

GAMES

FOR

MUSICAL
IMPROVISATION

	Physical	Favorites of AM	Song Formats	Rhyming Games	Exercises	Group and Circle Games	Warm Up Games		
123454321									
A Cappella Harmonies				*		*	*		
Bad Rap				*	*				
Ballad					*				
Band				*	*	*			
Beastie Boys				*					
Blues				*	*				
Busby Berkeley				*	*				
Charity Song				*					
Counterpoint Song				*					
Da Doo Ron Ron				*			*		
Drinking Song				*					
Emotion Zones		*							
Favorite Things				*	*	*			
Flock of Birds		*							
Gibberish Duets				*	*	*	*		
Harmony Duets				*	*				
Hoedown				*	*				
Hotspot				*	*	*	*		
Hush Little Baby				*	*	*			
Improvised Rounds				*		*			
Inspired By Rhymes With				*					

	Warm Up Games	Group and Circle Games	Exercises	Rhyming Games	Song Formats	Favorites of AM	Physical		
Love is Like	*		*	*					
Madrigal					*				
Moving and Emoting	*								
Musical 8 Things	*	*							
Opening Numbers					*				
Oscar Winner		*							
Pointing Song		*			*				
Rhyme Ball	*		*	*					
Scales	*								
Set ups			*	*					
Sing it			*						
Sing your day		*							
Sing your Name	*								
Sing when the music plays			*						
Split Scene Tagline Song					*				
Song Circle		*	*						
Tagline Song					*				
Titling			*						
What You Got							*		
Verse Chorus Song					*				

123454321-5-1

Good for: Scouring your brain, putting on your show face.

All sing 123454321 5 1 to the corresponding white notes on a piano
Then sing 234565432 6 2
Then 345676543 7 3. etc.

Try different languages, letters days of the week or names for added spice.

Tips:

Never show your fear!

You are perfect at this and never get anything wrong

How dare you even suggest I may have sung '3,7,frog,hhmr,sfro,3' and then laughed.

A Cappella Harmonies

Good for: Singing as an ensemble, freeing up the voice, deep listening, a spiritual experience!

Players stand in a circle with their eyes closed if comfortable

Participants are asked to take some breaths slowly together

Then participants start singing any note to 'aah'

At the end of a breath you can take your time and come in again

Every person should be singing at the same volume to create a group chord

It can sound horrible, or beautiful. Embrace both.

Tips:

Try adding some structure - consonant or rhythmic sounds, dynamic changes or even words

Encourage listening as much as singing

We have done this for up to one hour and in the dark! Have a listen to our 'singong' podcasts

Bad Rap

Good for: Quick thinking. Accepting failure. Group singing

A beat is started

A subject or suggestion is given

The first person starts by rapping a set up rhyme. This will be two lines that rhyme with each other.

For example if the subject is crime, the first person might sing.

I got mugged yesterday, could it get any worse

They took my money that was in my _____.

This is then set up for the next person to fill in the gap. However, this is bad rap. Rather than filling in the word we all expect, the next person must replace this with something either similar, or ridiculously inappropriate. Some examples for the above could be:

They took my money that was in my "WALLET" or "SHOE" or "ELEPHANT."

The key is NOT to use the word that will spring to mind (assuming the set up is good enough).

Once this has been done, the group sings

Bad rap, bad rap, bad rap bad rap bad rap.

Then the next person sets the next up and so on around the circle.

Tips:

Do your best not to pre-prepare your bad rap word

This is impossible to keep in time but failure is what we are here for

Try to keep your set ups simple so the next player can really play against it.

Ballad

Good for: Using audience suggestions. Singing choruses. Rhyming in song.

Usually a performance piece so up to 5 people on stage
An audience member is asked about their relationship
We usually find out a minimum of their names, where they first met and what hobbies they share
A short scene in the location of their first meeting starts
The music begins softly
The song is sung with the following structure:
VERSE 1-Player 1 (one half of the couple)
VERSE 2-Player 2 (the other half)
CHORUS - Player 3
VERSE 3 - Shared between Player 1 and 2
CHORUS - Everyone
Players 4 and 5 will be doing object and movement work as well as supporting the chorus

Tips:

Try to use all the information given by the audience
Try to avoid making up any new information as this can create a disconnect for the audience member
The couple's names are a great opportunity for setting up a rhyme in the verse
The chorus can be really grand and over-arching - "Their love is like the wind...."etc
The final verse is a great time to include their hobbies
Finish with a lovely stage picture and enjoy the rapturous applause!

Band

Good for: Singing in an ensemble. Vocal range. Vocal styles.

Performers are asked to think of an instrument in their heads
The musician or backing music starts (or this could be acapella)
Participants imitate their instrument.

Generally everyone will start to sing along together and then be picked out for some solos.

The instruments can be anything at all including percussion instruments, kazoos or didgeridoos.

Once everyone has had a go at doing a solo, the piece can be brought to a big finish.

It is quite fun to guess who was playing what afterwards, especially if it was quite obscure.

Tips:

Challenge yourself to pick a weird or obscure instrument
See what it does to your voice rather than trying an exact imitation
Join in with the group and hear the whole sound you are making

Beastie Boys

Good for: Quick rhyming. Singing as a group. A performance game.
Rapping but lite.

Players split into two teams and stand in a line facing each other.

Crew names can be decided

A name is given to rhyme with eg. "Bob"

Player 1a (Team A) tries to set up his team to complete his rhyme.

Player 1a - "I'm out of work, I lost my..."

Team A - "Job" - (hopefully)

Bit of music fill

Player 1b (Team B) "I like sweetcorn, I like corn on the..."

Team B - "Cob"

Bit of music fill

If a team fails to complete a rhyme, or a player clams up then the player giving the rhyme is out

The winning team is the one with 2 or more surviving players

Tips:

Remember that this is a game or a performance! People have to lose in order for it to ever end.

That said, you can over-act your departure from the game for effect.

Blues

Good for: Singing in a genre. Using the voice differently. Rhyming.
Using suggestions. Backing track [here](#)

This is loosely based on a 12 bar blues.

An audience member is asked for something they feel a bit down about.
Go for the light hearted stuff!

Blues music starts and each player sings a verse about the suggestion

A reliable structure is a rhyming couplet then 'I got theblues'

After all players have sung, the ensemble can all sing together, 'We got theblues'

Tips:

Try to set up a rhyming gag for yourself on the second line

Go for an innuendo or pun

Rather than sticking to structure, why not go off piste and really let rip

Busby Berkeley

Good for: Group mind, improvised choreography

Named after the famous MGM musicals choreographer

Form a symmetrical shape on stage and put on some high impact music.

Take a suggestion of a title for this piece

"Find a friend" - try to pair up with someone to imitate their moves.

Although symmetry should be preserved there is nothing to stop you all going round in a circle or forming an archway for people to dance down.

Crossing the stage simultaneously with a partner is a great effect.

Build up to a big group finish.

Tips:

Find the lines of symmetry

Support other people more than leading yourself

Charity Song

Good for: Singing structure in a group. Singing in different vocal styles.

Up to 8 Players stand in a semicircle around an imagined microphone hanging from the ceiling

A fake and ridiculous charity is discovered through suggestions

Player 1 speaks a heartfelt introduction over the music

Player 2 sings the first two lines of the verse1 (AA)

Player 3 sings the last two lines of the verse1 (BB)

Player 4 sings a simple and strident chorus

Player 5 sings the first two lines of verse 2

Player 6 sings the last two lines of verse 2

All sing chorus

Player 7 raps a verse on their own

All sing a cappella (without backing music) chorus

All sing chorus with Maria Carey-esque vocal wailing from Player 8

Key change and final chorus

Tips:

Pick a celebrity singer and try to be as much like them as possible

There is no limit to your commitment

One hand to your 'headphones' and lean into the mic

Counterpoint Song

Good for: That 'wow' moment mid musical

This really does work well as a tent-pole in the middle of a longform improvised musical. Think "One day more" from Les Mis or "Tonight" from West Side Story. Otherwise known as the "Non-pointing pointing song" for reasons that may become clear:

The protagonist or main character enters and sings a simple repeated line that sums up their desires

They are joined one by one (or in pairs) by other characters singing complimentary melodies but with their own words

When everyone is on stage, they all sing their lines together

All the singers converge on one line that sums up their combined state

End

Tips:

Can you give your focus to the newest singer on stage?

Try to find your own line that really sums up your character's journey up to that point

If you think you have the line that could apply to everyone, try to make that clear.

Da Doo Ron Ron

Good for: Practising rhyming, staying in time.

Stand in a circle or 'on stage'

Sing the original song one line per person with improvised bits

Person 1 - "I met him on a Monday and his name was Bill

All - "Da doo ron ron ron, da doo ron ron"

Person 2 - "He looked very sick, he was very ill"

All - "Da doo ron ron ron, da doo ron ron"

All - "Yeah"

Person 3 - "He took a pill"

All - "Yeah"

Person 4 - "It worked until"

All - "Yeah"

Person 5 - "He grew some gills"

All - "Da doo ron ron ron, da doo ron ron.

Person 6 - "I met her on a Tuesday and her name was Anne"

etc.

Tips:

See if you can stay in time with the song as a group

Try out some more interesting names for a rhyming challenge

Drinking Song

Good for: One word at a time. Group singing. - watch it here

A suggestion is taken.

Usually four players stand in a line

The song is sung one line each in a rambly kind of drunk fashion

You can go for one word each if you are feeling adventurous.

The lines are quick and in the rhyme scheme A-B-C-B

Tips:

This game is as much about getting it 'right' as it is getting it wrong and loving it

In a trusting team, try to trip each other up

Maybe go for an actually good song!

Emotion Zones

Good for: physical movement, emotional heightening, easy

Designate areas in the room / on stage that correspond with different emotions/emotional points of view, e.g. anger, sadness, joy, suspicion. Set up a scene, and as it happens, players move into the different zones and perform (acting or singing) with those emotions.

Favourite Things

Good for: Concentration. Keeping calm when everything has fallen apart.

All sing through the verse/chorus of "Favourite things" to familiarise players with the tune

Each line will be improvised by each player in turn

Player 1 thinks of a category and sings things in that category, eg Fruit

Player 1 - "Apples and lemons and strawberries and plums"

Player 2 recognises the category and sings more things, the last of which rhymes!

Player 2 - "Bananas and pears and peaches shaped like bums"

Player 3 Sets up the next player to rhyme with the category...

Player 3 - "Anyone can eat them, wimps or brutes"

Player 4 completes the rhyme...

Player 4 - "These are a few of my favourite fruits"

Player 5 sings something that goes wrong with that thing

Player 5 - "When the core rots"

Player 6 does the same

Player 6 - "When they're squishy"

Player 7 same (they could set up a bad word for Player 8 if they are super-charged)

Player 7 - "When they fall on your head"

Player 8 sings two lines and rhymes

Player 8 - "I simply remember my favourite fruits, and then I don't end up dead"

All congratulate themselves about whatever just happened

Tips:

You cannot control what other players are doing. They will get everything wrong. Try not to stare disapprovingly at them, rather just give them your focus and wait.

Some people's brains can do this, others just can't. We are all different thank goodness.

If you happen to be in a group where everybody can achieve this ridiculous exercise then congratulations, you win Improv.

Flock of Birds

Good for: Getting everyone moving. Leading and following. Using the body.

Players form a 'clump' (a loose group) on stage facing front

A title for the piece can be suggested

The music begins

Whoever is at the front is the 'dance captain'

Everyone else copies their movement

At any time the dance captain can turn on the spot to face a different direction

Everyone turns and whoever is now at the front is the new dance captain

Continue!

Tips:

How can you play with the mechanics of the format?

Try to be imaginative and get the group to go along with you

Just like a flock of birds there will be moments of chaos and moments of synchronicity

If you are stuck in the middle - burst through and take the lead

If you are always taking the lead try to melt into the middle

Gibberish Duets

Good for: Freeing up the voice. Listening and singing with someone else. Expressing emotion without worrying about lyrics

Performers stand in a circle.

The musician or backing music starts

Person 1, inspired by the music, turns to person 2 and starts to sing without using real words (gibberish)

When they are finished, person 2 'answers' with their own gibberish.

Then both participants will sing at the same time to each other in a gibberish duet.

At a suitable point in the music this duet will finish, and person 2 will turn to person 3 and begin again.

This process continues around the circle until the last person duets with the first as the finale.

Tips:

It is natural for the duets to be complimentary in style. However, vocally it can be nice to try and sing in a different range to the first (high or low) or use a different rhythmic pattern (short staccato notes as opposed to long notes). Each leads to its own magic moments when both voices come together.

Ideally each duet should be a miniature scene, telling a clear story of a relationship between two people.

Try to sing a little bit of back and forth in order to hear each other and get a feel for each other's characters before building to a crescendo and finishing the duet by singing together.

It really is more important to be expressive and connect to your partner than to sing well.

Harmony Duets

Good for: Listening and harmonising. Singing with different people and in different styles. Vocal range.

The musician or backing music starts a repetitive phrase or chord sequence

Person 1 sings a short tune (can be la-la-la) that 'goes with' the music

Person 1 repeats what they just sung while Person 2 joins in with a harmony line

Person 2 repeats what they just sung on their own

Person 2 repeats their line for a 3rd time while Person 3 joins in with a harmony line.

Person 3 repeats their line on their own etc.

The order goes 1, 1&2, 2, 2&3, 3, 3&4 etc.

Tips:

If you are not sure what harmony really is, just sing something that goes along with the music.

You could try following the shape of the other person's tune

You could deliberately sing something different in style that goes with the other tune

If you are really fancy try singing a third or sixth above or below at all times

Hoedown

Good for: Faster than thought rhyming. Keeping up with the music.
Embracing failure. Embracing failure. Embracing failure.

This is usually sung to a set tune. Backing track here (short intro) or here (long intro)

This exercise can be done one line at a time between four people, or a whole four-line verse each

A subject is taken from the audience

The rhyme structure is usually AABB and players often try to finish with a joke, innuendo or pun

When everyone is done the whole group can sing the final line together

Watch the 'Whose Line' crew performing the hoedown here

Tips:

When all the words come out in the wrong order, continue to smile, laugh and sing.

Try planning your entire verse, or just the rhymes at the end of each line

Set yourself up for a gag at the end

If all else fails, mime your own demise.

Hotspot

Good for: Group singing, performance piece, singing something amazing with other people.

Arrange the singers in rows facing the audience. Some sitting on the floor, some on chairs and some standing behind like a school photo

Suggest a broad subject (childhood, money, travel etc.)

The music starts

The conductor points at each singer in turn who sings a short repeating phrase. They will only sing this phrase when pointed at

Once all the phrases have been heard the conductor can bring in two or three or more at the same time.

Try to find interesting and contrasting combinations.

Eventually the conductor will bring everybody in.

Through the magic of group mind the participants will try to end up all singing just one of the phrases that was heard.

Tips:

Be prepared to ditch your idea if it is too similar to someone else's who has already sung

What would compliment the piece the most?

Sing something dumb - maybe just noises

Be prepared to try out a few other people's lines near the end before the group settles on one in particular

Hush Little Baby

Good for: Rhyming, thinking on the spot, Yes and. Backing Track

Sing Hush little baby improvising the words. eg:

Person 1 <think of something "Daddy" is going to buy you> - Daddy's going to buy you a piece of string

Person 2 <think of what could go wrong> - And if that piece of string's too short.

Person 2 <Rhyme with yourself - short> - Daddy's gonna buy you a bottle of port

Person 3 - And if that bottle of Port's gone off

Person 3 - Daddy's gonna buy you a picture of The Hoff

etc.

This is a great way of practicing associating and rhyming in a concise format

Tips:

Accept anything the previous person 'gave' you, even if you didn't hear, didn't understand or found it tasteless, yes and it.

Keep it moving even if you descend into gibberish

There is no time for the filter - you may say things you did not mean to - you can apologise afterwards!

Improvised Rounds

Good for: Ultimate commitment. Intense listening. Being comfortable with total failure.

Pick a well known round like "Frere Jacques" for the tune.

4 people stand in a line

A suggestion for the subject of the round is given

Person 1 improvises the first line of the round

Person 2 sings the first line while Person 1 sings the 2nd line!

Person 3 sings the 1st line while Person 2 sings the 2nd line while

Person 1 sings the 3rd line

Person 4 sings the 1st line, 3 sings the 2nd, 2 sings the 3rd and 4 sings the 1st line.

Now the round is underway and will sound like a total mess

Finish the round when it totally falls apart, or with a triumphant unison

Tips:

Can you look straight forward without straining your body to hear the others

Can you look like you have totally bossed it rather than being the most confused you have ever been

Can you change the lines, or pick up other people's changes

For an uber-challenge, start the round on one topic but try to morph each line to a new topic.

Inspired By Rhymes With

Good for: Rhyming, song structure, conceptual work

Love is Like

Good for: Rhyming, passing a line, reacting quickly in the moment, non-judgement

Players stand in a circle.

Person 1 sings 2 lines to the next person, "Our love is like a,

It" eg.

Person 1 - "Our love is like a frog" <A>

Person 1 - "It's green and very small"

Person 2 completes the mini verse by using the same rhyme scheme. eg.

Person 2 - "Our love is like a log" <A>

Person 2 - "It used to be quite tall"

Then Person 2 turns to the next person and the process continues.

Notice that they do not have to make much sense, in fact they are generally funnier if they do not.

Tips:

The key is commitment

If you do not hear the previous line or didn't understand it, play on as if you did

Make up words, make no sense, keep smiling, dance it out.

Madrigal

Good for: Singing as a group. A funny performance short form piece.
Working with audience suggestions:

Usually 4 players stand in a line or a slight semicircle

Each player is given a short statement, like a headline (could be a real headline)

Each player sings their individual line over a church like tune

Next time around, start to steal words from other player's lines and use them in yours

Last time around just mash up bits from all the lines and see what comes out

Tips:

Try to take yourself very seriously for extra comic effect
No laughing!

Moving and Emoting

Good for: Getting people moving and singing unselfconsciously

Participants walk or move around a space while using the voice.

A musician plays or background music plays

There really are no rules for what the improvisers should be doing, as long as they are moving and making a noise.

This exercise can also be done using words.

Everyone in the room will be singing/speaking at the same time which is fine.

Each improviser should be exploring their own environment and not be too swayed by what other people are doing.

The exercise should end loudly, both physically and vocally.

Tips:

As you walk around the space, you should try to express some thoughts that are in your mind as you move.

If you do feel like using words, just let them come and try not to think about them too much.

If you find that you are losing emotion or tune at the expense of telling a funny story then dispense with words altogether and just go back to lalalas.

In terms of your physicality, again try not to think too much. If you can, try and find a balance between moving freely and subconsciously and also making deliberate choices.

As this is still part of the warming up part of your class, this is also a good time to explore your range. How low or high are the notes that you can reach and what do they help you to express emotionally?

Musical 8 Things

Good for: Letting words tumble out without judgement, keeping the brain moving, laughing.

(Backing Track provided at openyourmouthandsing.com)

Music starts - this can be the version on the backing track or anything at all!

Person 1 hears the music and is inspired to suggest a category to Person 2, eg. "Give me, 8 things you'd find on the moon"

Person 2 sings 8 things in that category with the rest of the group singing "One, thing, two things" in between each one.

Person 1 - "rocks"

All - "One thing"

Person 1 - "Aliens"

All - "two things"

Person 1 - "Cheese"

etc.

At the finale everyone sings '8 Things' in triumphant Musical Theatre style

Tips:

Instead of the ensemble singing 'one thing...' they could try singing the category instead 'moon stuff...'

Present the piece like it is in a Musical

Really support the soloist with eye contact and choreography

Keep on singing! If you get stuck then repeat, make up words, do a dance – anything.

Opening Numbers

Good for: Getting your musical off to a great start. High energy group numbers. Passing lines. Negotiating turns.

The location or title of the musical is given
The opening number will usually be a verse chorus song
Everyone should be on stage and there should be plenty of movement
In the verses, focus should be given to the singer
Verses can be passed or shared
The chorus should be simple and repeatable
Must have a big finish

Tips:

You can set a structure beforehand or improvise it each time
Try to keep the stage picture moving
The verses should be generic - not the time for plot or character
You all feel the same about who you are and how you feel

Oscar Winner

Good for: Working with underscore, emotion and character

Start an everyday scene

The director calls out your name and "Oscar winning moment"

The music will inform you of your mood

Ham it up and win that award

Tips:

As with 'showstopper, can the other characters hear the 'soloist'?

Really work with the music and let it change you, and vice versa

Pointing Song

Good for: Group singing, performance piece, singing something amazing with other people.

Arrange the singers in rows facing the audience. Some sitting on the floor, some on chairs and some standing behind like a school photo

Suggest a broad subject (childhood, money, travel etc.)

The music starts

The conductor points at each singer in turn who sings a short repeating phrase. They will only sing this phrase when pointed at

Once all the phrases have been heard the conductor can bring in two or three or more at the same time.

Try to find interesting and contrasting combinations.

Eventually the conductor will bring everybody in.

Through the magic of group mind the participants will try to end up all singing just one of the phrases that was heard.

Tips:

Be prepared to ditch your idea if it is too similar to someone else's who has already sung

What would compliment the piece the most?

Sing something dumb - maybe just noises

Be prepared to try out a few other people's lines near the end before the group settles on one in particular

Questions

Good for: Rhyming, quick thinking, laughing, finding out things about people you would never otherwise know.

Can be played solo, with two people or as a group.

First person asks a genuine question such as:

"Do you have any pets?". Second person responds with a real answer :

"I do, I have a dog called Spot" - then asks a new question that rhymes with their own previous answer :

"Do you ever get too hot?". First person (or next person if playing in a circle) responds with a real answer:

"Sometimes if I'm in a sauna" - then a new rhyming question:

"Do you prefer flora or fauna?" - etc.

Tips:

Try to keep the flow going.

You can play along to a rap/hip hop beat to make things more rhythmical

If you can't think of a rhyme just make up words or don't rhyme at all, but with commitment

Try to keep your answers real, but beware, some truths you may not want to share!

Rhyme Ball

Good for: Rhyming, passing a line, reacting quickly in the moment, non-judgement

Performers should stand in a complete circle.

One person holds an imaginary ball that will then be thrown around the circle.

On throwing the ball, the thrower says a word. It should be obvious who they are throwing the ball to by establishing eye contact and ‘throwing’ in their direction.

When catching the ball, the catcher should say a word that rhymes with the word they were given.

When this person then throws the ball again, they say a word that ‘associates’ with their rhyming word.

Here is an example:

Person 1 <Throws ball to person 2>: ‘Door’

Person 2 <Catches ball>: ‘Floor’ (Rhyming)

<Throws ball>: ‘Rug’ (Associating)

Person 3 <Catches ball>: ‘Mug’ (Rhyming)

<Throws ball>: ‘Cup’ (Associating)

Person 4 <Catches ball>: ‘Pup’ (Rhyming)

<Throws ball>: ‘Dog’ (Associating)

Etc.

Tips:

It is important to keep the throwing and catching gestures as obvious and real as possible, and also to time these to when you say your words. It should be as if you really are throwing a word to someone, and as they catch it, they rhyme with it.

As with other associating games, the link between the two words does not have to be apparent to everyone. It might be that on catching the ball you rhyme ‘dog’ with ‘frog’, and when you throw it you suddenly think of ‘ferry’.

It is the same with the rhyme, some words are virtually impossible to rhyme with so you can approximate, or even make up a word to keep the game going.

Scales

Good for: Warming up the voice. Landing in the room or virtual space.
Making a suggestion. Singing in front of other people.

Participants stand in a circle.

This exercise uses 5 note scales going up and then down.

The scale is then repeated on a higher note, usually a semitone up from the first.

Any word can be chosen for the scale to begin with. The word is announced and the group all have to sing the scale together using the suggested word.

When the first scale is finished, the next person in the circle announces the next word, and the next scale is sung to that word.

Ideally, the words announced should be associated, for example if the first word was dog, the next could be cat and so on.

Example:

Person 1: 'Dog'

All: 'Dog dog dog dog dog dog dog dog'

Person 2: 'Cat'

All: 'Cat cat cat cat cat cat cat cat'

Person 3: 'Purr'

All: 'Purr purr purr purr purr purr purr purr'

Person 4: 'Tiger'

etc.

Tips:

After going round the group once, the exercise can be repeated, but this time with more emphasis on staying in time with a beat.

Each scale has a pause at the end which should be just big enough for the next person to announce their word. If done correctly, a regular rhythm can be followed, and the whole exercise can be sung 'in time'.

Once the rhythm has been established, the exercise can be performed faster, until things start to break down! Often words of more than one syllable will be announced, in which case it is entirely up to each improviser, whether to try and fit the whole word onto each note, 'Tiger tiger tiger tiger tiger tiger tiger' or to scan the word across two or more notes, 'Ti-ger ti-ger ti-ger ti-ger ti'.

Set ups

Good for: Rhyming. Working with a team. Passing lines

A category is given eg sports

Player 1 tries to set up Player 2 with a relevant rhyming word

Player 1 - "I hit balls through hoops, I hope that's okay"

Player 2 attempts to complete the rhyme

Player 2 - "Of course it is if you're playing croquet"

Player 2 tries to set up Player 3 with a relevant rhyming word"

Player 2 - "You cant play this without a wicket"

Player 3 has a zen-like moment of nothingness and cannot think of anything...

Player 3 - "I can't play that so please just stick it" etc.

Tips:

Completing the rhyme successfully is not compulsory. Better to relax and enjoy yourself.

Can you accept whatever offer you are given. If you do not hear correctly, or they have just uttered total nonsense then Yes And them and carry on.

You can deliberately not complete the rhyme and go for a curveball gag if you wish.

Sing as Soon as the Music Plays

Good for: Freeing yourself from your inner critic, or inner planner.

Start a scene

When the music comes in you must start singing immediately

The song can be any form or no form.

Tips:

How quickly can you start singing?

If stuck, you can just sing the last thing you said

Support your partner if they are running dry

Sing it

Good for: Quick comic songs. Singing without planning (improvising)

A scene of any type with any amount of players begins

The music director, any of the players, or the audience can shout "Sing it" when they hear a good, funny or outrageous song title during a scene

The Player who spoke that line must then deliver a song with that line as the title

Hilarious

Tips:

Try to support the singer with some backing, choreography or chorus joining in

Do not spend the whole scene fishing for great song titles, let them emerge naturally

Practise the comic shift from Play to Musical Theatre

Sing your Day

Good for: Verse and chorus practise. Using autobiographical material.
Gently moving into full songs.

The music begins.

Person 1 sings a verse about their day to the music.

Could be '4 lines' or could be free.

Person 2 sings a chorus that sums up Person 1's day

Everyone repeats the chorus (so long as you are not online)

Person 3 sings a verse about their day

etc.

Tips:

Really listen to the verse before you - what is it really about? That is your chorus

If you have high levels of trust in the group try choruses that are a bit mean!

Make your chorus simple and repeatable.

Sing your name

Good for: Learning people's names, warming up the voice, scanning.

Participants stand in a circle

1st person says their name to the group

Their name is then sung by everyone to a scale (we use: CDE-DEF-EFG...)

Next person announces their name

Tips:

Enjoy getting it wrong!

Try scanning full names (first, middle names etc.)

When you get to the top of the scale - come back down (EDC-DCB-CBA...)

See if the group can agree on what they are singing and when

Song Circle

Good for: Putting together a whole song. Improvising as a group. Feeling different song structures

A topic is suggested or the music starts to play.

Someone walks across the circle towards another player singing an improvised "line" of a song

The other player then walks towards someone else singing the second "line"

This continues until the song is finished.

This is a great sandbox for trying out literally anything! Songs are negotiated by the whole group.

Choruses can be sung all together.

Tips:

Can you pre-decide a song structure you are trying to achieve?

Can you make a chorus really stand out?

Try to really 'Yes and' the previous line rather than deciding what you are going to sing way in advance.

Split scene tagline Song

Good for: A sure-fire pathos-inducing, tear-jerking crowd-pleasing stunner

1st singer comes on stage and monologues (spoken) to set scene and setting

2nd singer enters in a different locality and or different reality and monologues.

1st singer sings a tagline verse to audience - an inner monologue

2nd singer sings a tagline verse using whatever last line (the tagline) the 1st singer used

Bridge is shared

Both singers repeat their verses over the top of each other

Magic.

Tips:

When repeating your verse, do not worry about remembering it exactly, just the rhymes, or the feeling behind it is enough

Try to find the space between you and your song partner in the lines

Try to land on the last line together. If you don't just keep repeating it until you do find it.

Tagline Song

Good for: Song structure. listen to our tagline song podcast. Download the sad tagline backing track or the happy tagline backing track

Players sing a song with the form Verse, Verse, Bridge, Verse with the "tagline" of the song coming on the first or last line of each verse.

A tagline is a line that is repeated but does not appear in a chorus (there is usually no chorus in a tagline song)

The tagline should be repeated in the same place in the verse as the first person set it, often the first or last line

The bridge usually does not contain the tagline

You can all sing the tagline together at the end.

Tips:

This structure is very popular in jazz as well as improv

Try to make your bridges as heightening or contrasting as possible

If you do not all manage to sing the tagline together, try again!

This is how we do it

Good for: Rhyming, setting up a rhyme, rapping skills, flow.

Can be played solo or with a partner.

You will need a load of different objects if playing alone, or if with another player, they will be 'feeding' you words.

Let's say the first word is 'Chair'

You start a beat as an accompaniment

First line is "This is how we do it...." Then you set yourself up to rhyme with 'chair'

"This is how we do it, when cutting your hair". Then the second line is the payoff rhyme.

"You might want to sit down, on a chair".

In the small gap before the next musical bar either look at a new object if playing solo, or feed the next word verbally 'pen'

"This is how we do it, again and again"

"If you want to write it, just use a pen" etc.

Tips:

Try to keep the flow going.

Keep the words coming smoothly if you are feeding them to the player.

As you get more comfortable rhyming, can you make the whole line make sense too?

Titling

Good for: Scene into song. Musical theatre acting

Any number of players start a scene.

The emotional content is ramped up throughout the scene until a song is needed

When a suitable title for a song is heard in the dialogue it is repeated in cheesy musical theatre style out to the audience.

eg. Player 1 - "But John I have always held a flame for you"

Player 2 - "Love cannot survive in a storm"

Player 2 - <to audience>"Love cannot survive in a storm"

The song, "Love cannot survive in a storm" is then heard with that title being used as a tagline or in the chorus.

Tips:

A real chance to dust off those acting skills and go for it

Try to make sure you do actually sing the song you have 'promised' the audience with your title

Can the title appear in the chorus? Or as a surprise in the bridge perhaps.

Verse Chorus Song

Good for: Song structure. Practising the most popular improvised song format. Choruses podcast. Choruses backing track

Either staged or in a line

The inspiration may come from a suggestion or emerge from a scene

The song has Verses and Choruses in any structure

The Chorus is usually repeatable and repeated by the players on stage.

Tips:

Make your choruses memorable by adding movement or having a melody line that moves

Repetition is your friend, a chorus can be repeated far more times than you might think

See if you can make the end adventurous and clean!

Emotions

from
<https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/emogifs/map.html#>

A: admiration	O: enrancement	desolate
B: adoration	P: excitement	eager
C: aesthetic appreciation	Q: fear	annoyed
D: amusement	R: horror	in shock
E: anger	S: interest	epiphany
F: anxiety	T: joy	
G: awe	U: nostalgia	
H: awkwardness	V: relief	
I: boredom	W: romance	
J: calmness	X: sadness	
K: confusion	Y: satisfaction	
L: craving	Z: sexual desire	
M: disgust	Ω: surprise	
N: pain		

Relationships

how one character feels or acts toward another

in love

in awe

contempt

nurturing

worried about

higher status

lower status

approval seeking

Gottman's list of minor connection bids

1. Pay attention to what I say.
“How do I look?” “Did you see that squirrel?”
2. Respond to simple requests.
“Could you take Pooh for a walk?”
“While you're up, can you grab the salsa?”
3. Help or work with me.
4. Show interest or active excitement in my accomplishments.
5. Answer my questions or requests for information.
6. Chat with me.
7. Share the events of your day with me.
8. Respond to my joke.
9. Help me de-stress.
“I've been cooking all day, so I'm tired.”
10. Help me problem solve.
“Greta wants to go on a walk, but my foot hurts.”
11. Be affectionate.
“Come cuddle with me while I read.”
12. Play with me.
“Let's get the chess board!”
13. Join me in an adventure.
14. Join me in learning something.

Character Traits

confident

insecure

goal oriented

itchy

completely content

hurried

lying

surprised

jaded

- Honesty-Humility
- Emotionality
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Openness to Experience

Situations

at the dentist

at the grocery store

employment interview

meeting a friend for lunch at a restaurant

repairman / technician comes to a home

real estate agent and home buyer

landlord / tenant

Common Rhyme Word Families

ack ain air ake ale all ame

an ank ap ash at ate aw

ay eat ell est ice ick ide

ite ill in ine ing ink ip

it ock oke op ore ot uck

ug ump unk

ool oot

Listening / Background Material List

What to listen to in order to internalize musical knowledge and styles that you'll have in common with other improvisers. Listen multiple times, until the song or style is familiar and you can be creative with it.

“My Favorite Things” (Rodgers/Hammerstein)

“Hoedown” song from any/multiple episodes of “Whose Line is it Anyway?”

Beastie Boys e.g. “Fight for Your Right” or “Hold It Now, Hit It”

Things you probably already know, included for completeness:

12-bar blues songs (e.g. “Johnny B. Goode”, “Ain’t No Sunshine”)

Music Styles

Gregorian chant	hillbilly	Bulgarian women's choral
medieval music	motown	
church music / organ and choral	soul	minimalism (Philip Glass)
ballad singer / minstrel	gospel	
drinking songs / student songs	singer/songwriter	
love songs	chanson / canzoni	
silent film / ragtime	folk music	
opera	irish folk	
art song (Schubert)	belly dance music	
12 tone / atonal	yodeling	
minimal music	gstanzl (bavarian couplé, only for the initiated)	
ambient (lots of music, not much singing)	cabaret song	
Italian bel canto (pavarotti)	couple / satirical song	
operetta	socialist workers' songs	
broadway musical	popular music (music stall)	
jazz / jazzbalade / jazz song (standard)	pop song	
dixieland (Louis Armstrong)	rock	
Latin jazz / bossa nova	hard rock	
rock jazz	death metal	
free jazz	heavy metal	
punk jazz / very heavy drums, vocals as in punk	punk	
salsa	German new wave	
Afro pop	techno / electronic music	
country	rap	
	hip hop	
	a cappella	
	children's song	