

A scene is a series of realizations followed by decisions. Character A realizes something about Character B and so decides to take an action, so...Character B realizes the action Character B is taking and so decides to take a counteraction. And so on and so on until the end of the scene.

CHARACTER A Realization → Decision

CHARACTER B Realization of that decision → makes new Decision

CHARACTER A Realization of that decision →

The character A is doing something to character B. Character B realizes that Character A is doing something to them, and decides to counter act by doing something to Character A. Now, Character A realizes that Character B is doing something to Character A, and so counter-acts by deciding to do something to Character B. And so on.

So...an "R + D" rehearsal attaches the dialogue to these worked out realizations and decision. Actors talk through the R + Ds with the dialogue:

Character A says: "I realize that you are (doing an action)...so I decide to (do an action)..." and then Character A says their next line of dialogue.

Character B says: "I realize that you are (doing an action)...so I decide to (do an action)..." and then Character a says their next line of dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

Dialogue:

CARLY

You aren't as good as you think.

JONATHAN

Who do you think you are?

So as "R+D":

CARLY: I realize you are shunning me, so I decide to rattle your cage:

"You aren't as good as you think."

JONATHAN: You are rattling my cage, so I minimize you:

"Who do you think you are?"

My realization in the action that you are doing to me. I decide to counteract. And then say the dialogue appropriate to that action. Then you do the same, for each beat of the scene. This is a slow motion version of the scene, which lines up the memorized dialogue with the actions that you are playing.

In a simple script, the realizations and decisions add up as we have above: your decision is my realization. And my decision is your realization. That would be characters who understand what each other are doing.

However, in the real world, real people often misunderstand what each other are doing. Sometimes, in more complex, more realistic scenes, characters misinterpret each other's actions. People often misunderstand each other because of prejudice, bias, insecurity, or mis-information.

EXAMPLE:

The dialogue is:

JAMES
I love you.

MARY
You're a jerk.

So the R + D would be:

JAMES: I realize you are pushing me away, so I decide to soften you with love:
"I love you"

MARY: You are manipulating me, so I decide to slam you:
"You're a jerk."

The R + Ds don't add up because the characters are in different interpretations of the circumstances.

Sometimes decisions come in silences. A character will realize what's going on, and decide to say nothing.

EXAMPLE.

Dialogue:

Mary says nothing.

JAMES
I love you.

Mary turns her back to James.

JAMES
I said: "I love you".

JAMES
Man, you're making this hard.

As an R+D rehearsal would be:

JAMES: You are pushing me away, so I decide to soften you with love:
"I love you"

MARY: You are manipulating me, so I decide to shut you down by refusing to respond: I say nothing.

JAMES: I realize you are cutting me off so I throw my love at you:
"I said I love you."

MARY: You are persisting to lie to me, so I turn my back on your nastiness.

JAMES: I realize you have completely refused my love, so I pull into truth:
"Man, you're making this hard."

There are realizations and decisions within each moment. So R + Ds can come within the line of a character. The decisions of the speaker are still coming from the other, silent character. And the silent character is still having R + D's, they just aren't voicing them. They are having "unspoken dialogue".

Hamlet: "I realize you don't understand where I am at, so I set the table for you: To be."

Hamlet: "Now I realize that you are paying attention, so I throw the opposite at you: Or not to be"

Hamlet: "Now I realize you aren't getting what that means, so I ram home the premise: That is the question."

When the decisions are only being voiced by one character, that's called a MONOLOGUE.

When working with a scene partner, if the actors do a thorough R + D rehearsal for what will be a three to five minute scene, that will take twenty to thirty minutes to work through...as the actors are really extending the scene, extending the moments, and working out all the notes of the scene.

As the actors work, they will have little discoveries, and will be adjusting and re-working the analysis they already prepared, learning more and more, and going deeper and deeper into the scene. After all that rigorous and exhaustive work the actor did for days preparing the scene analysis, in the R + D rehearsal the actor will sometimes have an epiphany about the meaning of the scene, and will give the actor a much cleared picture of the scenes story.

The R + D rehearsal is paramount. On set, working with actors, always try take time to work through the R + D with them. To make sure you are both "on the same page". Definitely have at least worked it out with a coach or a fellow actor before ever coming close to set (or audition or stage rehearsal).

Once an actor and their scene partner have thoroughly worked out R + Ds, another affective exercise is to run the R + Ds WITHOUT DIALOGUE but with no scenes in hand. That is a very effective way to KNOW that you KNOW the meaning of every moment of the scene.

In my GRADUATES CLASS when actors go up on the dialogue, lose their lines, they don't ask for "line"...they ask for "moment". They know the words, these are actors who are disciplined and skilled at memorization. It isn't the dialogue that they have forgotten, it's the moment. They lost focus and dropped the moment. They've lost track of the realizations and decisions. So instead of prompting them with the next line of dialogue, I call out their realization, and the lines always come.

Don't forget: like NOTES make up music, it is the MOMENTS that make up a scene. Not the dialogue, The dialogue is only one of three possible ways to convey the communication of the moment: Speech, Behaviour, or silence.

If an actor is feeling disconnected from their partner, or stiff in the scene...if they are failing to find their FLOW... then a great exercise is to do the R + D WITH SOUND AND MOVEMENT. This exercise requires a third person, or coach to help:

After the realization and decision is stated, the actors break into Sound And Movement for a few beats until the coach spontaneously calls for dialogue, and without a moment's hesitation, the actor says the dialogue. then the other actor states their next R + D, the actors do Sound And Movement, and then the coach at some point calls for dialogue, and the actor blurts out their dialogue without hesitation.

That is a effective way of ingraining the dialogue into the action and finding it off your partner all while killing any possibility of pre-set line readings.

That exercise of course could also be done with the NOUN EXERCISE inserted into the R + D. It can also be done with the A B C exercise inserted into the R + D. And at the highest level, it could be done with VECTOR BEHAVIOUR being inserted into the R + D.

Step (1): Each actor faces off the other. From their character statements, the actors take the VERB that they are playing in the scene. Each actor points to the other. And one at a time, they make a PROMISE, a pledge, to do that verb to each other:

"I will INVITE you into my life."

"I will SMASH APART your manipulation."

Don't forget these verbs need to be exciting to you the actor. A verb needs to be as specific as possible. Needs to be POTENT. Needs to be ELECTRIC. It needs to excite the actor. Because in life, actions are specific and exciting. When the actor walks out on to their mark, or on to stage, that actor should be alive.

If the articulated verb is both powerful and specific, it is much easier for the actor to click into it. If it is general, the actor will fall back from it. One of the major errors that the early actor does is to play general actions instead of specific ones. When playing a specific action, the actor will fall into the scene.

As an acting teacher, my job when assessing actors is to first ascertain what actions they are playing. When two actors are boring, off their game, not engaged, or disconnected from the text...an acting teacher SHOULD NOT jump right to the personal. "Tell me about your mother" kind of teaching. The first thing I do is ask: "what was the action you were playing at that moment." Like a music teacher working with a young violinist, the teacher's job is to ensure that the student is playing the right notes, before the get into personal psychology. I ask the actors what is the verb that they are playing, and when they come back with a general and meaningless verb...to "convince" as opposed to "inject the data"...I will cry out: "No wonder you are boring! Your verb is boring! YOU are bored!"

Step (2): Now, once the two actors have pinpointed the specific verbs they are playing, they go back to their corners, emotionally prepare, then come back out to the centre, face off, point, and SIMULTANEOUSLY pledge their verbs to each other...and then instantly break into SOUND AND MOVEMENT.

Step (3): Now, actors figure out their DEMAND STATEMENT. The DEMAND STATEMENT is a counterpoint statement... a "STOP" statement. It is a demand. I want the other character to stop "verb-ing" me, the action that they are playing to me. Because their point is my counterpoint, and my point is their counterpoint. A over B equals B over A:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A & & B \\ \text{---} & = & \text{---} \\ B & & A \end{array}$$

That means the verb they are doing to me is touching my counterpoint, something I am trying to repress or play against. I need them to stop doing that verb. I need to say "STOP doing that to me".

Of course, my verb is hitting them in their counterpoint, something they are trying to repress to get their action done. So they need to "STOP doing your verb to me!"

To repeat: Your POINT is your VERB (your action). Your COUNTERPOINT is your STOP STATEMENT. And that is an inversion of the other character.

So, the exercise goes like this: once the two actors have pinpointed the specific verbs they are playing, and their specific stop statements...they go back to their corners, emotionally prepare, then come back out to the centre, face off, point to each other, and say their STOP STATEMENTS. Then break into SOUND AND MOVEMENT.

CHARACTER #1: "STOP Pushing me out of your life."

CHARACTER #2: "STOP making me love you!"

And the actors break into SOUND AND MOVEMENT.

[4] The two actors go back to their corners, emotionally prepare, then come back out to the centre, face off, point to each other, and say their VERBS and STOP STATEMENTS as inversions of each other. Then break into SOUND AND MOVEMENT.

CHARACTER #1 says: "I am going to VERB you".

CHARACTER #2 says: "STOP verbing me".

Then:

CHARACTER #2 says: "I am going to VERB you."

CHARACTER #2 says: "STOP verbing me."

Then: the actors go back and forth, switching from one to the other. This smashes home the point versus counter-point internal conflict, and drives the acting outward into vectored out connection.

Now we have really pummelled in scene analysis, emotional truth, and focus into the actor. NOW IT IS FINALLY TIME TO SURRENDER TO A RUN...

[5] The two actors go back to their corners:

- They emotionally prepare...
- They turn, face off, and point...
- They call their verbs out to each other...
- Then they break into sound and movement for a few beats...
- Then they break into VECTOR exercise for a few beats...

And then, spontaneously, they break into THE DIALOGUE.

NOW the actors are fully invested into the three corners of the triangle. NOW the actors have memorized the dialogue, aligned it to the actions through the R + D rehearsal. Now they are fully inside the story, they have aligned themselves to the character's emotions, and have full focus on the other. Now the character is in the actor's mind, soul, and blood. The actor is now "IN CHARACTER".

The actors set the stage for the possibilities of performance. "Setting the stage" means setting the relationships to everything in the scene outside of the characters in the scene. The relationship to the other character or characters have already been set. Now the actor has to explore and pinpoint the relationships to the physical set itself. To the props. To activities.

SET

An actor walking on to a set in film or television or in a professional stage production, walks on to a pre-made set. The actor walks into their finished office. They walk into the museum, the hospital operating room, or on to the helicopter tarmac. And now the actor gets to play. An actor in a scene study class, or in some theatre productions, are directing themselves, and have to build the set and set the stage themselves. An actor in an audition room has no set at all, and sets the stage in their imagination.

Whatever the scenario, an actor needs to cement the relationship of the character to the setting of the scene. More specifically, the actor needs to connect the relationship of the character to the different arenas within the set. The character has different relationships to the different areas of the playing field.

In each and every place that a person is in, the person has THREE DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIPS to what we call the THREE ARENAS:

- the SAFETY zone
- the DANGER place
- the ESCAPE path

Whatever setting you are in right now as you read this...your bedroom, office, a cafe, on a park bench in a park... those three arenas are alive in you.

Now that the actor has explored the character's relationships to the environment and its three separate arenas, the actor needs to reach back into the emotional life and align emotionally imagery of those three places to themselves. Like "mini emotional preparations" to specifically find what that means to the actor, and then transfer it to the three arenas.

PROPS

The actor will be working with props. A coffee maker to make the coffee. The notebook. The gun. The laundry. The picture in the frame. The contract, computer chip, crutch or whatever your character uses in their physical activities. Jewelry. A wallet. Watch. Wedding ring. The glass of water. Everything. As with set, the actor needs to cement the emotional relationships to these props.

It isn't just a gun...it is "what will take my son's father away from him". That's not just an alcoholic drink...it is my "elixir of joy that will douse the pain". Or it is "the liquid courage to fortify my commitment to taking action". Or it is "the poison that will take away my wife and child."

Food means something to your character. It isn't just eating. It could be: this meal is "the delicious comfort that is warming my soul and making me feel cared for." Or: this food could be "the nutrition my body needs despite the fact that it tastes like dead rat."

The coffee maker is the "tool to rebuild his sobriety so we can save our clients."

From the story, the character has a relationship to each one of these props. The actor needs to reach back into their emotional life and align their personal emotionally imagery of the relationship to the prop. Again, doing "mini emotional preparations", to specifically find what that relationship means to the actor, and then transfer it to the the props.

Often times, props are the tools of ACTIVITIES.

ACTIVITIES

An activity is a physical doing that is intended to help achieve the objective.

AN OBJECTIVE: the circumstances of the story determine the CO-CENTRIC CIRCLE OF OBJECTIVES (page 50). The character's OVERALL OBJECTIVE is their objective of life. That will determine the character's objective in the whole story (screenplay, teleplay, or play script). That STORY OBJECTIVE will determine the character's SCENE OBJECTIVE. The scene objective is the goal of the character, what they want to "make" the other character do or "get" from the other character in order to achieve whatever it is that they consciously want to achieve.

AN ACTION: the scene objective determines SCENE ACT OBJECTIVES which determine the SUBACT OBJECTIVES which determine the UNIT OBJECTIVES...all the way down to the moment. In that moment, the character is doing a PARTNER-RELATED ACTION to the other character...they are affecting (or attempting to affect) a change in the other character to achieve their objective. The partner-related action is a transitive verb. "I (verb) you".

AN ACTIVITY: a physical doing in the scene that a character does in order to achieve their objective. To search for the phone number in the purse in order to call the HIV clinic. To clean the gun, preparing to face off Jesse James. To wash the dishes to show love to his wife who has just returned home from the hospital. The making of the bed to make the guest, who the character is falling in love with, comfortable.

- Making coffee
- Folding the laundry
- Sewing the child's shirt
- Writing the will
- Wrapping the present
- Making dinner for her lover

The activity is born of the scene objective from the story. It's very strange to watch a character do an objective that isn't in concert with the objective. It's extremely unnatural and distracting for an audience to watch an actor who made "a choice"...from their ego...in order to be interesting, decide to do an arbitrary activity added into a scene. The actor for no reason pours a drink. Or for no seeming reason is practising their golf swing. Because it's not born of the story, the audience gets contradictory signals, and part of their attention gets absorbed with the figuring out why exactly that character is swinging golf clubs in the scene.

In real life, people only do activities born of their objectives, consciously or subconsciously.

Therefore, activities must be D.U.I.:

- Difficult
- Urgent
- Imperative

If an activity is too easy, it wouldn't be in the scene because it won't occupy the character. If it isn't urgent, then it wouldn't have to happen now in the scene. And if it wasn't imperative, meaning deeply important, than the character wouldn't bother doing it.

From the story, the character has a relationship to each one of these activities. The actor needs to reach back into their emotional life and align their personal emotionally imagery of the relationship to that activity. Again, doing "mini emotional preparations", to specifically find what that relationship means to me, and then transfer it to the the activity which is difficult, urgent, and imperative.

Now that the actor has the meaning of the set, props, and activities defined - they have embedded the emotional relationship to these aspects of the scene within themselves - the last series of relationships that need to be set, is to anything mentioned in the scene...

IMAGERY

If any concepts, people, places, events, ideas, or images of any kind are mentioned in the scene, the characters will know what they are, look like, and mean to them. And so the actor has to be certain they have aligned their understanding of these images to their own.

If in the scene the characters talk about going to Barbados, the actor must have an image of “Barbados” prepared in them. The actor must ask: “What does “Barbados” mean to the character? What relationship does the character have “Barbados” that comes from the COR(e) of the story?” And then the actor must ask themselves: “what would mean that to me?”

When one of the characters speak about “wealth”...the actor *MUST* investigate the meaning of wealth to their character, and then ensure that that meaning of wealth has been aligned to the actor. When the character mentions “good old Uncle Harry”, the actor better have an image of who that is to them that is born of what Uncle Harry means to their character.

Actors need to take time with the script and pinpoint all the concepts, ideas, people, places, objects, memories – anything spoken of in the scene – and accurately assess the meaning of these things to their characters, so that they can then find images in themselves to live in the same emotional relationship to each. An audience watching a professional actor who have done their job will have the images in their heads triggered by the images in the actor’s head. They will be connected to the actor.

Even if the actor is talking about things the audience has no concept of...say a medical term: “dilated cardio-myopathy”...if the actor has a specific emotional relationship to the meaning of that term, even if the audience doesn’t, they will FEEL SAFE that the actor does. Audiences feel safe in the hands of a prepared actor who knows what they are doing and why.

It is unnerving and inhuman to watch an actor talk about things that mean nothing to them. Actors who have no idea why they are saying what they are saying and have no meaning and image ascribed to it...then the audience can’t have images for it, and they FEEL UNSAFE.

EXAMPLE: Look at Annie's monologue from Bull Durham. The actress will need to work out each and every one of the things mentioned, and find an emotional image for each and every one:

Crash gingerly helps her to her feet. Gets her a drink.

CRASH

Why baseball?

ANNIE

I was raised in a Baptist church
got dipped in the water when I
was 5-- born again before
kindergarten...by the time I was
10 I knew it was bullshit and at
15 I ran away from home..

She smiles at the painful memories.

ANNIE

...pregnant, had an abortion, got
pregnant again, had an abortion
again...gave up men. Tried women.
Missed men. My mother died.

(beat)

I bought a car for \$200 and drove
to Ft. Lauderdale to bury her.

(beat)

And after we'd sung some hymns in
some wretched Florida funeral home,
I went outside and something happened--

Her tone becomes wistful, nostalgic.

ANNIE

The smell of cut grass in the
warm March air overwhelmed me and
I heard a noise--tok, tok, tok--
and some men shouting...then
tok, tok, tok.

Crash smiles slightly. He knows.

ANNIE

I crossed the street--it was the
New York Yankees spring training
field--tok, tok, tok, was the
sound of a ball hitting a bat--
and I sat in the warm bleachers
to think about my mother...

(beat)

And I saw him.
baseball.

CRASH

What's so great about baseball?

ANNIE

If you know where home plate is,
then you know where 1st base is,
and 2nd, and everything else--
'cause they're always in the same
place in relation to home.

(beat)

Don't you see? If you know where
home plate is, then you know where
everything else in the universe is!

The actress playing Annie will have to take time to write out a list...and then find an emotional image equivalent for each and everyone so that she knows that SHE KNOWS what she is talking about:

- Baptist Church
- Kindergarten
- Home
- Pregnancy
- Abortion
- Sex with Men
- Sex with Women
- Mother
- Used Car
- Ft. Lauderdale
- Funeral home
- Springtime
- Baseball
- Bleachers