

# DRAMA CLUB STARTER PACK
















This pack should give you all the information you need to start running your own drama club, junior drama group, or youth theatre.

It is assumed that the members of your drama club are aged between 7 and 12. Any older or younger and you may need to adapt some of the material. It is also assumed that your drama club will meet weekly and that sessions will be 60 minutes long. Again, if this is not the case, some of the lesson plans will need to be adjusted.

For the purposes of simplicity and continuity I have referred to your young actors as ‘students’ throughout this pack. Those of you running the drama club will be referred to as ‘teachers’.

Most drama clubs are affiliated to a school but this pack also provides support and information for anyone going it alone in the wonderful world of youth drama.

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## TWELVE LESSON PLANS FOR YOUR FIRST TERM

However, if you don't have the time or confidence to prepare lesson plans yourself, Arts On The Move has created twelve fabulous **DRAMA CLUB LESSON PLANS** for the whole of your first term. These lessons have been created to introduce new students to you, each other, to drama and the creative environment.

It's assumed that you meet once a week, and that each session is 60 minutes long. For shorter sessions simply drop one of the games and/or activities. For longer sessions allow members more time on each activity, or repeat a game at the end of the session.

In early sessions I've included two warm-up games. Later sessions have just one. This is because students should be used to working together by, at least, Lesson 4 and shouldn't need additional team building activities.

You'll notice that I haven't included many 'name games', just one per session for the first three lessons. I'm not a big fan of students having to 'perform' when they've only just met. Trying to be imaginative or funny with a group of strangers puts pressure on us as adults, and young people are no different in that respect. I prefer groups to learn each other's names in a more organic way, just as teachers do, but have included a few non-threatening name games to help the process. You can always add more if you feel the need. This web page – [Drama Notebook – Drama Name Games](#) - provides some ideas and an internet search will give you more.

I've also tried to balance the physical games with quieter, concentration games. In the early lessons it's great to use a few lively icebreakers. These will encourage students to lose inhibitions and will help to create a cohesive group. For later lessons, and particularly when you're working towards a performance, it's better to select games that will serve the same purpose but in a calmer fashion. This will ensure that your students are focussed and ready to work at the beginning of your main activities. Lively games can then be used as a release at the end of the lesson. It's always good to send excited students home!

Warm-up activities in later lessons also become more linked to the drama and less about just playing a game. They are still fun and enjoyable but give the sessions more focus and link more clearly to the aim.

Final lessons can either be dedicated to producing a short performance of the poem Timothy Winters, or by using drama techniques to explore the poem. I have written a detailed Production Outline for you if you prefer to create a performance.

**If you need to remove any lessons due to shortened terms, or holidays, my suggestion would be to remove Lesson 2 and Lesson 4.**

**Equipment / Resources:** chairs for the circle; whistle (optional).

**WARM-UP**

**What Are You Doing?** Students sit in a circle. Teacher nominates a student to stand in the centre of the circle and begin to mime a simple activity, for example, brushing his or her teeth. The student sitting on his/her left enters the circle and asks, "What are you doing?" The first student passes on another mime by answering with anything EXCEPT what he/she is actually doing. For example, student one might say, "I'm planting flowers." As soon as student two hears the answer, he or she must begin to mime the given activity, i.e. to mime planting flowers. When the first student has passed on this new mime, he or she sits down again. The student sitting in third place now enters the circle and asks, "What are you doing?"

The student who is miming planting flowers must pass on a different action, for example, riding a horse. Student two then sits down, student three performs the mime, and student four moves into the centre of the circle to ask the question again. This process continues around the circle, with mimes being acted, new mimes being passed on, and the question "What are you doing?" being asked by each student entering the circle. Students must continue with their mimes until a new mime has been given. New students entering the circle must begin their mimes as soon as they are given them. Students should try to make the mimes as interesting, varied, and unusual as possible. Teacher should praise imaginative mimes. Continue with the exercise until everyone in the circle has taken a turn.

**MAIN ACTIVITY**

**Freeze Scenes:** Students work in groups of 5 or 6 people and, working together, create freezes (still images) which represent a scene from 'The Beach'. Teacher reminds students to use faces and bodies effectively and to think about positioning of characters, the use of space, and differing heights. Teacher allows up to 1 minute for students to discuss, plan and create their freeze. Teacher gives a countdown from ten and each group must present their freeze simultaneously. Teacher views all freezes, praising elements of each. Students show their freezes to each other, commenting on what they like about each freeze and what aspects they think are realistic and effective. This process is repeated with other scene titles: The Classroom; Family Time; Going Home; The Playground. Students must think carefully about who might be in the scene, what they might be doing, how they might feel about the other people in the scene, and how you can show this in a frozen moment.

**Freeze Scenes (2) Thought-tracking:** Groups should recreate and show 'The Playground' freeze in turn, one group a time. Each character in each freeze must say something – a word or a sentence – about how their character feels. They speak aloud in turn whilst keeping their position in the freeze. All students should applaud after each freeze has been shown. Teacher should praise thoughtful and expressive words or phrases used by students in character.

**ENDGAME**

**Touch and Freeze!:** Teacher selects two or three students to sit on the floor, cross-legged, with their hands in their laps. Other students place one of their fingers anywhere (within reason!) on all of the students sitting down. Once all fingers are placed, teacher pauses before shouting the command 'Touch and Freeze!' On this command the students touching have to try to dash away quickly whilst the students sitting down have to try to tap them wherever they can hit – and without moving from their spot. Anyone tapped by one of the 'sitters' joins those sitting down. Everyone puts one finger back on to the students sitting down and the game begins again. Keep going until you have a winner, or winners.

N.B. Students sitting down must always begin with their hands in their laps. Students touching must have fingers on actual parts of the body, not shoelaces or strands of hair! Teachers can pause for as long as they like before giving the command. Warn students not to crouch too low, as others could fall over them or tread on them.

**EVALUATION / REFLECTION**

Students sit facing the teacher. They respond to questions from the teacher:

*Did you enjoy the lesson? What did you enjoy the most? Why did you enjoy that?*

*What did you learn from this lesson? What do you think you did well?*

*What would you like to achieve in the next lesson?*

The teacher thanks the students for their responses and praises their efforts.

# COSTUMES, PROPS AND STAGING

## COSTUMES

These can sometimes eat up most of your budget for a production, but you have to learn to be smart and spend your money wisely.

For costumes, search in second hand stores, charity shops and discount stores. Buy something that you think might come in handy as soon as you see it – it won't be there when you go back for it!

Ask parents, school Governors and other friends of your organisation to check their wardrobes for any clothes they may want to get rid of. Shirts can be cut down to size, worn as smocks, or turned into collar-less shirts. Skirts can be worn long with large belts or cummerbunds. Trousers can be cut down and turned into knickerbockers by threading a bit of elastic through a seam just below the knees.

Buckles can be made by wrapping silver foil around cardboard shaped like a buckle and threaded onto a piece of elastic. Visit craft and fabric stores to find offcuts and end of roll pieces of material, then hand these to some kind and crafty parents to turn into wonderful costume items.

Pillow-cases and black refuse bags can be decorated with all manner of materials and motifs. Cut holes for the head and arms and wear with leggings for a quick and easy costume.

Get even more creative: dress your actors in black trousers or skirts combined with white T-shirts. Add one more item – a tie, a scarf, a bag, a belt – in another colour to represent their character. For example, in a production of *The Rise and Fall of Lord Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth could wear red gloves, Lord Macbeth could wear a red belt, King Duncan could wear a red cape (or a red crown), Banquo could wear red socks, or a red hat. The options are endless. The items could be discussed with cast members and chosen for their relevance to the characters.

Another option is for your actors to wear black skirts or trousers combined with white T-shirts, upon which have been written words that connect to the character. For example, in a production of *Hamlet*, the Murder Mystery, Hamlet could wear a T-shirt with the words *Revenge* or *Anger* written on it.






Gather a collection of tights in different colours. Cut the feet off then team them up with long shirts or T-shirts and decorate them to create all manner of magical, mythical and fantasy costumes. Cut a pair in half and stuff each leg with bubble wrap to create fantastic tails for animals – particularly effective for rats, as seen in the play *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Use the top of the leg, or the gusset, to create a mini balaclava onto which you can stick feathers, cotton wool balls, hay, or all manner of materials to make hats, headdresses or masks.

Don't be afraid to hire costumes. Many suppliers now offer special rates for schools and youth theatres. This option also saves you having to find somewhere to store costumes afterwards!

Similarly, see if other schools in your area have costumes they could lend you.

Keep your eyes open for local shops closing down and grab yourself a clothes rail or two. These will be invaluable on performance nights, and will save costumes from being ruined before the final curtain comes down!

### The main considerations when gathering costumes for your production are:

-  Can they see clearly – they may have to walk up steps, be on a stage or do a dance? Good vision is essential so make sure that young actors can see properly.
-  Is it too hot? School halls get very hot. Make sure you don't buy or make costumes that will have young actors fainting (it can happen!)
-  Make sure the costume is not a trip or a slip hazard. Long dresses are better to stop at the ankle; bare feet are safer than socks or tights.
-  Similarly, if your actors have to dance or be particularly physical, make sure that their costume allows them to do this. It's very distracting if they can't or if bits start falling off.
-  Is it flammable? Try to keep your actors safe by purchasing or making costumes that will not burn should the unthinkable happen.

Visit one of the [costume suppliers](#) in the Arts On The Move online [Directory](#).