Warming Up for Actors – Building Our Daily Routine

Lesson 1 · 50 minutes · Grades 6–8 · Intro to Theater

Lesson Goals

Central Focus

Students will identify why performers warm up, explore diaphragmatic breathing and a standing stretch routine, and use focused movement to build concentration and control over their bodies.

State Standards

- 6.TH:Pr5.a – Recognize how acting exercises and techniques can be applied to a drama/theatre work.
- 7.TH:Pr5.a – Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.
- 8.TH:Pr5.a – Use a variety of acting techniques to increase skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

Learning Objective

I will explain at least two reasons why performers warm up, practice diaphragmatic breathing and a standing stretch routine, and use focused movement (Space Walk) to build concentration and control over my body in our shared performance space.

Academic Language and Language Supports

Language function: Explain, practice, demonstrate

Language demand: Listening, Speaking, following multi-step kinesthetic directions, Reflecting

Lesson vocabulary: Warm-up, Diaphragmatic Breathing, Stretch, Focus, Space Walk, Freeze.

Syntax: Students use structured sentences to explain the purpose of a warm-up step. (e.g., "Warming up helps performers because ___.")

Discourse: Students will discuss what they noticed during the warm-up and Space Walk with a partner.

- "I noticed that when we moved ___, my body/mind felt ___."
- "One reason performers warm up is ___, because ___."

- "Compared to walking slow, walking fast made me feel ___."

Materials

- "Warming Up for Actors" slide deck
- Open floor space with marked boundaries
- Timer
- Exit ticket
- Class syllabus

Differentiation

English Language Learners

- Encourage use of sentence frames.
- Pair with a peer model for stretch names to support comprehension.
- Provide the option to respond with gesture or drawing on the exit ticket.

Gifted/Advanced Students

- Students are encouraged to lead or demonstrate a stretch for the class.
- Extension: identify which muscle groups or systems (breath, voice, circulation) each stretch engages.
- Extension reflection connecting breath control to real-world stress management.

IEP/504

- Offer clear examples through each step.
- For Autistic/ASD students: give a verbal + visual countdown before any change in Space Walk speed instead of a sudden call, to avoid startle; offer a designated low-sensory space to opt into if needed.
- Offer seated versions of standing stretches as needed.
- Clarify social expectations including gratitude, positive encouragement for peers, and respectful listening.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Invite students to share warm-up or centering rituals from their own lives – sports, dance, music, prayer, or family sayings.
- Validate diverse cultural framings of breath and centering practices as equally legitimate preparation tools.

Lesson Plan Details

3 min Step 1 – Hook & Objective

- Ask the class: "Who warms up?" Brainstorm jobs or activities that require a warm-up (athletes, musicians, dancers, singers).
- Share the quote: "Sweat now in warm up, so that you don't bleed in battle." Discuss what it might mean for actors.

7 min Step 2 – Why Do We Warm Up?

- Using the slide deck, introduce Physical, Mental, and Emotional benefits of warming up (bloodflow, vocal strength, injury prevention, calmed nerves, sharper focus, confidence, reduced stage fright).
- Call-and-response: teacher names a benefit, students name which category (Physical/Mental/Emotional) it belongs to.

5 min Step 3 – Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Explain diaphragmatic breathing: chest, belly, and ribs expand like a balloon on the inhale and contract on the exhale.
- Everyone stands. Guided practice: ten counted breaths, paying close attention to each one.

10 min Step 4 – Standing Stretch Routine

Teacher leads call-and-response counting: ankle rolls (8x each), knee circles (8x both directions), hip circles (8x both directions), chicken circles (8x both directions), twist it out (8x), Olympic swim (10x).

15 min Step 5 – Space Walk

- Students explore the open floor space within marked boundaries, eyes up. Walk SLOW, then FAST (safely) — repeat 2–3 rounds — then FREEZE on cue.
- Teacher observes each student's focus, spatial awareness, and physical control.

Step 6 – Reflective Discussion: Student Pair Up

- Students discuss with a partner what they noticed about their body/focus at different Space Walk speeds, using the discourse stems.
- Teacher circulates and listens for evidence of engagement with the warm-up vocabulary.

> **Assessment 1.1 (Informal) · Standards: 6.TH:Pr5.a, 7.TH:Pr5.a, 8.TH:Pr5.a**

5 min Closure: Step 7 – Reflection

Students are given quiet time to consider which part of the warm-up helped them feel most ready to perform, and record one sentence about it in their notebook.

5 min Step 8 – Closure

- Students complete an EXIT TICKET naming one physical, mental, or emotional benefit of warming up.
- HOMEWORK: Students and parents read, review, and complete the class syllabus.