**Theater Etiquette – How To Be A Great Actor**

As a community theater, we encourage actors and actresses of all abilities and ages and backgrounds to take part in our plays, musicals and revues. So since not all of our thespians come to us with a strong familiarity with putting on a production, indeed for many, this is the first time that they’ve set foot on a stage, here are some tips on how to interact with your fellow actors, behave in and around the stage, and what to do if all else fails. Thanks to [CommunityTheater.org](http://www.communitytheater.org/) and [Actors’ Equity](http://www.actorsequity.com/) for ideas from their lists of actor’s etiquette: [The Actor’s Guide to Backstage Etiquette](http://www.communitytheater.org/articles/act_di_cr/bsetiket.htm); [Actors’ Equity Actors’ Etiquette](http://www.actorsequity.org/docs/outreach/etiquette.pdf). So here, in no particular order:

1. When you step off the stage, you vanish. Walk quietly backstage, in access corridors, up and down stairs, and everywhere in the theater. No talking or whispering off stage. No loud noise in the dressing room. Nothing ruins a scene more than the thumps of someone running to make a cue or someone talking in the wings.
2. Once the house is open, stay off the stage and out of the theater. Don’t mingle with a waiting audience; you have other things to keep you busy.
3. Never talk when the director is talking!
4. Never miss an entrance. Even if you don’t remember your lines, get your body on to the stage so your fellow actor or actors at least have someone to talk to. They can coach you along if they have to. If you’re not there, they might have to monologue or soliloquize and we definitely don’t want that to happen!
5. No mobile phones, especially in the wings! When you’re waiting to enter or supporting the on-stage cast from the wings, the show deserves all of your attention. Put the phone away and save the texting and tweeting for after rehearsal or after the night’s show.
6. Accept all notes from the director graciously and say, “Thank you.” Never disagree with the director in front of the cast and if you don’t understand the note or disagree, ask the director for some one-on-one time to discuss.
7. Never give other actors notes and don’t accept them from other actors. If someone does offer you notes, say “Thank you but we should take that through the director.” The only members of the production who should be giving notes are the director and the stage manager. It’s their job to make sure things look and sound the way they and the producers want, not yours. Constructive criticism among cast members is welcome, even encouraged in community theater since that’s the way we learn our chops, but all changes to the production must go through the director.
8. Never add something to or remove something from your costume. It’s the costume designers job to put you in something appropriate for the show, not yours. If you have suggestions or problems with a part of your costume, take them to the costumer or the director.
9. Don’t hang out in the wings to watch the show. Backstage areas can be tight and crew and your fellow actors have to get to where they need to be. If you want to watch the show, buy a ticket or get the DVD. Hang out in the dressing room.
10. Pay attention to the monitors so you know what’s happening. There is no excuse for missing a cue. If you’re not going on-stage for a while, be respectful of those who are: stay out of the way of costume changes, don’t make so much noise that the other actors can’t hear the monitors, and don’t get in the way of travel corridors.
11. Keep the dressing room neat and clean. You’re going to be living here for a while and there’s nothing more terrifying than losing a piece of your costume amid the mess, moments before you go on.
12. When waiting in the wings for an entrance, watch your sight lines, that is the path between the audience and the stage. If you can see them, they can see you; and if you aren’t in the scene, you shouldn’t be in the scene!
13. When entering and exiting, try to avoid brushing against scenery, backdrops, teasers and tormenters. Apart from breaking part of the set, all that motion can be seen by the audience and distracts them from the action on the stage.
14. Tech rehearsals can be tough. Hang in while the crews fine-tune cues and equipment and remember that they control all the lights! Give them the respect they deserve while doing their jobs: pay attention, stay quiet, and be available as they jump from scene to scene.
15. Pay attention to the stage manager. He or she will be telling you important stuff to keep the show running smoothly. And don’t forget to thank the stage manager when he gives a call (“15 minutes!” “Thank you 15!”). That’s so the stage manager knows that you heard the call and are ready to go.
16. Never touch someone else’s prop, even if you think it’s out of place. They may have moved it there on purpose in order to help the flow of the show. Bring it to the attention of the stage manager if you think it’s in the wrong location.
17. Always check your props before curtain. Things happen, props get bumped or moved or crushed. It’s also comforting to know that everything is where you expect it to be before the curtain goes up.
18. Props don’t belong to you, they belong to the theater. Treat them with respect and be sure to return them to their rightful locations after you’ve used them. If you’d like to practice with a prop at home, DON’T. Find an alternate or make arrangements with the director or stage manager to come in and rehearse at some other time.
19. Unless you’re doing improv, don’t ad-lib. The authors and playwrights wrote the lines that way for a reason so if you want to mess around with the script, write your own play.
20. Whether it’s a rehearsal or production night, don’t miss a call time. There’s a very good reason that the director made a call for 6:00pm even if you don’t know what it is. And if you’re going to be late or miss a rehearsal, let the stage manager or director know as soon as possible so that they have plenty of time to make allowances.
21. Always give your best! Whether it’s a 1pm matinee with a house full of kids or an 8pm curtain in front of the reviewers, the audience paid to come see you become somebody else. There’s no excuse for giving less than 100%! Focus!
22. Always be respectful of everyone you work with: the staff, the crew, the directors, the designers, the other actors, and yourself!

The Academy of Performing Arts – New Orleans, Louisiana http://www.apacape.org/wp/2012/02/15/theater-etiquette/