

Memorization Techniques

1. REPITITION

Repeat, repeat, repeat!

2. GROUPING

Memorize one group, then the next, and so on - then go back and link them together. This works well for dialogue in plays, or musicals where it may be a long time between lines.

3. LAYERING

Memorize one sentence, then the next. Then go back and say them together. Do this until you get all the way through. Works well for monologues.

4. PICTURES

Draw pictures to represent certain words of the script. For example: for "smile" you might draw a happy face, or a toothy grin. For "time" you might draw a clock.

5. MOVEMENT

Create actions for key words or phrases in your speech. For the phrase "and now the ICE is BROKEN" you could do a slipping motion for "ice" and act as though you are breaking a stick for "broken." But BE CAREFUL! Do not focus on this method long if you do not intend to do the motions in the final performance. If you get nervous, you will find yourself doing them anyway!

This is a very practical method. You will find that a script is frequently easier to memorize AFTER you have learned the blocking.

6. SUMMARIZE

The idea here is to rephrase your lines into something that makes sense to you. Don't read it exact, but go for the general idea of the script. BUT this is also a dangerous method. DO NOT do this more than once or twice, or you will find yourself not memorizing the script, but your summary of the script. Make sure what you memorize is exact!

7. THE BEST METHOD

Use ALL of the above! You'll find that different techniques work better for different types of scripts. But generally, it is a good idea to combine two or more. You might start with grouping, but find that you use pictures in one particularly difficult spot. The key is to use whatever works for you.

Other tips:

Always memorize in character.

If you are using an accent or a funny voice, then practice with it. Otherwise, you may find it hard to add it later.

Start memorizing early.

Don't wait until two days before you're supposed to be "off book" before you decide to start memorizing. The best way is to learn it over a couple of weeks.

ALWAYS be off book on time.

The deadline is set because it is hard to work with a script in your hand. Your director has set this "off book" date because you will need both hands for the rest of the rehearsals.

"Off Book" doesn't mean lose your script.

Even once you are memorized, continue to review your lines. It will help you stay focused, and you may find that you aren't saying all the lines correctly. Many actors even keep a script handy for the first few performances.

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