



Family Theatre Activity Series 1 for ages 8+

From warm up to performance, this series of activities will help your family get into character and get ready to stage a fun-filled reading of a Young Playwrights' winning elementary play.

1: Warming Up Your Body - Wet Dog

WHY DO WE WARM UP?

When we play a character, we use our bodies as well as our voices! Sometimes our bodies have tension in them because of other things we did during our day. Physical warm-ups help us loosen our muscles, take bigger breaths, and focus our imagination.

DIRECTIONS:

This exercise begins on a count of eight, and you count down from eight to one as a group as you shake your arms and legs one at a time. It goes like this:

Shake your right arm: "8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1!"

Shake your left arm: "8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1!"

Shake your right leg: "8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1!"

Shake your left leg: "8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1!"

After this first round, you drop the count to 7, then 6, then 5, then 4, then 3, then 2, then 1. After the last "1," you clap your hands and say, "Yes!" Here's what the last three rounds of the game look like with that ending:

Right arm: "3 – 2 – 1!"

Left arm: "3 – 2 – 1!"

Right leg: "3 – 2 – 1!"

Left leg: "3 – 2 – 1!"

Right arm: "2 – 1!"

Left arm: "2 – 1!"

Right leg: "2 – 1!"

Left leg: "2 – 1!"

"1 – 1 – 1 – 1" <<Clap>> "Yes!"



2: Warming Up Your Expressions - Just With Your...

WHY ARE OUR EXPRESSIONS IMPORTANT?

Now that our bodies are warm, we need to practice using them to show different emotions! As actors, we need to express what our character is feeling and show that to the audience through our body and voice.

DIRECTIONS:

Sit on a chair in neutral position. Neutral position means your legs are uncrossed, your feet are on the floor, you're sitting up straight, your arms are down at your sides, and your expression is blank. After each round of the game, you should "shake out" the emotion you were expressing and return to this neutral position before trying a new emotion.

Let's try our first emotion - **SURPRISE!** Try to show surprise in the following ways:

Show me that you're **SURPRISED** just with your eyes.

Show me that you're **SURPRISED** just with your eyes and face.

Show me that you're **SURPRISED** just with your eyes, face, and arms.

Show me that you're **SURPRISED** just with your eyes, face, arms, and upper body.

Now, stand up and show me that you're **SURPRISED** with your whole body.

Great job! Shake SURPRISE out of your body and return to neutral position. Now you're ready to try another emotion. Pick from the list below, or brainstorm what emotion to do next as a family.

Some emotions to try: Afraid, Relaxed, Silly, Jealous, Proud, Embarrassed, Annoyed, Excited, Loved, Sad, Confused



3: Moving in Character - Cross the Room

WHY ARE CHARACTER BODIES IMPORTANT?

It's almost showtime! Characters need to move through their day to achieve their goals just like we do. As actors, we use our bodies to give the audience clues about who our character is, where they are (setting), and what they are doing (action/plot).

DIRECTIONS:

Choose a room where you have plenty of space to move around - you can even go outside! Each time you cross the room (or yard), use your body to show a particular setting or character. Let's try it! Cross the room like you're a queen, king, or knight. How do you show your character by how you stand and walk? How do you show your character by how you move your arms and head? What action might a queen, king, or knight do as they move?

Fantastic work! You're ready to try acting out a setting. Cross the room like you're walking through a blizzard. How do you show this blizzard by how you stand and walk? How do you show this blizzard by how you move your arms and head? What action might a person be doing in a blizzard?

Try another character or setting. Pick from the list below, or brainstorm what character or setting to do next as a family.

Some characters to try: Alien, Ghost, Teacher, Lion, Soldier, Dragon, Detective, Pirate, Doctor, Wizard, Farmer, Fish

Some settings to try: Moon, Desert, Jungle, Playground, Library, Graveyard, Ocean, Zoo, Circus, Beach, Farm

4: Showtime - Host Your Own Play Reading!

Now that you're warmed up and in character, try acting out a play written by one of our young playwrights. Download the play on our website and have fun!

Don't forget to share photos or videos of your reading by tagging @PYPlaywrights on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook.