



SETTINGS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Module Activities

Activity: Floor Plan

- Design a set for a living room.
 - A floor plan is a diagram of any interior space as seen from above.
 - Remember, we're designing a stage set, not an actual living room.
 - You need to think about the audience's view.
- Use the PDF of a floor plan and the PDF of furniture symbols.
 - Feel free to print these for use.
 - Or, simply refer to them as you draw your plan on your own paper.
- Two major considerations
 - Motivated space
 - Place furniture, doors, and windows on the set in ways that will provide reasons for the actors to use the whole space.
 - Sharing with the audience
 - Remember that we want to audience to be able to see the action on stage.

Exercise: Where

- This exercise is adapted from a theatre game developed by Viola Spolin.
- It will demonstrate how a space can be activated and come to life even in the absence of physical objects.
- Part One: Preparation
 - Clear away the furniture and create an empty stage space, deciding where the audience sits – the location of the “fourth wall.”
 - Put your living room floorplan where it's readily visible to everyone, including the actors.
 - Use chairs to represent the couches and chairs on your floor plan, putting them in the appropriate corresponding spots.
 - Everything else – lamps, doors, windows, tables, and so on are imaginary – you're going to create by showing them physically.
 - Remember: the only actual objects are the chairs.
- Part Two: Establishing the space
 - The first player will enter the living room set and make physical contact with an object in the set (e.g. a lamp or a candy dish). Remember to refer to the living room floorplan. The player then exits.
 - Then the next player enters, makes contact with the object the first player showed us, and then makes contact with another object – maybe wipes the table – again always referring to the floor plan.
 - Then the third player enters, makes contact with the first two objects, and then contacts a third, and so on.



- Continue until there's been contact with every object on the ground plan. Challenge yourself to make inventive, interesting contact.
- Part Three: Adding Relationships
 - Choose two players and decide on a simple relationship for them: husband/wife; boyfriend/girlfriend, siblings.
 - Don't use your real-life relationships.
 - Decide on a simple reason for the two of them to be in the living room.
 - While playing out this simple relationship and activity, the task for the two players is to make physical contact with every object in the room. Justified contact.
 - Remember to always refer to your living room floor plan.
- Discuss the ways in which the set came to life and how it gave life and character to the two players.
- You can explore other "Where" exercises by visiting <https://spolingamesonline.org/using-the-where/>.

Exercise: Elephant in the Room

- Determine a high stakes unvoiced concern, or the elephant in the room.
- Layer the elephant in the room into Part Three of the "Where" exercise.

Scene Writing

Working alone or with a partner, write the opening few pages of a Family Drama, involving two related characters. Describe the setting in some detail. Decide on the characters' relationship. Give them a simple activity: preparing a meal, cleaning up, folding laundry. Most importantly, decide on the elephant in the room, the unspoken issue that charges the circumstances. This you keep private.

- Establish the key primary "realities."
 - What is the event? (e.g. Christmas Eve, Passover, a birthday (whose?))
 - What activities does the event typically involve?
 - Meal: cooking, wiping and setting the table, pouring drinks
 - Birthday: giving presents, singing "Happy Birthday," cake with candles
- Establish Relationships
 - Family Members?
 - Approximate Ages?
- Establish the elephant
 - Define the attitudes of the various family members to it.
 - Bury it as deeply as possible.
 - The stronger it is, the less is may be mentioned.
 - Explore what happens to normal family communications in the presence of an "elephant." (This is key.)
- Bring the scene to some kind of resolution, if not a conclusion



- Some examples:
 - A family member has enlisted – against the wishes of the family – and is leaving tomorrow.
 - A marriage proposal is expected imminently.
 - A family member, deployed in a war zone, has not texted or called at the expected time.
 - The family is expecting a call from the college coach with an offer of a full athletic scholarship.
 - A family member has been convicted of a serious crime and will be sentenced tomorrow.
 - The family, in dire financial straits, is expecting a call with a job offer.