

The Theatre's Professional Code of Ethics

[Compiled from Fran Avery Tanner's *Basic Drama Projects* and Tom Markus' *An Actor Behaves*]

The 4 R's of Theatre Etiquette:

1. **Respect the Space.**
2. **Respect the Time.**
3. **Respect the People.**
4. **Respect Yourself.**

1. Always be prompt for rehearsals. The industry standard is fifteen minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time. The time of rehearsal means you are warmed up, properly dressed and prepared to work at the time.
2. Come to rehearsals prepared to work. "Your mutual enemy is time. Join to defeat it." Make good use of your time and get off book as quickly as possible. Memorize your lines.
3. Show respect for the people you work with. Be prompt, make sure you have brushed your teeth and bathed recently and are physically pleasant to work with.
4. Study your part when you are not on stage; also study it at home. A day should not go by that you do not work on your part during a rehearsal period as well as a production run.
5. When not studying your part, actively watch others on stage. You will learn from their errors and achievements. Approach each moment as an opportunity to learn more about your craft. Practice good observation skills.
6. Don't leave rehearsals until you are dismissed by the director/assistant director. The director is in charge. Any absences or early exits must be approved ahead of time. The director has shaped the schedule to optimize the actors' rehearsal time.
7. Cooperate with all cast and crew members. There are no "stars" in a show; each person is needed to create a production. We are a team. The art of theatre is much bigger than any one person, so our goal must be to produce good theatre. The best theatre is intimately profound for both performers and audience. This will not happen if there is not an atmosphere of giving on stage.
8. Accept criticism cheerfully and leave the notes to the director! Unless you are the director, that is not your job. If you are having difficulty with a certain direction or person, please take these concerns to the director or stage manager. Do not try to deal with them yourself. Also, do not feed lines to other actors on stage. That is not your job.
9. Allow the director to direct. When you are given directions, listen. If you are asked to write down criticism, do so and then incorporate the suggestions in the next rehearsal. BRING A PENCIL AND YOUR SCRIPT TO EVERY REHEARSAL!
10. Avoid a display of temperament. Be patient and pleasant. Don't criticize others. Practice the golden rule! You will continue to work in this business if you are pleasant to work with. You are setting up a network of opportunities each job you do and every conference or workshop you attend. Be careful: the person you make a comment about might be the best friend of the person you are talking to.
11. Be quiet in the wings and auditorium. Professionalism should extend throughout your time in the theatre. During rehearsals, performances, class, etc.

12. Be ready for entrances without having to be called. Never be late for an entrance. Use your time in rehearsal as if it is precious. More likely than not, it is. You will never have enough time.
13. Remain in character whenever on stage. Never break and laugh. Very unprofessional. This is the main source of getting yelled at in some rehearsals. To repeat, your time in the theatre is very limited.
14. Don't look at the prompter if you forget a line. Remain in character and wait for the prompt. Listen to it carefully. The industry standard is to say "Line," and wait for the prompt.
15. When the director interrupts rehearsal for another actor, stand quietly in character, ready to start again when the interruption is finished. Once again, time is our enemy.
16. During a rehearsal or production, if anything accidentally falls on the stage floor, pick it up. The stage must always be free of distraction. If something doesn't belong there, for safety's sake pick it up. If it's during a show, do it in character. The only exception would be if picking it up would disrupt the story you are telling on stage.
17. Never appear in makeup or costume except backstage and on stage. This varies depending on the venue, so check with your director for post show etiquette and procedures.
18. Don't touch items such as lights, or props or costumes that are under the jurisdiction of another crew. If it is not yours, hand off!
19. When entering the theatre, leave personal problems behind. Always exhibit an air of professionalism when in rehearsal. Respect others and their time in rehearsal. Remember this is just like any other job. Many employers/directors won't care if you woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Your motivation is your paycheck, your credibility, and your reputation in the business.
20. Give your best performance for every audience. Every audience member is deserving of your best. That's why they came. That's what they paid for. Whether it's your first performance or your two hundredth one, to that audience member, it may be their first.
21. Don't confuse acting with living. Once again, this is a job. See #19. Though many artists will say that their chosen field and the products of that work are therapeutic, there is a big difference between therapeutic and therapy as hard as it may seem sometimes, try to leave the character (at least his or her more ill-mannered traits) on stage. As we don't want you to bring your personal problems on stage with you so do we ask that for your own as well as your loved ones' health you don't take your work home with you.
22. Never peek through the main curtain at the audience. Should we even have to mention this?
23. When the stage manager gives warning calls or instructions, always say, "Thank you," in reply. This is not a gesture of appreciation but more for an acknowledgement so that we know you have heard the instructions.
24. Keep up your grades. If you can't participate in drama and simultaneously maintain good grades, don't accept a role. Artists are notorious for their bad living habits. Please take care of yourself physically as well as mentally and spiritually. Get plenty of rest, drink lots of water, eat right, find time for study, and strive for excellence in everything you do.

"The two greatest enemies to good acting are time and a lack of self-respect. There is simply never sufficient time for the actor to do his work correctly. Time is money in the commercial world of theatre and the actor needs to invest in his time constructively, efficiently, and intensely. Proper work habits will

assist you to use your time well. When you behave properly, you will work effectively (and more often).” You will discover that you are able to maintain your focus on the real problems of acting during the hours you will be given to rehearse a role. Too many actors are destructively insecure and have so little respect for themselves and their craft that they waste their time and belittle their work by deluding themselves that divine inspiration and opening-night energy will miraculously produce results that have never been seen in rehearsals and that “I’ll be right on that night.” They have little craft and, therefore, few ways to assist themselves, and so they waste their time and energies on leaping irrelevant, self-imposed hurdles...But the actor who has sound working habits knows what he can do in each rehearsal and between rehearsals. He knows how to help himself and the entire production. He knows how to respect his work, and that helps him respect himself. That in turn helps him to use his time wisely, to behave as a professional.”

(from *An Actor Behaves* by Tom Markus)