

# The Curve Ball

Use this exercise later in the rehearsal process. If you suspect students are just going through the paces with their lines and with their characters, if they're not listening to each other, or if they are saying their lines the same way every time you rehearse, use this exercise.

1. You'll have to enlist a couple of actors into your plan. Take them aside in the rehearsal before you plan to use The Curve Ball. Make sure your other actors aren't aware of what you're doing, and that you can trust your enlisted actors to keep a secret.
2. Tell these actors that at the next rehearsal, when they do a certain scene they are to say a line, or act out with the complete opposite emotion they've been doing it up to now. If the scene is all about a loving relationship - they're to act angry. If it's an angry line, they're to say it with a laugh. If they usually talk really fast, tell them to say the line as slowly as possible and vice versa.
3. The point of the exercise is to see how their partner in the scene reacts. If they are really in character and they are really listening, they'll be able to take whatever curve ball is thrown at them and respond. If they say their lines the exact same way, it shows the student is acting by rote and is not in the moment.
4. Let this Curve Ball happen a couple of times. If the responding actors break character or ask "what are you doing" coach them to stay in the scene, to stay in the moment and react accordingly.
5. Once the rehearsal is over, have a discussion about what happened. What did an actor do when they were thrown a curve ball? Did they stay in character and react? Did they break character? Did they say their lines exactly the same?
6. Remind students that the most impactful actor on stage is one who is in the moment and reacting to whatever curve ball is thrown at them. And that means they have to pay attention at all times. They have to listen to their fellow actors and respond accordingly. If someone says something angry in a loving scene, or laughs in an angry scene and you just say your line the exact same way, you're not in the moment.
7. Assure students that you're not changing the play or changing the tone of a certain scene. But you are going to be throwing curve balls at them and their job as an actor is to respond accordingly. Always listen and be in the moment.