

How To Prepare A Scene

What do you need to do beyond learning your lines to prepare a scene?

WHO IS YOUR CHARACTER?

What are the given circumstances and the background details?

In order to make a scene come to life, you have to know as much about your character as possible. If you're preparing a scene that comes from a larger work, you'll need to read the whole play to find out character details. If there are no additional details, that means you'll have to create them so that you are working with a three-dimensional character.

WHERE/WHEN IS YOUR CHARACTER?

What is the World of the Play?

Identify when your play takes place and where it takes place. Think about how the "When" and the "Where" can help with staging and character development. The World of the Play also refers to events and moments that happen outside the scene they're working on. What happened to these two characters leading up to your scene? Are their previous moments that could add subtext to the scene?

WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER DOING IN THE SCENE?

What is the conflict?

The "what" in a scene centres around the conflict. What is the conflict? What is the problem to be solved? What does each character want and how does the conflict get in the way of the want? Sometimes the conflict is a human, another character. Sometimes it's internal, we often get in our own way. Sometimes the conflict is an external force, like a locked door.

HOW DOES YOUR CHARACTER MOVE?

All action must be character driven!

The best way to bring the conflict to life is to physicalize it. Blocking is not about standing up or sitting down. It's that my character can do nothing else but sit in this moment. They have to sit. They have to stand and go to another character to convince them. They have to pace because they're so frustrated at not getting what they want. Character driven action is always going to be more interesting, both for the actor and the audience.

WHY IS YOUR CHARACTER HERE?

What do you want? What's the subtext? What are you trying to communicate?

Some of this will already have been discussed when you define the conflict, wants, obstacles, and tactics. This question is all about communication. Think not only about what you're saying, but why you're saying it. What are you trying to communicate? What's the subtext?