

In **CHAPTER 1** we will be looking at the philosophy of acting itself, we will discuss in full detail exactly what actors do for a living, and the construction of life itself: the life triangle.

Chapter 1A: Philosophy

Acting is the art form of LIFE. So if we are all alive, why does the early amateur actor look like they are "acting"? Acting is a misinterpreted art form because we cannot see the mechanics behind it. It just looks like life. But just like any other vocation, it requires a tremendous amount of skill and preparation to look so effortless and spontaneous. In this first lesson, we learn the golden rule of acting, why the performance is only 1% of the process, and why relying on your instincts will lead you astray.

Chapter 1B: Life

Acting is the art of being. So what does it mean to BE? Life is defined by three things: the intellectual, the emotional, and the actual (thinking, feeling, doing). This is the life triangle. In this lesson, we learn how to apply the life triangle to our acting process so that we can fulfill the 99% (preparation) and completely surrender to story. We also explore the paradox of "losing yourself" in a role, and the risks of inverting the process and putting the 99% into performance.

Chapter 1C: Surrender

Acting is not about "trust". It is about knowledge. In order to surrender to a scene, we must know that we can surrender. We must know that all our preparation is there to support us as we fall into character. Our knowledge must override our fear. When doing your preparation, the energy of the 99% should be equally divided into the three sections of the life triangle: STORY, EMOTION, and FOCUS. If an actor drops any corner of the triangle, it is impossible to surrender to character because there will be a gap in the knowledge.

Chapter 1D: Fear

If an actor has not done their homework and investigated all three areas of the triangle (STORY, EMOTION, FOCUS) then a gap in the knowledge occurs. Within that gap, our insecurity – or what we call "negative ego" – takes over. You've now made it about you, and the audience is paradoxically left out of your performance. Here you will learn the irony of insecurity in your acting, the best way to override your fears, and the surprising thing that can make you a more empathetic and vulnerable actor.

Chapter 1E: Knowledge

The key to acting is self-knowledge. In order to take ownership of our fears and insecurities, we must be unrelenting in the research of our own intellectual, emotional, and charismatic selves. The irony of acting is that if we know ourselves well, we can then overcome self and become character. What is the ultimate goal in our acting? Here we discuss further what it means to surrender to character, and what the contract is between the actor and the audience. Also, learn why every actor should have a PHD.

Chapter 1F: Summary

If you are alive, you already have an actor inside of you. You are already intelligent, emotional, and charismatic. Through knowledge of story, emotion, and focus, you can unleash those qualities and become character. The potential exists inside you already. You just need to permit yourself to be what you already are. In this video, we summarize and solidify the philosophy we learned throughout this chapter to prepare you for the lessons ahead.

CHAPTER 2 is a complete mapping out of story analysis, breaking down scenes, and the understanding of how to read and approach narrative.

Chapters 2A: Scarecrow

Human beings are genetically encoded to understand story and narrative structure. We view everything through a narrative lens: story is our way of making sense of the world and finding meaning in our lives. To begin our scene analysis, we must explore our innate and complex relationship to story and how it relates to our acting. Learn why human beings are meaning-making machines, why your personal narrative is so powerful, and what the analogy of the white moth can teach us about ourselves.

Chapter 2B: Story

Our job as actors is to surrender and serve the story. We must have a deep understanding of what narrative structure looks like in order to play the scene correctly. In this chapter, we will begin a visual graph of structure that we can reference and work from. There is a formula to understanding every script. Learn what is at a scene's CORE (C-circumstances, O-objective, R-relationship, E-emotional truth), how to identify the theme, and why there are always two contrasting conversations (e.g. Money vs. Morality).

Chapter 2C: Structure

Structure and story are two sides of the same coin; one cannot live without the other. Without structure, a scene would have no shape. Every scene is composed in a very specific way to tell the story, and only by understanding that composition can we fulfill the fullest intentions of the script. How does understanding structure teach you about the conflict in your scene? How do we know if a character wins or loses? What are the obstacles? Learn what the ARC of a scene is and how to find it.

Chapter 2D: Counterpoint

Counterpoint is the equal opposite that occurs in all things. All human beings are in self-conflict, and we must bring that same inner tension and depth to the characters we play. Every scene that exists is born out of counterpoint and irony. Without counterpoint, an actor will only play "one note". Using many examples from popular film scenes, this lesson will examine the law of counterpoint and how to find it in your characters. Learn how counterpoint will inform a crucial component of your scene analysis, and how to apply this knowledge to your final performance.

Chapter 2E: Graph

Every scene has two contrasting themes/conversations, and every character has both a point and counterpoint. How do these two ideas relate to one another? The answer to this question becomes the essential formula (A/B = B/A) at the core of every scene.

In this lesson, we will continue to build our visual graph of structure. The graph will teach you how to find the positive or negative arc of a character, why a positive arc in a scene also equals a negative counterpoint arc, and how characters are inversions of one another. This will all become the foundation of your character work.

Chapter 2F: Threes

There is a beginning, middle, and an end to everything in the universe. All things that exist in time are in a three act structure. Therefore, the final step in creating our graph is to cut the scene into three distinct acts. Here we will learn why "cutting into threes" is a crucial step in shaping the script and clarifying the wins and losses of your character. Also discover the difference between an act, a sub-act, and a unit, and why there are precisely 243 macro moments in a scene! This lesson may feel a little bit like math class, but it will be worth it!

Chapter 2G: Architecture

To not understand story and structure is to not understand the scene. The writer has given us the architecture, and we must know how live within that architecture to fulfill the story. In this lesson, we examine our relationship to structure as human beings and the implications on our art. How can structure actually make us better artists? When an actor chooses not to follow any form or structure, what happens?

Chapter 2H: Verbs

If music is composed of notes, and dancing is composed of steps, what is acting composed of? Transitive verbs are the partner-related actions you take moment to moment through a scene. They are the notes the actor must play to tell the story correctly, and they are essential to your preparation. Here we learn why transitive verbs are the secret to a dynamic performance. You will discover the importance of finding playable actions that are specific and meaningful to you, and why sometimes a powerful verb cannot be found in a dictionary.

Chapter 2I: Moments

A moment is the juxtaposition of two realizations and decisions (R&D). An character realizes something and makes a decision (an action), and then the other character realizes something and makes a decision in response (counteraction). It is the shift of energy between two people. In this lesson, we go deeper into our relationship with verbs and what "surrendering to the moment" really means. We also learn the difference between your actions on paper, and what happens when you use them in performance.

Chapter 2J: character

How do we define character? Character is action. Once you take all the actions off the page and play them in a moment with your scene partner(s), character is immediately born. Learn the difference between character and characterization, why it is dangerous (and even lazy!) to write a "backstory" for your character, and why you should never do in a scene what you think you would do in your own life.

Chapter 2K : Character Statement

Character statement is a tool you will be using through the rest of these lessons. It is all the information you have accumulated through your scene analysis - relationship, action, objective, consequence, and counterpoint - distilled down into one easy, playable sentence. Your character statement is the articulation of your A/B = B/A. Your character statement is written in the following formula: You are the one who (relationship) and I have to (verb) you because I need (objective) otherwise (consequence of failing) but the truth is (counterpoint)."

CHAPTER III is devoted to emotionality: defining emotion, how to discover the character's emotional life, and how to permit the actor's emotions...in order to move audiences. A very clear, step-by-step process of emotion - not magic or instinct or intuition - but the actual psychological processes of the function and construction of emotion, so that an actor can consistently and repeatedly sit inside character emotion.

Chapter 3A: Tinman

Emotionality is one of the most beautiful and misunderstood parts of acting. You cannot become character if you do not inhabit the character's emotionality; it is an essential part of bringing humanity and truth to life. But it is still only 1/3 of the triangle, and the purpose of emotionality is always to serve the story. In this chapter, we will begin to learn what emotion is and why we emotionalize ourselves. We also look at the two most false arguments about emotionality in acting, and the way to allow yourself to be emotional in the work without becoming self indulgent.

Chapter 3B: E/Motion

What is emotion? Emotion is energy in motion, just like you. You are emotion; it is sitting inside of you waiting to pour out at all times. However, human beings frequently shut down their emotions and do their best not to express them as they go through an average day.

In this lesson, we analyze the complexity of our emotional selves and how it impacts our narrative art form.

Chapter 3C: Emotion = Death

We have been genetically encoded to be afraid of our own emotionality. According to our reptilian brain, emotions = death. So how do actors override their inner "reptile" and commit fully to the emotionality of their characters, even when they feel afraid? Here we examine the circle of emotionality. Learn why "real people" detach from their emotions, how this applies to our process as actors, and the most important step to finally bringing your emotionality into a scene.

Chapter 3D: Laws of Emotion

There are three laws of emotion. 1) Human are emotion and therefore have 100% emotional potential at all times. 2) Real human beings do their best NOT to express their emotions, and so we must do the same same in our acting. 3) To create real life, we must prep the full emotional potential of a scene and then push down on that emotion with the actions of the character.

In this lesson, we introduce the technique of “capping” and discuss the most common mistakes actors make when doing their emotional work.

Chapter 3E: Capping

Audiences do not respond to the outward appearance of emotionality; they react to the energy of emotionality. The truth of the character will teach you how much you must cap their emotions to get through the scene. In this lesson, we juxtapose parallel scenes from the films *Remains of the Day* and *Shadowlands* to illuminate emotionality in character and how the process of capping works. Learn why the same emotional preparation occurs no matter how your character deals with that emotion, and why big emotional outbursts are actually the moments of highest teaching.

Chapter 3F: Emotional Core

In order to get to the soul of your character, you must connect yourself to their emotional core truth. Your character's emotional core is not the feelings of the character, nor is it plot. Remember that emotions are verbs (energy in motion), and so your emotional core truth must be articulated in such a way that you can put it into action. Learn how to isolate and articulate the emotional core truth of your characters, the difference between feelings and emotions, and how to avoid result-oriented acting.

Chapter 3G: Emotion = Light

Imagine the emotional core of your character is a bright light, radiating from inside a house with closed doors. In order to inhabit that emotionality, the actor must find a way into that house and shine like that light. Sometimes you relate so easily to the scene you can walk right through the front door; other times, you may need to crawl through the chimney or back window. Either way, it is your job to research yourself and embody that character's emotionality completely. Learn how to embrace this process of aligning your own emotional life to character by understanding that emotions are all light, not darkness.

Chapter 3H: Passion

There are two conflicting voices within us at all times: joy and fear. As we grow older, those voices are constantly ignited by our different life experiences. Those pain and joy voices shape our core essence and become the passion of who we are. In this lesson, we go deeper into the metaphor of the house of emotionality and how to use your life experiences to align yourself with character. Learn why your joy voice is always present in even your darkest moments, and why it screams “This is so good for my acting!”

Chapter 3I: Experience and Imagination

We take in the world through imagery. Images come at us all day long, and while most of them are deleted or rejected from our consciousness, the meaningful ones will attach to your emotional core and stay stored inside your “nation of images” (imagination). Learn why there is no difference between memory and imagination, why a memory will lose its emotional resonance every time you remember it, and how to effectively use your personal imagery in your acting.

Chapter 3J: Preparation Process

If emotion is a house of light, what is the tool to get yourself into that house? Everything revolves around imagery. You are full of imagery that is tied to your emotional core, and that imagery is the “crow bar” that releases the geyser within you. All you need to do is find the specific image that will align you with your character. In this lesson, we break down the process of preparation process step by step. Learn the important questions to ask yourself, what imagery is and how to use it, and what it means to physicalize your emotional hook.

Chapter 3K: Hamlet Prep

Hamlet’s emotional core is that he is questioning his own life. If an actor cannot walk right through the front door of that “house of light”, how do they get inside Hamlet’s emotional state? Even if you have never contemplated suicide, ask yourself: “What do I know about that?”

In this demonstration, Matthew walks through the entire emotional preparation process for Hamlet’s To Be or Not To Be speech. See the process in action and learn why emotionality is not self-indulgent when it is used to become the character.

Chapter 3L: Beautiful Exploitation

We cannot go back in time to repair the things that have happened to us, nor can we erase our memories. Our life experiences are the gift we have as actors to empathize and align ourselves with the characters we play, and so we exploit our imaginations and memories in order to create great art and affect the world. We transform the gunk in ourselves into gold. In this video, learn the difference between self indulgence and exploitation, why you don’t need to be a tortured person to be an artist, and how releasing your negative emotions through character can manifest more joy in your life.

Then in CHAPTER 4 we will discover focus and partner-related action (called focal vectors), and the resulting charisma. How to courageously overcome the ego and get connected to the other, so that the actor can surrender to story.

Chapter 4A: Lion

Focus is the art of charisma. The focal exercises you will learn throughout this chapter exist to help you override your insecurities and establish an outward connection to your scene partner. If you overcome ego, you can surrender to the scene. In this lesson, we define what focus is and how you become interesting to an audience. Learn why everything in your scene is about the “other” and what it truly means to be ego-less.

Chapter 4G: Checking out

“Checking out” is when you ignite your ego, fall out of your partner and get into your head. It is an extremely natural, normal part of your insecurity. Checking out is a self-sabotaging mechanism designed for you to fail. Nobody is afraid of failure; we are afraid to succeed. Your fear will always look for ways to validate itself. Learn more about what the fear voice is, the many ways in which it disguises itself, and how to override your own check out mechanisms in order to “check in”.

Chapter 4H: Alphabet Exercise

The Alphabet exercise is very simple exercise with a profound result: it teaches you to recognize changing moments and deeply connect with your partner. As two actors say the alphabet together, they move on to the next letter when they acknowledge a new moment between them. As a moment changes, the letter changes. As we discussed in chapter two, a moment is a measure of time in which two people share one common event (the juxtaposition of two R&Ds). Here you will learn why moments can neither be created nor destroyed, only acknowledged. The exercise brings you into a place of neutrality and connectivity so that real life – real moments – can occur.

Chapter 4I: Vector Exercise

In this exercise, two actors face each other off at a comfortable distance and read each other’s behaviour using verbs (i.e. “You are encouraging me” / “You are challenging me”, etc.). After the first actor reads the other’s behaviour, the second actor can respond truthfully in kind with “Yes, I am encouraging you” or “No, I’m not challenging you.” Then the second actor reads the behaviour of the first actor, and so on. Behaviour is what the other actor is doing to you. Similar exercises that have been taught by teachers in the past have revolved around results, speaking in nouns and adjectives (“You look angry”). However, behaviour is a verb, so this exercise is about being able to recognize and deal with the action and energy that is coming at you; the realizations and decisions of your partner. This exercise helps you get inside the charisma of connectivity.

So CHAPTER V explains surrender and performance as well as digging into approaching rehearsal and working with adjustments.

Chapter 5A: Three Questions Exercise Part A

The Three Questions is an in-depth emotional exploration that requires you to ask three major questions of your life and align your emotional responses to the scene analysis. The exercise encourages you to intimately connect with your partner and open yourself up to vulnerability. In this lesson, you will be taken through the process of The Three Questions step by step, and then learn how to practically apply the results of the exercise to your character work. As you take your time to share your answers with your partner, use very specific images, anecdotes, and examples.

Chapter 5B: The Three Questions Exercise Part B

As you continue to go through The Three Questions, you will discover that this exercise has many profound results. The actor will not only lose track of time and become focally connected to their partner, but will also discover more about their own deep set emotionality that is always readily available to them. Everything that means anything to you is born out of one of the three questions: your core belief, your life objective, and who you love most in the world. In this lesson, you will complete the Three Questions Exercise and learn how to compound your imagery into a powerful character statement. As you bring this emotional work to the scene analysis you have already done, your character will come to life.

Chapter 5C: Memorization

The process of memorization is an essential part of what we do, yet often misunderstood. Actors will memorize in order to try to remember their dialogue in the scene, and deliver their lines the way that they memorized them. But in real life, people speak spontaneously in the moment and surprise themselves with what they are saying. In order to represent real life, an actor must actually memorize in order to forget. That way, lines come out spontaneously but also exactly as written. Here we will learn several simple but effective memorization techniques that will allow natural, spontaneous dialogue to occur. Learn about the melody of speech, why you should not pre-determine how your dialogue should sound, and which common memorization habits to avoid.

Chapter 5D Rehearsal

Now that you have completed your scene analysis and memorized your lines, you are ready for rehearsal. Rather than creating a pre-set performance, we will explore a series of verb exercises and other rehearsal techniques that will eradicate your ego, immerse you deeply into the moment-to-moment of the scene, and align your dialogue with the actions you are playing. It is discouraged to spend your rehearsal running the scene over and over again, or making ego-driven "choices". If you are limited on time, it is better to never run the scene at all and put all your work into the techniques we are demonstrating here. In this lesson, learn how to do an R&D rehearsal, how to apply a counterpoint statement, and why you should be memorizing your "moments" as deeply as your lines.

Chapter 5E: Class Warm Up

A warm up should be designed to get you emotionally prepared and electrically connected to your partner. In this video, Matthew will walk you through an intense class warm up in order to demonstrate how to practically put the exercises into action and prepare yourself for performance. These exercises will get you emotionally connected, focused on the relationship, objective, and actions of the scene, and ready for surrender.

Chapter 5F Setting the Scene

You have now completed your scene analysis, emotional work, and focal work. The last part of your rehearsal process is to set your relationships to everything beyond the other characters. This includes your set, props, activities, and anything that is spoken about within the scene. Everything must have meaning and associated imagery which will come from your knowledge of the story and the objectives of your character. In this lesson, learn why every objective is born of an even greater objective, what your safety/danger/escape zones are, and how to set your character's relationships within any environment.

Chapter 5G: Surrender

Now that you have done the 99%, you are finally ready to let go and surrender to the performance. Once you have done all your rehearsal work, there is no room for any insecurity to show up because you have closed the gap between actor and character. On action, all the knowledge from your homework breaks the “ego line” and the first moment happens. As the scene continues, you flow from moment to moment, and you have now become character and story. Learn how to use your character statement to launch you into performance, how to be certain you are serving the story and audience, and what you should promise your scene partner before you begin.

Chapter 5H: Blocking

Blocking is the result of your work, not the work itself. Early actors will rehearse scenes and predetermine the blocking to make it fit for them, which means it is born ego-driven choices and doesn't look natural. But if you have truly surrendered and become character, the blocking will just naturally occur. It will be unconscious and character-driven. You won't think of it as blocking; you are simply alive. In this lesson, you will learn what it means to receive a blocking note from a director, how to fix blocking that isn't working, and the difference between directorial notes and acting notes.

Chapter 5I - Classic Class Notes Part 1

There are many recurring habits and odd behaviours that can be seen in early actors when they are disassociated from character. An acting teacher should never just highlight a symptom or diagnose the problem (ie “You wave your hands too much”), they must also be prescriptive in helping the actor to fix it. Here we will learn some of the most common habits and behaviours that early actors make and why they happen. In this first part, we will discuss the “indicating actor”, unnatural sounding dialogue, and odd physical gestures.

Chapter 5J: Classic Class Notes P2

In this lesson, we continue to explore common behaviours that occur when an actor is not fully immersed in character. Often these habits are a result of a gap in the homework or a misunderstanding of the scene analysis, but there may also be personal barriers that affect the performance, such as a fear of conflict or a block against the specific emotionality of the scene. In each case, we will discuss some classic reasons behind these occurrences and what their practical solutions are. Some notes in this section include: the difference between picking up cues and speaking quickly, why you should always be weary of putting pauses in the wrong moments, and the relationship between tempo and objective.

Chapter 5K: Teaching vs Directing

An acting teacher's job is to “unblock” you. They are meant to help you build your skill set, open you up to your highest potential, and empower you to graduate and work on your own. Once you are hired on set, it is crucial to remember your director is not an acting teacher, and it is not their job to speak in your terminology or teach you about acting. The director is meant to be audience's representative on set, making sure the story is being told effectively. You will often receive result-oriented directing notes (ie. “Be more angry”) and must know how to translate these notes into something that isactable for you. In this lesson, learn more about the role of an acting teacher vs. a director, why a teacher should never try to “break you down”, and the important five step process to taking a note from a director.

Chapter 4B: Focus.

All the great actors pop electrically on screen. The more “vectored out” you are, the more charismatic and exciting you are to watch. If you are focused inward on yourself, your humanity shuts down and the camera shuts you out. Here we go deeper into the art of focus and what it means to be self-conscious, the real reason actors are made to feel so important on set, and why your job is to have a “good dinner party” on cue.

Chapter 4 C: The Other

Many actors believe that the most important lines of the scene are their own lines, but in fact it is the opposite. Your dialogue is inconsequential; your partner’s dialogue is imperative. If you are 100% focused and interested in the other person, suddenly the audience is interested in you.

In this lesson, learn what it means to be focused on the other, how to always have a good dinner party, and why actors need to be in “real time”.

Chapter 4 D: Sound and Movement

This exercise is called Sound and Movement. Two actors face off at a comfortable distance apart. One actor makes a random sound and a random movement. The second actor has to instantaneously repeat that sound and movement precisely as they saw it. The second actor then performs a spontaneous sound and movement of their own, and the first actor repeats it. Now they continue back and forth. This exercise is designed to help you focus on the other. Just like the dialogue in the scene, the most important sound and movement is the one your partner makes. Your response is entirely accidental. Through this exercise you will learn how to throw yourself into your partner, sharpen your listening, and dissolve your insecurity.

Chapter 4E: Speed of life

The magic of acting happens when you are inside the “speed of life”. The speed of life is our animal mode: the space where we are able to physically react before our minds have caught up to real time. Whether or not you are doing Aaron Sorkin or Harold Pinter, underneath the dialogue you must be so electrically connected with your partner that you are affecting change in one another even through silence. In this lesson, we learn the science behind the “speed of life”, why we are usually eight milliseconds out of the universe, and why you should never be slower than the audience.

Chapter 4F: Nouns

Once you have mastered the connectivity of Sound and Movement, it is time to move on to the Noun exercise. This exercise is the exact same premise as Sound and Movement, but in this case you are speaking to each other with nouns. One actor says a noun to the other; the second actor repeats that word as quickly as possible and then spontaneously adds a new one. This continues back and forth. Using nouns stirs up imagery in one another, and this can cause you to overthink and get your ego involved. Resist the urge to engage your personality or respond to the other’s noun in a clever or funny way. Avoid hiding behind generalizations and non-nouns like: you, me, him, her, no, yes. The point of this exercise is to be specific and precise, speak before you think, and click into the speed of life with your partner.

audience.