**EFL Improv Rules**

1) Don't Deny (A.K.A. Yes and…)

Denial is the number one reason most scenes go bad. Any time you refuse an Offer made by your partner your scene will almost instantly come to a grinding halt. Example: Player A) "Hi, my name is Jim. Welcome to my store." Player B) "This isn't a store, it's an airplane. And you're not Jim, you're an antelope."

2) Listen, listen, listen! And respond.

Listen, listen, listen! Listen to what your partner says, doesn’t say and the way he says it. Each word, gesture or pause provides tons of offers and information. Listening takes us outside of our focus on self and the worry about trying to think of something to say.

And Respond. Improv is about what is happening right now and the changes that occur. We need to respond to what is said, unsaid, done and undone by our partner. Building a scene is a joint process, and if we don’t respond, we make our partner’s efforts meaningless.

3) You don't have to be funny.

The hidden riddle of improv is that the harder you try not to be funny the funnier your scene is going to be. Why? Because the very best kind of improv scene you can do is an "interesting" scene, not necessarily a "funny" one.

4) You can look good if you make your partner look good.

When you are in a scene, the better you make your partner look the better the scene is going to be and, as a direct result, the better you are going to look.

5) There are no errors in improv.

As a teacher, our role in improv is the “guide on the side.” As long as everyone is following the rules, there are no errors. If the students are interrupted with error corrections, this activity will not work. Not only will the scene be disrupted, but the students will be hesitant to speak as they will be worrying too much about form and not the message.

**Improv Games and Activities**

**Greetings** (Any Level)

Description

All players start milling about the room. You then ask them to greet each other, perhaps just by shaking hands. Players just shake hands, move on, and greet the next player they meet. Then ask the players to greet each other in a more specific way. Possibilities are to greet:

* each other like you greet a long-lost friend
* someone you don`t really trust
* an ex-boyfriend/girlfriend
* someone you really hate
* someone you secretly love
* someone you met once but can’t remember their name
* someone that sold you a bad used car
* someone with bad breath

someone like you are a cowboy, a soldier, a nanny, a business person…

**What are you doing** (High beginner+)

Description

Everyone at one end of the room, form a long line. The first player of the line steps into the room and starts miming an activity. As soon as the activity is clear, player 2 approaches player 1 and asks `What are you doing`.

The first player answers something that has nothing to do with what he`s actually doing. E.g. if player 1 is cutting someone`s hair, when asked what he`s doing he might say "I`m reading the newspaper".

First player moves away, and the second player starts miming the activity stated by the previous player. A third player comes up to player 2, asks what he is doing, and so on.

Play until everyone has mimed something, and has answered the question.

**Presents** (Pre-intermediate+)

Description

Players stand in pairs and give each other presents. To give a present, you just open your arms/hands to indicate you`re holding something. Don`t try to think about what you`re holding, but give it to your companion.

Upon receiving the present, you give it a name, the first thing that comes to mind. You say something like `Oh, thanks, a little dead bird`. Explain to your partner why you are so happy to receive this present. You then promptly ignore your present and return something else to your companion.

This game works best if it`s played fast, so players really don`t have the time to preconceive. It`s also nice and positive, as everybody is always extremely happy with their presents, no matter what they are.

**Alphabet Game** (Intermediate+)

Description

This is a scene consisting of 26 lines of dialog. First the teacher or students need to set the scene or the situation. (i.e. We are friends sitting in a restaurant). The first line starts with a given letter (say `R`). The reply to that line must start with the following letter (an `S` in this case), and so on, until the whole alphabet has been covered starting back with the letter you started with. After `Z` comes `A`.

Players that hesitate, or use the wrong letter are out, and are replaced by another player. The replacement needs to take over the character of the player she replaces.

Notes

Urge players not to `stick` to the game - if you can`t think of a good sentence to advance the story, it`s better to just `die` than to screw up the story

**What Happens Next** (Intermediate+)

Description

One player in the middle, the others sit aside. Any person can give the middle player a task, which she performs, and then she asks `What happens next?’ Any player may suggest what needs to happen next, but the idea is for the group to construct a coherent story.

Notes

The player in the middle should only and strictly be doing what she`s told; it is up to the players at the side to construct the story.

**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Advice**

Description

3 players, form a line (or sit down) in the front of the class. The rest of the class take turns providing questions or problems for which they need advice. The 3 players provide good, bad, and really bad advice.

The teacher will choose who provides what advice, so everyone can have a chance at really offering bad advice. If the `bad advice` is really bad, then the ‘Ugly’ advice should be even worse.