

Performance Skills *by Janell Lovelace*

- 1. Face the audience whenever you are talking.** It doesn't matter if in the script you are supposedly talking to someone behind you, you should never face more than 45 degrees away from the audience when you are speaking. *Exercise: Come before the throne.*
- 2. Hold your head up.** Even if you are bowing to royalty or afraid of someone, you need to point your mouth at the audience to be understood - or at least to give them a chance to lipread.
- 3. Slow down and speak clearly.** This is true for everyone, but particularly true if you have a strong accent. You may well be excited and nervous and shy, but you still need to try to speak clearly. *Exercise: Pick a partner and introduce yourself.*
- 4. Speak loudly enough that the people in the back row can hear you.** Practice talking to people right in front of you, five feet away, and ten feet away. How do you need to change your voice? Can you get louder without yelling? What's a stage whisper?
- 5. Think about your voice and your inflection.** While still being loud enough to be heard, you can vary the way your voice sounds and the emotions you project. The same line can be said many different ways. *Exercise: "I can't believe you just said that to me!"*
- 6. Don't forget non-verbal communication.** Express feelings/emotions/ideas through simple motions & blocking. Practice balance and body awareness; actions enhance language. 90% of communication is non-verbal. *Exercise: What's your job / task?*
- 7. Movement on stage.** Yes, you're always facing the audience (/judges) while talking, but you still need to make the onstage movement interesting. *Exercise: Sit, stand, lean*
- 8. Characterization and character motivation.** Develop your character and think about what motivates them throughout the skit. *Exercise: be a tree / turtle / beetle, then freeze!*
- 9. You might want to sing.** Original compositions can greatly enhance performance. Be aware of time and copyright issues. Think about abilities, accompaniment and balance.
- 10. What happens when things go wrong?** How to feed someone a line. Always react in character - or don't react at all. Just keep going ... the show must go on!
- 11. Consider warm-up exercises.** You may not want to make time for these every time your group gets together, but when you're doing final rehearsals or preparing to perform, some body and voice warm-ups can help set the mood and relieve tense nerves. *Exercise: Everybody up!*
- 12. Memorize your lines as soon as you can.** As soon as you have a script, work on memorizing what you're supposed to say. Say lines to your brother, Mom, dog, mirror, etc.
- 13. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!** Just learning your lines isn't the same as practicing your interactions. The more times you go over it the more you'll be able to develop characters.
- 14. Use space safely and appropriately.** Review guidelines if you have questions.

Recommended reading: [Break a Leg!](#) by Lise Friedman, source for some of these exercises.