



TEXAS THESPIANSSM

Effective theatre classroom management is crucial for creating a positive and productive learning environment. Here are ten of the best approaches that teachers use, which we hope will be helpful for you to use:

- 1. Establish Clear Expectations:** Set clear and consistent rules and expectations for behavior, academic performance, and classroom procedures. Communicate these expectations to students and discuss them at the beginning of the school year. High expectations will be met if clearly articulated. Ten examples of expectations for the theatre classroom are:
 - Respect for All
 - Arrive Prepared
 - Active Participation
 - Classroom Environment
 - Academic Integrity
 - Promptness and Attendance
 - Personal Responsibility
 - Safety and Well-being
 - Open Mindset
- 2. Build Positive Relationships:** Develop strong relationships with your students by showing genuine interest in their lives, being approachable, and treating them with respect. A positive teacher-student relationship can greatly influence behavior and engagement. Especially make time for them as they enter and leave the classroom.
- 3. Use Positive Reinforcement:** Recognize and reward desired behavior with praise, encouragement, and tangible rewards. This helps reinforce positive behavior and motivates students to continue making good choices. Try a script wall challenge that will help engage students in productivity when they have idle time. Reading plays will keep them learning. Create group goals so they feel a part of a team. Everyone wants to be on a team! Reward with stickers or homemade cookies (if you don't bake, we're sure a mom out there will help).
- 4. Create a Structured Environment:** Establish routines and procedures for daily activities, such as entering the classroom, transitioning between activities and completing assignments. Predictability helps reduce anxiety and uncertainty among students. Physical and vocal warmups can be a great way to immediately engage students. Make sure the students understand the purpose behind each warmup. For example, here is a list of **breathing activities** and the justification for each:
 - **Diaphragmatic Breathing.**
 - **Instructions:** Have students lie on their backs or sit in a comfortable position. Place one hand on their chest and the other on their abdomen. Inhale deeply through the nose, allowing the abdomen to rise as the lungs fill with air. Exhale slowly through the mouth, feeling the abdomen fall. Encourage them to focus on breathing deeply and expanding the lower lungs.

- **Justification:** Diaphragmatic breathing helps actors develop breath support and control. It encourages the use of the diaphragm, a crucial muscle for sustained vocal delivery on stage.
- **Counting Breathing.**
 - **Instructions:** Instruct students to inhale deeply for a count of four, hold the breath for a count of four, exhale slowly for a count of four, and then pause for another count of four before inhaling again. Gradually increase the count as students become more comfortable.
 - **Justification:** Counted breathing helps students develop breath control and lung capacity. It teaches them to manage their breath for sustained lines and monologues.
- **Balloon Breathing.**
 - **Instructions:** Have students imagine their lungs as balloons. Inhale deeply through the nose, expanding the “balloons” in all directions. As they exhale through pursed lips, imagine deflating the balloons.
 - **Justification:** Balloon breathing visualizes the expansion and contraction of the lungs, encouraging full breaths and proper breath support.
- **Hissing Breath.**
 - **Instructions:** Inhale deeply, and as you exhale through pursed lips, create a controlled hissing sound. Try to maintain a consistent sound and airflow throughout the exhalation.
 - **Justification:** Hissing breath encourages smooth and controlled exhalation, helping actors regulate their breath for sustained lines and projection.
- **Sighing Breath.**
 - **Instructions:** Inhale deeply through the nose, and as you exhale through the mouth, release a gentle sigh. Let the exhale be longer than the inhale.
 - **Justification:** Sighing breath encourages relaxation and helps release tension, allowing for more natural and expressive vocal delivery.
- **Segmented Breath.**
 - **Instructions:** Inhale in short, segmented bursts. For example, take four quick inhaleds followed by a slow, controlled exhale. Gradually increase the number of segmented inhaleds.
 - **Justification:** Segmented breath exercises increase lung capacity, help develop control over breath release, and enhance breath support.
- **Breath and Sound Connection.**
 - **Instructions:** Inhale deeply and on the exhale, make a sustained “ssss” sound. Feel the breath moving from the diaphragm to the lips. Gradually change the sound to “shhh,” “zzz,” or other consonant sounds.
 - **Justification:** Connecting breath with sound helps students experience the relationship between breath control and vocal production. It also enhances articulation and control of airflow.

- **Breath Suspension.**
 - **Instructions:** Inhale deeply and hold the breath for a few seconds. During the breath hold, engage the abdominal muscles gently. Exhale slowly and repeat the process, gradually increasing the breath suspension time.
 - **Justification:** Breath suspension exercises develop breath control, strengthen the diaphragm, and improve overall vocal stamina.

Here are sample tongue twisters with their justification:

- **She sells seashells by the seashore.**
 - **Justification:** This tongue twister contains repetitive “s and “sh” sounds, which helps actors practice the correct placement of the tongue and lips for these challenging consonant sounds. It also helps with breath control and encourages precision in articulation.
- **How can a clam cram in a clean cream can?**
 - **Justification:** This tongue twister contains a variety of consonant clusters (e.g. “cl,” “cr,” “m,c,” and “n,c,”) that can be difficult to pronounce clearly. Practicing these clusters improves articulation and promotes tongue and jaw flexibility.
- **Red leather, yellow leather.**
 - **Justification:** This tongue twister focuses on repeated “r” and “l” sounds, helping actors work on sounds that can sometimes be tricky to enunciate clearly. It encourages controlled and distinct pronunciation of these consonants.
- **Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear. Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair. Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn’t very fuzzy, was he?**
 - **Justification:** This longer tongue twister challenges actors with rapid-fire repetition of similar sounds and phrases. It helps build stamina for speaking and articulating quickly, while also emphasizing clear enunciation.
- **Unique New York, you know you need unique New York.**
 - **Justification:** This tongue twister combines the “u” and “n” sounds, helping actors practice smooth transitions between vowels and consonants. It also emphasizes the importance of accurate vowel placement for clear speech.
- **Six slippery snails slid slowly seaward.**
 - **Justification:** This tongue twister includes a sequence of “s” and “sl” sounds, which can be tough to articulate smoothly. Practicing these sounds helps actors refine their tongue and lip movements enhancing diction and clarity.
- **Toy boat. Toy boat. Toy boat.**
 - **Justification:** This short and repetitive tongue twister focuses on the “t” and “oy” sounds. It helps actors work on precise articulation and coordination of the tongue and lips for these sounds.
- **Black bug bleeds black blood.**
 - **Justification:** This tongue twister is a challenge due to the repeated “b” sounds. It’s useful for practicing plosive sounds, where actors need to control the sudden release of air after closing their lips.

- **Three free throws.**
 - **Justification:** This simple tongue twister helps actors practice quick and accurate articulation of the “th” and “r” sounds. It’s a great warm-up for addressing common articulation challenges.
 - **Amidst the mists and coldest frosts, with stoutest wrists and loudest boasts, he thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts.**
 - **Justification:** This complex tongue twister challenges actors with a mix of consonant clusters, varied vowel sounds, and rhythmic patterns. It’s an excellent exercise for improving overall diction, speech rhythm, and clarity.
5. **Be Consistent.** Consistency is key to effective classroom management. Apply rules and consequences consistently to create a fair and predictable environment. Inconsistency can lead to confusion and frustration among students. An engaging classroom with respect by all doesn’t need many rules, just routines.
 6. **Use Nonverbal and Verbal Cues.** Develop a set of nonverbal or verbal cues to signal transitions or redirect student behavior without disrupting the flow of the lesson. This can include gestures, light flicker, or even specific visual cues. Use cues that you would use on stage during rehearsals such as, “Hold, please,” or “places, in 30 seconds, please,”. Teach them to respond: “Thank you, hold,” or “ Thank you, 30”.
 7. **Active Engagement.** Plan interactive and engaging lessons that involve various learning styles and allow students to participate actively. Engaged students are less likely to exhibit disruptive behavior. Your lesson should start by gaining the student’s interest (5-10 minutes). Spend 5-10 minutes refreshing students on knowledge they already have that will be incorporated in the day’s lesson. The next part of the lesson is any new knowledge they need to have. This area can be creative. Spend about 10 minutes on new knowledge. Allow 10 minutes for students to show their understanding, this can be done in many ways: showing, sharing with a classmate or the teacher, or writing. The final five minutes of your class should be closure, which needs to establish what has been accomplished! Well-structured lessons with clear objectives and varied activities can help maintain student engagement and minimize disruptions. Share a syllabus or scope and sequence with your students to keep everyone understanding the plans for the year and all they will learn. A sample syllabus:

THEATRE ARTS I SYLLABUS

FIRST SIX WEEKS:

BODY

BODY WARM UPS
STAGE TERMINOLOGY
PANTOMIME PERFORMANCE
DANCE FOR MUSICAL THEATRE
MOVEMENT

SECOND SIX WEEKS:

VOICE

VOICE AND DICTION
ORAL INTERPRETATION
PROSE/POETRY PERFORMANCE

THIRD SIX WEEKS:

CREATIVE MIND

IMPROVISATION
PLAY ANALYSIS
MONOLOGUE PERFORMANCE

FOURTH SIX WEEKS:
SHARING THE STAGE

ENSEMBLE

FIFTH SIX WEEKS:
PRODUCTION

SIXTH SIX WEEKS:
BEHIND THE SCENES

SHOW THE GROWTH

DUET PERFORMANCE

AUDITION
ONE-ACT PLAY

COSTUMING
PUBLIC PLAY PERFORMANCE

MAKE-UP APPLICATION
LIGHTING
SOUND

MONOLOGUE PERFORMANCE

8. **Proximity Management.** Moving around the classroom and being physically present near students who may be off task can often redirect their attention back to the lesson. Don't touch or enter their personal space, just proximity.
9. **Individual Attention.** Identify students who may need additional support, whether academically or behaviorally, and provide them with the necessary resources and attention. Kindness goes a long way in making students all feel supported. If all the students have the resources that they need to be successful, you are one step closer to everyone learning, which is the goal.
10. **Reflect and Adjust.** Regularly assess your classroom management strategies and lesson planning to identify what's working and what needs improvement. Adjust your tactics based on the needs of your students and the dynamics of the class. Keep things consistent and comfortable but also fun and engaging.

Remember that this is all an ongoing process that requires flexibility, patience and a willingness to adapt. Every classroom is unique, so it's important to tailor your approach to the specific needs and dynamics of your students.

Break a leg!