

Make a “Scene”!

These improv games will get you and your friends laughing.

By Cheryl Solimini • Art by Mike Lowery

Something funny is going on. And it’s called improv, or improvisational comedy. That’s when two or more people (a “troupe”) act out a scene. Unlike stand-up comedians and actors, improvisers don’t memorize or practice lines. Everything is

made up on the spot. And anyone (yes, you!) can do it.

A scene often starts from a suggestion. Someone might name a place, a thing, or an emotion. One person starts with a sentence or an action. Another person joins in, then anyone can come and go in the scene.

Improv is like a conversation. You never know what the other person will say next. Don’t think twice, and don’t try too hard to be funny. The first thing that pops into your head can steer the story in a fun direction.

Jump in with these games suggested by teachers at the After School Laughter School at the ImprovBoston theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



ZIP ZAP ZOP!

This warm-up game helps you connect with your troupe. Standing in a circle, everyone says “Zip zap zop!” together. Then one player claps and points to another player while saying “Zip!” That person claps and points to someone else while saying “Zap!” That person passes it on with a “Zop!” Players repeat the sequence, faster and faster. Try to make eye contact each time you point. If anyone misses a *zop* or a *zap*, just start again from *zip*, until everyone has zip-zap-zopped at least once.

YES, LET’S!

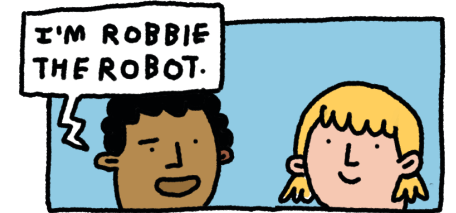
Someone calls out “Hey, everyone! Let’s . . .” and makes a suggestion for an activity, such as “. . . ride pogo sticks,” and pretends to do that. Everyone shouts “Yes, let’s!” and joins in pogo-sticking, until someone else says “Hey, everyone! Let’s . . .” and makes another suggestion. Play until everyone has started a different activity.

WORLD’S WORST

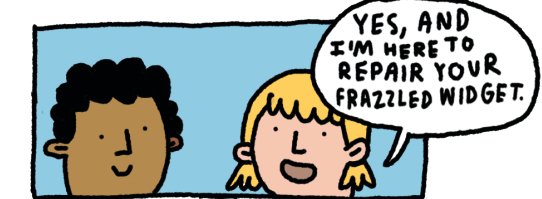
Someone names a job, and a player starts to act out the “world’s worst” version of that occupation. For example, if the job is dentist, the player might look into another person’s ear and say “Open wide!” Everyone takes a turn as the “bad” dentist, and the last player suggests another occupation.

Rules to Play By

Before starting, set guidelines that make everyone feel comfortable and respected. Otherwise, improv has very few rules, and here they are:



1. Say “yes”! If your friend says “I’m a robot” then, yes, he is a robot. Anyone’s idea is a good one, without judgment.



2. Add an “and.” Take your friend’s idea a step further. Add new information or characters.



3. Listen closely. A word or an action could spark an idea—for that moment or for later in the scene.



4. Trust your troupe—and yourself. There are no “mistakes” in improv, only “gifts.”

5. Have fun! 🎉