

# Improv Playhouse

## Introduction

Make it up, on the spot, using whatever's in the bag. Get kids thinking on their feet, working together, and expressing their most creative sides with an improv theater activity. Each 'troupe' gets a brown bag of random items—a couple hats, an old cell phone, a kitchen mitt, a magazine, some cups, a paper towel—to create a five-minute skit to perform for the rest of the group.

## Learning Objective

Kids will practice creative thinking and communication skills.

Kids will practice teamwork and giving positive feedback (as audience members).

## Activity:

- 1 Ask: Who has seen a show of sketch comedy? (There are several now geared towards kids on television.) How much of the skits do you think is written ahead of time? How much is made up on the spot? When quick skits are made up with a few props and little advanced time, it's called "improv," short for improvisational.
- 2 Explain: Today we are going to do some improv. We'll divide into groups and each group will have materials to create their own 5-minute skit. You'll have only 10 minutes to plan your skit, and then you'll perform for the group. Not everyone has to perform in the skit, but **everyone** needs to be a part of creating the skit.
- 3 Group kids in to 'troupes' of 5–7. (Decide ahead of time how you will divide up the groups. Will they self-select?)
- 4 Suggest different roles for members of each troupe—actors, narrator, prop person, timekeeper, director/cue-giver—to help kids select roles that fit their comfort levels and styles
- 5 Ask groups to name their troupe.
- 6 Give each group a bag of items. (Make the bags ahead of time, so kids are surprised when they open the bags. You can give each group the same items or mix it up.)
- 7 Before watching the performances, create some agreements for how the audience should behave, such as staying quiet during the skits, and clapping at the end.
- 8 Enjoy the improves!
- 9 Debrief: Discuss how much planning went into the improv. Did it turn out different than the troupes had planned? Was that OK? Did people get ideas from other troupes?

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## Twist!

Have kids do skits without talking.

## Content Boost!

Have kids 'sell' tickets to the show and/or host a refreshments stand.

## Project Extension!

Have groups develop their skits into written plays or stories, or create a video, or take pictures and make a slide show or illustrated booklet.

Research book, television show, and movie merchandising (i.e., school supplies, games, action figures, food, perfume, and clothing). What merchandise would they create to promote their own play or video?