

THEATRE TERMS

- Actions:** What a character does to achieve his/her objective (action words).
- Acting area:** The area of the stage where the play is performed.
- Actor:** A person who performs in a play.
- Ad-lib:** To make up lines of dialogue (usually to make a scene more natural).
- Articulation:** Speaking clearly and distinctly—pronouncing all consonants and vowels.
- Audience:** The people who watch a play.
- Backstage:** Parts of the theater not seen by the audience including dressing rooms and green room.
- Blocking:** The movement and business of an actor on stage.
- Break character:** When an actor says or does anything that is not in keeping with the character.
- Character:** The imaginary person, thing or animal the actor is playing.
- Character Icons:** Symbols, props or costume pieces that help define a character.
- Character roles:** The “comic” characters in a play (usually supporting roles).
- Cheat out:** A position where the actor slightly turns his/her body toward the audience.
- Concentration:** Ability to focus attention on the task at hand.
- Conflict:** A problem in the play that must be resolved in some way.
- Control:** Ability to manipulate the actor’s tools as instructed and willed.
- Counter:** To adjust one’s place on stage in reaction to another actor’s movement.
- Cross (X):** To move from one place to another on stage.
- Cue:** A signal to begin action or dialogue.
- Cue pickups:** Speaking a line of dialogue (following another actor’s line) in a timely manner.
- Dialogue:** Spoken words between characters on stage.
- Director:** The person who instructs the actors on stage and is in charge of the overall artistic vision.
- Driving force:** What a character subconsciously and emotionally needs.
- Energy:** The fuel that drives the actor or actions on stage.
- Exposition (Backstory):** Aspects of the story and characters that have happened in the past that are disclosed to the audience during the play.
- Focus:** Directing the audiences’ attention to a particular place or character on stage.
- Gesture:** A movement that helps express an idea or feeling.
- Hand prop:** A prop that can be easily carried or held.
- Honest:** A believable “real” performance by an actor.
- Improvisation:** A scene performed with little or no rehearsal and no script.
- In the moment**
- Ingénue:** A young female character.
- Juvenile:** A young male character.
- Leading roles:** The character(s) who have the primary storyline in a play.
- Milk:** Making the most of a line or moment on stage.
- Mime:** A person who performs pantomime.
- Monologue:** A long segment of dialogue spoken by one character to another character or to the audience.

Motivation: Why a character wants to achieve an objective.

Objective: What a character wants to achieve.

Obstacles: Things (external or internal) that stand in the way of a character achieving an objective.

Pantomime: A performance that communicates an idea or action without speaking.

Projection: Controlling the loudness of the voice in order to be heard by the audience.

Playwright: The person who writes the play.

Read-through: Usually the first rehearsal at which the cast reads through the script.

Side: An excerpt from a play used at auditions in cold readings.

Soliloquy: A monologue spoken by a character that reveals his/her inner thoughts.

Stage directions: Instructions in the script indicating the movement, blocking, or stage business of the characters or other descriptions of the physical setting or atmosphere of the play.

Stage business: Activity on stage in which character(s) are involved; i.e., eating, playing a game, studying, etc.

Stakes: What a character stands to gain/lose if he/she does not achieve an objective.

Stealing focus: Diverting the audience's attention away from the intended place of focus.

Straight roles: The "serious" characters in a play (usually the leading roles).

Subtext: The meaning beneath the lines—what a character is thinking and feeling.

Supporting roles: Characters in a play who have a secondary storyline.

Tools of the actor: What an actor uses to create and communicate character (voice, body and imagination).

Top: To say one's line bigger and louder than another actor.

Typecast: Always being chosen for a similar role.

Vocal pitch: The highness or lowness of an actor's speech.

Vocal rate: The speed at which an actor speaks.