

A great activity to warm up a group for a characterisation workshop or to build awareness of others. A highly interactive and fun activity.

What You Need

An object to pass around (not a ball, as the temptation will be to throw it).

What To Do

The group sits in a circle on the floor or on chairs. Ask the students to lean forward and close their eyes.

Walk around the outside of the circle and touch one person on the back (a trick is to nearly touch everyone on the back so if someone is peaking, they won't know who was touched).

Tell the group that you have touched one person on the back who is now the "alien". This person needs to keep it a secret and will try to trick the others in the group by not revealing themselves as the alien.

Give another person in the group the passing object. That person must stand up and walk around the inside of the circle—when they think that a person **is not** the alien, they pass them the object. The new person then enters the circle and repeats the process.

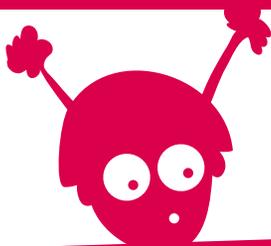
Everyone in the group, including the alien, needs to try and prove that they are not the alien by extending their arms and beckoning the object carrier with their fingers without verbally enticing them. If the object carrier gives the object to the alien, the alien shouts out "I'm the alien" and the game ends.

Gotcha

Sometimes the game may take a long time. The person in the middle becomes very powerful when all these people are pleading with them. Players tend to enjoy this and even the shyest student will love this power. Once they have had enough of an ego boost, give them a 10 second count to pass on the object.

Boys will be boys. When you walk around to touch the alien be aware that some boys may touch their neighbours back to make them think they are the alien. To counteract this, touch that person as well and make no comment.

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What's It For?

Develops physical skills, coordination and self control

Develops observation and listening skills

Explores the importance of roles in a group setting and develops the ability to offer appropriate individual contributions and behaviour

Explores the importance of risk-taking and the acceptance of failure

Variations

- The group is allowed to verbally convince the object carrier of their innocence as well as use gestures.
- The object carrier is the captain of the spaceship. When the captain approaches someone in the circle they must indicate what special skills they have for the ship—"I'm a wonderful chef that specialises in desserts". Again, the captain only chooses those they believe not to be the alien.
- Allocate three captains of spaceships. They must go around the group recruiting a crew. The group again try to convince the captains of their skills. Once someone has been recruited they stay with that captain and help to make decisions on who should join the crew. The largest crew without the alien is the winner. The alien is revealed at the end of the game.
- To speed up the game further, touch up to three people on the back and have three aliens. For fun, touch everyone on the back except one, who is made the carrier. This gets the group very animated.

BALLOON INTERVIEW

A great game to get players engaged and to get the shyest person in the class eager to participate.
A high risk game in terms of getting the class too hyped up.

What You Need

Long blown-up balloons

What To Do

Three chairs are placed in front of the class. The facilitator sits on the middle chair with a student on either side. The facilitator has a long blown-up balloon. The facilitator looks at one of the students and asks them questions. The other student is instructed to pull faces and poke their tongue out behind the facilitator's back. The facilitator randomly turns to the other student and asks the other student a series of questions. If the facilitator catches one of the students pulling faces, the facilitator hits them with the balloon. If you play the game, be prepared to be hassled to play again.

Gotcha

As a facilitator after this game you have two choices.

- [1] Use this chaotic energy and new-found verbal skills in another activity; or
 - [2] Have another activity that will bring their energy down and reintroduce discipline.
- Both are equally valid in a difficult class as it teaches the class how to let go and have fun in chaos, but also how to stop, refocus and bring yourself back under control. These are important skills for these students to learn and develop.

What's It For?

Explores the importance of risk-taking and the acceptance of failure
Fosters self-confidence, self-reliance and self-esteem
Reinforces positivity and the value of giving and receiving positive feedback
Fosters trust between teachers and students
Develops ability to follow complex instructions and rules, and determine preferred behaviours
Develops general knowledge and oral language skills

We first used this activity in a year two class that was unfocused and difficult to engage. Once we commenced the whole class was rolling around the floor with laughter. They had moved so close to the action we had to keep moving them back. The two participants found it difficult to pull faces as they were laughing too much. However, the one being interviewed would always be verbally engaged and respond to our questions elaborating and expanding their answers. Every student in the class wanted to do it, even the shyest. Hitting them with a balloon caused the biggest laughter and enjoyment for everyone. This game is a prime example of changing the environment. We had broken all the rules—students poking out their tongue at the teacher, and the teacher whacking them with a balloon!

SPACE JUMP

The TheatreSports game that most students know, or believe they know. If taught properly it is a very useful tool to teach over-acceptance, focus, spontaneity, using other people's ideas and characterisation.



What You Need

Nothing

What To Do

Select four players. The first player is given a scene to perform on their own, such as teaching the audience to fish. The facilitator blows the whistle or shouts “space jump”. This should happen between 20 or 30 seconds. At this point the player freezes in that exact position.

Player 2 enters the space and uses dialogue and action to trigger a new scene. Player 1 immediately accepts the offer and joins in. Both players play out the scene until “space jump” is called again and they both freeze.

Another player then enters the scene and starts another scene until all players are on stage.

Approximately 20 to 60 seconds into the fourth scene call out “space jump”. At this point, the player who entered last leaves the scene, and the players resume the third scene but using their new positions. Every 20 to 30 seconds, call “space jump” until Player 1 is on stage alone, who finishes off the first scene.

Gotcha

Players must use the frozen position of the player(s) to trigger each new scene. Often players will enter with a planned scene. This is very obvious. It is important to re-establish the frozen positions and get them to re-enter.

Players often become static in the scenes—it may be up to the facilitator to side-coach scenes into action. The fun of the game is in the frozen positions. If the scenes are only talking then the frozen positions are boring. Over-acceptance is essential.

On the way back down through the scenes, it is important that the new positions are used and justified. For example scene 3 may be about painting the ceiling, scene four about worshipping a guru. When “space jump” is called players may all be on their knees. Players must justify this and not just jump up and start painting the ceiling again. Someone may say “Look at the paint on the floor”, “We are in so much trouble”, “We’d better scrub it”.

The major problem with this game is that it tends to be a narrative block—every time you get a story going, it is switched and dropped. However, students love the game and we believe it is essential to let them play it and teach all the skills you can during the process.

What's It For?

Develops core improvisation skills

Develops key theatre performance skills and performer/audience relationships

Encourages physical interaction in a group setting and awareness of others

Develops physical skills, coordination and self control

Encourages cooperation

Variations

- **Mass Space Jump.** The whole class come in one at a time until everyone is on stage. Take notes to keep track of the order of scenes.
- **Backward Space Jump.** Four players start on stage in a given scene. The facilitator calls “space jump” and one player leaves. The remaining three players justify their frozen positions to start another totally unrelated scene. This is repeated until one player does a scene on their own—then the players return one at a time, revisiting the scene they previously left. This is good fun to try, even though we have rarely seen it work.