

Gift Giving

Objective

We can all think of a conversation where the other person seemed to only be interested in getting their point across. Meaningful dialogue doesn't occur unless we build on one another's thoughts. The same is true in improv. This dynamic is referred to as the "Yes And" principle. "Yes And" refers to the idea that when improvising with others, we accept what they offer, rather than critique or change what they bring to the scene. This means building onto, rather than competing with, one another.

In this activity, students will improve collaboration, self-concept, and stage presence. Students will use context clues, gestures, and body language to understand what their peers are communicating.

Goals

Develops improv, choice making, imagination, originality, conceptualizing an artistic idea, collaboration, teamwork, active watching, articulating ideas, persuading, responding, investigating, turn-taking, deciphering meaning, pantomime, stage presence, critical thinking, contribution, and presenting

Directions

1. Gather in a circle.
2. Direct the first person to pantomime giving a gift to the student beside them.
3. The person receiving the gift uses context clues to decide what the gift is, and then replies, "Thank you! I've always wanted a [fill in the blank with a gift that corresponds with the size and weight of the imaginary item given]."

Modifications

Level Down

- ↓ **Visual Aid:** Provide the [Gift Giving choice board](#) for inspiration. Or, build your own choice board [using this template](#).
- ↓ **Slow Motion:** Perform the pantomime actions in slow motion. This encourages students to focus on their movements and gestures in more detail, enhancing the ability to convey and interpret meaning non-verbally.
- ↓ **Tactile Aid:** Add a tangible element by using a prop (See *This is Not a Ribbon*)
- ↓ **Verbal Clues:** Allow students to provide verbal clues along with their pantomime actions. When giving a gift, they can say a few words or phrases that hint at what the gift might be. This adds an additional layer of communication and comprehension.
- ↓ **Group Pantomime:** Divide the students into small groups. Each group will work together to pantomime giving and receiving gifts. This promotes collaboration and teamwork as students coordinate their actions and create cohesive pantomime scenes.

Level Up

- ↑ **Facial Expression Emphasis:** Instruct students to focus on conveying emotions and context through facial expressions. The explicit focus on facial expressions can be particularly beneficial in developing social awareness and emotional understanding, as it helps students observe and interpret non-verbal cues, which is an essential skill in social interactions.
- ↑ **Dialogue Exchange:** Encourage students to incorporate short dialogue between the person giving and receiving the gift.
- ↑ **Characterization:** Embody a specific character or role while giving the gift. Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to portray the character and their emotions.
- ↑ **Narrative Pantomime:** Each gift-giving interaction becomes a part of a larger narrative, and the students need to connect their gift to what has come before in order to create a cohesive story arc. This challenges storytelling abilities and encourages students to think about the progression of a scene.

Reflection

Assess understanding by giving each student a gift and watching their response.

Interdisciplinary Lenses

Science

Modify the game by focusing on nature. Direct students to choose items that relate to a specific habitat or ecosystem. For example:

- **Rainforest:** Tropical flowers, exotic birds, toucan, jar of rainwater
- **Desert:** Cactus, sled to ride a sand dune, pet lizard, tickets for a camel ride
- **Arctic Tundra:** Snowflakes, polar bear cub, icicles, arctic fox
- **Coral Reef:** Colorful coral, shells, baby sea turtle, clownfish, snorkeling mask
- **Grassland/Savanna:** Binoculars, safari tickets, tall grass, hat, baobab tree seeds
- **Freshwater Pond:** Frog, lily pads, dragonfly, fishing pole, bait
- **Mountain Range:** Hiking boots, climbing rope, mountain goat, backpack
- **Caves:** Stalactites, bat, flashlight, helmet, map, explorer's journal

Explore [creating a choice board](#) for inspiration.

Social Studies

Modify the game by focusing on events or eras. Direct students to choose items that relate to a specific geographic area or time period. For example:

- **The American Revolution:** the Declaration of Independence, musket, tricorn hat, Liberty Bell
- **Medieval Europe:** sword, suit of armor, castle key, dragon, illuminated manuscripts
- **Ancient Rome:** togas, Roman helmets, laurel wreaths, Roman coins
- **Industrial Revolution:** spinning wheel, tickets to ride a steam engine, factory tools, loose gear
- **Ancient Greece:** Greek pottery, olive wreaths, theatre masks, scrolls containing philosophical writings
- **Civil Rights Movement:** protest signs, "I Have a Dream" manuscript, Freedom Riders Pass
- **Renaissance:** Paintbrush, musical instrument like a lute, quill pen, sketch of a famous artwork
- **Ancient China:** silk garment, calligraphy brush, Chinese lantern, miniature replica of the Great Wall.

Explore [creating a choice board](#) for inspiration.

English Language Arts

Modify the game by focusing on elements of literature. This allows students to engage with the story through imagined objects and encourages an understanding of literary elements in a playful and interactive way. Identify a story you have read in class. Then, direct students to choose items that relate to a specific character, plot event, or setting. For example:

Character Focus:

- **The Three Little Pigs:** Straw hat, pig nose mask, wolf puppet
- **Goldilocks and the Three Bears:** Teddy bear, porridge bowl, golden lock of hair
- **The Wizard of Oz:** Ruby slippers, yellow brick, scarecrow's hat, Tin Man's heart
- **To Kill a Mockingbird:** Mockingbird figurine, lawyer's briefcase, small-town newspaper
- **Harry Potter:** Wand, Hogwarts acceptance letter, invisibility cloak
- **The Great Gatsby:** Champagne glass, green light symbol, Roaring Twenties-style hat

Plot Event Focus:

- **Little Red Riding Hood:** Basket of goodies, red cape, wolf's tail
- **The Gingerbread Man:** Gingerbread cookie, oven mitt, fox puppet
- **Romeo and Juliet:** Poison bottle, balcony silhouette, love letter
- **The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe:** Wardrobe, lamppost, Turkish delight, lion's mane
- **The Hunger Games:** Mockingjay pin, bow and arrow, dystopian map
- **The Odyssey:** Ship model, Cyclops eye, Greek hero's helmet

Setting Focus:

- **The Jungle Book:** Jungle foliage, animal footprint, jungle vine
- **The Little Mermaid:** Seashell, fish figurine, mermaid tail
- **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland:** Pocket watch, teacup, playing cards
- **1984:** Surveillance camera, newspeak dictionary, Big Brother poster, Room 101 symbol
- **The Lord of the Rings:** One Ring, Elven brooch, map of Middle-earth
- **Pride and Prejudice:** Fan, dance card, Regency-era letter

Explore [creating a choice board](#) for inspiration.

Mathematics

Modify the game by focusing on shapes or monetary concepts. Explore [creating a choice board](#) to help students visually identify patterns in each category. For example:

- **Straight Lines:** ruler, sidewalk, fence, ladder, pencil
- **Curved Lines:** protractor, wave, roller coaster, rainbow, bicycle handlebar
- **Circles:** pie, can, coaster, donut, frisbee, frying pan, clock
- **Triangles:** pizza slice, cake server, triangle ruler, pyramid, traffic cone ([Triangle choice board](#))
- **Quadrilaterals:** sticky notes, picture frame, playing card, book cover, gift card
- **Hexagons:** honeycomb, stop sign, snowflake, bolt head
- **Items you can buy with coins:** gumball, toy car, candy bar, temporary tattoo, bouncy ball
- **Items for \$5:** movie ticket, paperback book, small plant
- **Items for \$50:** board game, Bluetooth speaker, concert ticket, sports jersey
- **Measuring Units:** tape measure, weighing scale, thermometer, ruler, measuring cups
- **Time:** Alarm clock, hourglass, wristwatch, calendar, stopwatch
- **Symmetry:** Mirror, kaleidoscope, snowflake, butterfly, symmetrical pattern