose.) Myiesha please leave the circle - say nothing. There are still wolves among you. Starting with Ella, 'I am not a wolf'.....

Repeat the voting process etc. Even if The Seer is voted off, keep pretending they're in when everyone's eyes are closed and just make up whether they're guessing correctly or not. It adds to everyone's confusion.

Keep playing until either all the wolves are voted out meaning the villagers win OR there are only wolves left meaning they win. Only at the very end reveal the three wolves and The Seer. Once people are voted off or eaten, they don't have to close their eyes but they must remain silent and not give anything away.

## Sneaky Chairs

The group is seated in a circle. Each person in the circle is given a piece of paper with a number on it. One volunteer comes into the middle of the circle. They call out two numbers and those two people have to try to work out who has the other number and try to swap chairs before the person in the middle sees. The person in the middle is aiming to get to an empty chair before they are able to swap. The new person in the middle now calls two numbers.

## I Accuse

Ask the participants to position their chairs in a semi-circle. Start at one end and give everyone a number in order from one. Throughout the game the number stays with the chair, not the participant. Number one always starts. They stand up or raise their hand and say 'I accuse number X.' They can choose any number as long as it is within the number of people playing the game. The number they call must stand up or raise a hand and say 'I accuse number X'. If someone misses their number, hesitates, or doesn't stand up/raise their hand they are sent to the highest number chair and everyone else who had a higher number than their original chair moves down one chair and therefore one number. The object of the game is to try and get to chair number one.

Make the game as fast and furious as you can. You can start by saying the full sentence 'I accuse number 3', then shorten it to 'number 3', then to just '3' as a way to flummox the group! You can add in the no passing back rule OR no passing back unless it's to number one.

## Shuffle Chairs

Ask the participants to sit on chairs in random parts of the room, leaving only one seat spare. The facilitator must try to take this spare seat by shuffling towards it, slowly. The group works as a team to stop the facilitator getting to the seat by one person sitting on the empty chair every time they get near. This leaves a new chair free so the facilitator now shuffles towards that chair and so on until the facilitator has managed to sit down! Stress that there must be no running, only fast walking. The participants can then have turns at being the one to shuffle now they know how it works.

It can add to the fun of the game if the person 'on' also hums an annoying tune as they shuffle!

## I Went to a Party and I Danced Like This <sup>SD</sup>

Get the group in a circle. The first person says "I went to a party and I danced like this..." followed by a dance move of their choice. The next person does the same thing, but they do their own dance move and also the one of the person before them. The next person does their own dance move and then does the two before them and so on. This continues until it gets to the last person who has to remember all the dance moves of the entire group. Finally, ask everyone in the circle to remember all the moves and do them all together as fast as possible.

## Name-Ball-Sequence

The group get in a circle. The facilitator holds a soft ball and explains that you are going to create a sequence of passing the ball. Everyone must remember who they pass the ball to and who passes the ball to them. Everyone takes a turn to say the name of another person in the circle and then passes the ball to that person – everyone should only receive that ball once. Once you receive the ball you then say the name of someone else and throw the ball to them. This carries on until everyone has been passed the ball. The last person to receive the ball throws it back to the facilitator. Practise the sequence a few times so that everyone is familiar with it. Then take away saying the names, so the group passes the ball in silence trying to remember the sequence. Then get everyone to mix up the circle so they are next to someone different – can they still complete the sequence with everyone in new positions? You could then remove the ball and ask each person to move towards the person they originally threw to. When it is their turn they then take their space and the next person starts to move across the circle. How slowly/quickly can they do this? You could add some different styles of music at this stage and ask the participants to move in the style/tempo of that music.

We learned the next two games from Tom Hogan who is the Artistic Director at Proud and Loud Arts.

## Who Killed King John? <sup>SD</sup>

The participants get in a circle (we don't use chairs), the first person is King John. The person to their left is number one and so on round the circle. Think of this game like learning a short piece of script.

King John starts the game by saying to number one - 'Who killed King John?'

Number one replies by saying 'Not I'

King John: 'Then who killed King John?'

Number one: 'Number (picks number) seven killed King John.'

Number seven: 'Not I'

Number one: 'Then who killed King John?'

Number seven: 'Number twelve killed King John'

Number twelve: 'Not I'

Number seven: 'Then who killed King John?'

Number twelve: 'King John killed King John'

....and the game continues. It is important that everyone sticks to the script exactly. If someone replies too slowly or doesn't reply correctly, or adds in words to the script then they become the highest number and the other numbers change accordingly. Encourage the group to be very dramatic in their delivery. React to the accusations and use a really good RP accent! The aim of the game is to become King John.

## Samurai <sup>SD</sup>

The group gets into a circle. One person starts the game by making a Samurai inspired sound and doing an action (or it can be any sound and action). The rest of the group copies this noise and action. The person who initiated the game raises their hands above their head, sweeps their arms downwards so they're pointing at someone in the circle and says 'HU'. The person who is being pointed at lifts their arms upwards above their head, with their hands clasped together and says 'HA'. The two people either side of that person use their arms as if imaginary samurai swords, swing in towards them and say 'CHING'. The middle person then quickly passes the 'game' onto another person in the circle by lifting their hands above their head, sweeping their arms downwards so they're pointing at someone in the circle while saying 'HU'- then the game carries on. If someone is too slow in how they respond or they forget to do their action etc. they have to do a dramatic death and are out of the game. If two people start the game at the same time they are both out!

**You can watch Caroline explaining the game [here](#)**

## 4. Improvisation Exercises

### What Are You Doing?<sup>SD</sup>

In a circle. One person goes in the middle and does a mime of an action e.g. brushing their hair. The next person comes in and says, 'What are you doing?' The first person must say anything other than what they were actually doing! So they could say 'Washing the car.'

The second person then does a mime of what they just said (washing the car) and so it continues. The participants should think about how they can make it challenging for the next person and interesting for the audience e.g. eating spaghetti while riding a unicycle.

### Character Chaos

The Artists at Mind the Gap taught us this when we visited them with our co-production with Proud and Loud Arts, 'Shadow Girl'.

The group get into a circle. The facilitator suggests a line of dialogue e.g. 'today has been a nightmare'. The facilitator starts by walking across the circle saying that line as any character of their choosing e.g. a frazzled parent... a dog... an astronaut... a sassy teenager! Whoever the facilitator walks towards, that person then walks across the circle as another random character (saying the given line) towards another person and the game continues.

### Not a Pen

In the circle a pen is passed round. Each person says, 'This is not a pen, this is a ...' They mime what the pen could be (a moustache/a microphone/a hammer). The group guesses what they're miming.

### Pass the Gift<sup>SD</sup>

In a circle, an imaginary gift is passed around. Each person opens the gift and first shows on their face if it's something they like or not. They then begin to 'use' it by miming it. The rest of the group guesses what the gift is. That person then passes a gift to the person next to them and so on.

### 30 Second Object

Split the group into two teams. Give the teams 30 seconds to use their bodies as a group and create different images e.g. a toaster, a washing machine, an elephant, a castle. This exercise can be extended to create small scenes out of freeze frames, slowly adding dialogue e.g. '30 seconds to create an image of a birthday party.' This then can be extended into a story about a party, characters developed and a story created.

## Greetings

Ask the participants to start moving around the room. Ask them to greet each other, first just using eye contact, then using their whole face, then using their bodies – this might be a wave or a high five or a hand shake. Then ask the participants to greet each other in a more specific way. Possibilities are:

- greet each other like you greet a long-lost friend
- greet someone like you don't really trust them
- greet someone like they're a famous celebrity
- greet someone like you are a cowboy, an alien, royalty etc.

## 1234 Against 5678 <sup>SD</sup>

Ask the group to stand in two rows, facing one another. One row can only communicate with their partner (the person opposite them) by saying 1234, and the other side can only use 5678. Ask them to communicate like this acting in different situations. For example, love at first sight, or a pupil trying to explain to the teacher why they haven't done their homework. The only way they will be able to show the difference is by using volume, actions, intonation etc. They are only allowed to say their given numbers and nothing else!

## Park Bench <sup>SD</sup>

Set up three chairs in a row on your stage area (or use a bench if you have one). One member of the group sits on the 'bench'. This is a bench in a park and it is up to the rest of the group to find ways to get them off the bench without any physical contact. They need to think of clever ways to convince them with a situation or a really annoying character e.g. 'that bench has just been painted, you have paint all over yourself!' or they might be someone who is talking really loud on the phone or someone who won't stop singing. If it works the person has to get off and swap, they can't be stubborn, if it would make them move in real life they have to move.

## Objects in the Middle

The facilitator places several random props in the middle of the space and the group makes a circle around them. One at a time, participants enter the 'space' and create a short improvisation using one or more of the props. The challenge is that the prop can't be used as what it is designed to be e.g. an umbrella might become a giant telephone.



## Taxi <sup>SD</sup>

As a whole group, write down a list of characteristics, habits, emotions or attitudes. Two chairs are placed on stage and one participant takes a chair as if driving a car, they are the taxi driver. They pick up a customer played by another participant. The customer plays one of the strong character traits, habits or quirks from the list or chooses their own e.g. anger. The taxi driver improvises a scene, asking the customer where they're going and how their day has been etc. paying attention to the characteristic that the customer is playing. Once the taxi driver thinks they know the characteristic the customer is playing, they take it on and start playing the scene that way too. The facilitator can coach from the side, pointing out things or asking questions to help the taxi driver. Once you think the taxi driver has an idea of the characteristic, ask them to guess which characteristic/emotion the customer was playing.

## First Lines <sup>SD</sup>

Get the group into pairs. They label themselves A and B. The pairs are all going to improvise a short scene at the same time and they will all be given the same first line. Whoever starts with the first line (A or B) sets the tone for the scene and the other must go along with what they are doing. We usually count them down so everyone starts together, this way nobody feels like they're being watched so it takes the pressure off a bit. We usually use '3, 2, 1 action' and leave the pairs for a minute or two to improvise before calling 'Freeze!'. Ask if anyone wants to show back, spotlight on each pair who are happy to share. Start with As having the first line and then once some pairs have shared, let Bs have a turn at having the first line.

First line ideas:

This is the last time you will ever see me!

Don't look behind you!

Can you help me move this?

This is the best/worst day ever!

## Why Are You Late? <sup>SD</sup>

The participants sit in a line, pretending to type as if working in an office. They are 'the workers.' One participant is the 'strict boss'. Another participant leaves the room, they are the 'late employee'. When they're out of the room, the workers decide an elaborate reason why that person is late e.g. they fell on a banana skin and then got chased by a dog. The late employee enters the room and the strict boss says, 'why are you late?' The boss then turns round so their back is to the rest of the workers. The workers then quickly mime the reason why the employee was late. If the boss turns around and sees anyone moving (e.g. not typing) they are sacked and are no longer allowed to mime. The employee tries to decipher from the mimes why they're late and explain to the boss before everyone is caught moving. Once they get it right, or get close, you can choose a new boss and employee.

## Where Are We? <sup>SD</sup>

A volunteer in the group decides on a location e.g. a library, a beach, a gym, a zoo. They whisper their location to the facilitator, nobody else in the group should know the location. The volunteer stands in front of the rest of the group and mimes one repeated action that symbolises their chosen space e.g. they might be stacking or scanning books if in a library. If another member of the group thinks they know where that person is, they enter the stage and add another repeated action to the scene. They can't just copy what the other person is doing, their action must compliment and build the scene. Participants don't need to go in an any order or ask; as soon as they have an idea they just join in. The facilitator can be repeating 'where do you think they are?' and highlighting what it looks like people are doing as encouragement, without giving the location away! Also remind the group that they can only go on what they think they're seeing, it really doesn't matter (and is sometimes even more interesting) if their guess is different to the original person. Once everyone has added to the scene, the facilitator asks everyone to freeze. They can then comment on how interesting it looks all together and guess at what people look like they're doing. Then ask everyone to relax but stay where they are and ask each person 'where are you?'- everyone gives their answer. Finally ask the person who started and we see who's has guessed the same as the original idea.

## What's the Story? <sup>SD</sup>

Sit the participants like an audience facing your stage area. Ask for two volunteers to come and be the actors and direct them to stand in interesting positions e.g. one with their hands on their hips, the other looking away with their head down. Then ask the audience to take a good look at the actors then ask them 'What's the story?' You might need to delve a bit more and ask 'What do you think is happening in this scene? What is their relationship to each other?' Hopefully you'll get lots of different interesting ideas. Once there are no more ideas, recap as many as you can remember and ask the actors to choose between them which one they want to improvise - they don't tell the audience. Then invite the actors to improvise for about 30 seconds or so. Repeat with new actors and different positions - you can even let the participants have a turn of being the director instead of the facilitator and get them to position the two actors.

## Knock at my Door

One volunteer sits on the stage area and pretends it's their house. Other participants must go up and knock at their 'door' and try and persuade them to let them in by improvising a situation where the homeowner would be compelled to let them in. They have to be very persuasive. The homeowner can't be stubborn, if it feels like a valid reason, they have to let them in. You can switch the homeowner to someone new as often or as little as you like.

## TV Game <sup>SD</sup>

The participants split into small groups, minimum of two but it's good to have at least four if you can. They need to think of a TV programme that has the same number of words in the title as people in the group. Each person in the group is then allocated a word of the title, the other group(s) cannot overhear what is being said. The other group(s) then need to ask each person a random question e.g. what's your favourite food/ what did you do last night? They need to answer the question but **MUST** include their word in their answer. They can only give one sentence answers. The others have to try and work out the title of the TV programme once they have 'heard' all the words.

# 5. Cool Down Exercises

## Focus 1-10 <sup>SD</sup>

The participants stand silently in a circle with their eyes closed. They need to count to ten but without knowing who will say the next number, any repetition of numbers or speaking at the same time means going back to the beginning. Encourage patience and listening and not getting annoyed when the game has to restart.

## 3, 2, 1, Point! <sup>SD</sup>

The group sits in a circle. The facilitator gives instructions for everyone to 'Look Down.' Then says '3, 2, 1, point.' On the word 'point' everyone must look up and point directly at someone else in the circle. They have to commit to their point and are not allowed to change direction or point at the ceiling! If the person they are pointing at is also pointing at them, they are both out (at this point we'd ask them to put their chairs away and wait quietly. It avoids a rush of stacking chairs at the end of the session). Continue saying 'Look Down. 3, 2, 1, point' until you have a winner or winners.

## Guess a Minute <sup>SD</sup>

The participants spread out spaced around the room. They are asked to close their eyes and try and guess when a minute is up. When they think a minute has passed they should sit down or raise their hand – see who can get closest!

## I Went to a Drama Workshop... <sup>SD</sup>

The participants sit in a circle and take turns to complete the sentence with something they did in the session e.g. 'I went to a drama workshop and I pretended to be a toaster!' The first person says their sentence then the next person says their sentence and adds on what the person before them said e.g. 'I went to a drama workshop and I played splat and pretended to be a toaster' and so on round the circle.

## Leave Behind and Take Away <sup>SD</sup>

The participants sit in a circle and are asked to say one thing that they would like to leave behind from the workshop (e.g. nerves) and one they would like to take away (e.g. confidence/ friendship.)

## 3 Words <sup>SD</sup>

Each participant is invited to say 3 positive words to describe the drama workshop.

# With Thanks To.....

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**London Bubble**  
You can download their free resources here  
[https://www.londonbubble.org.uk/parent\\_project/speech-bubbles/](https://www.londonbubble.org.uk/parent_project/speech-bubbles/)

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