

Theatre Etiquette 101

Learn some guidelines of professional behavior from a designer's perspective

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Safety First

- ❖ Do not work impaired (exhaustion, illness, alcohol, cannabis, prescription narcotics, etc.). This is extremely dangerous.
- ❖ You are responsible for everyone's safety, including your own. If you feel unsafe or see something unsafe, tell an SM. Don't do anything you feel unsafe doing; ask for help.
- ❖ Design and budget constraints may require you to be uncomfortable, but never unsafe. Do not wear a dangerous costume or traverse a dangerous set; speak up if you feel unsafe.
- ❖ Let the right person know immediately of set, prop, or costume issues. This would be an ASM, SM, and/or area-related crew member, not cast members. If something looks out of place, say something.
- ❖ Maintain quiet onstage at all times; do not chitchat or sing. This is first and foremost a safety issue but is also essential to preserve the illusion (during preshow & run) and to conserve time (during level set, tech, photo call).
- ❖ Be mindful of treating furniture and props with proper respect. They are not usually built to be handled aggressively or stood upon.
- ❖ Pay attention to what's going on and move without having to be asked.
- ❖ If you hear "hold," then stop whatever you're doing and look around for possible dangers.
- ❖ Wear shoes onstage.
- ❖ Do not share makeup, food, or drink, it is extremely unsanitary (this is how entire casts get mono).
- ❖ Do not use machinery without the proper attire, training, supervision, and personal protective equipment.

Be Prepared to Do Your Job Well

- ❖ Do your job and do it well.
- ❖ Dress appropriately for what you're doing so as not to compromise your safety or integrity.
- ❖ Know your lines. Do your best to get them right. You are the steward of the playwright's art. The words are the tent poles for the rest of the production.
- ❖ Show up, prepared, and on time. Never miss a call or cue. Fifteen before call is on time, call is late, one after call is fired.
- ❖ Check your callboard/email/phone regularly.
- ❖ Never do something you wouldn't want any one or everyone knowing you did. The truth will out.
- ❖ Project past the last row of the house at all times.
- ❖ Perform sound check as instructed: loudest/softest/talk/sing/scream. Do not mark (hold back). This minute determines how you are heard the rest of the night, so it is the most important moment.
- ❖ The sound engineer cannot reproduce what isn't there: sing on key, in time, and project.
- ❖ Maintain a consistent vocal volume.
- ❖ Tech rehearsal is still a rehearsal: the technical elements must take priority but use it to hone your craft and explore your character. It is an acting opportunity. Keep the stakes high.
- ❖ Come to the first dress rehearsal with makeup and hair supplies.
- ❖ Get rehearsal pieces early and work with them as much as possible.
- ❖ Show up to fittings on time, clean, and wearing proper undergarments.



Wear the Attitude You Want to See in Others

- ❖ A positive attitude and eagerness to work matters. This may not be your ideal gig, but it can lead there with the right attitude. No one wants to work with a jerk.
- ❖ Every show, every company, even every day-job is a learning opportunity. There is no point in doing a show if you can't learn something from it. Challenge yourself to do something you've never done before. If nothing else, you can learn what not to do.
- ❖ It is always someone's first experience, so always perform to the best of your ability. Creating that first experience is an opportunity, a privilege, and a responsibility.
- ❖ Take responsibility for the show as a whole; it belongs to you, too.
- ❖ Jump at opportunities, but know when to say, "Sorry, I'm booked."
- ❖ The engineer can hear your mic, so mind the content of your backstage conversations. However, the engineer must not abuse this privilege by eavesdropping except to troubleshoot issues.
- ❖ Take initiative.
- ❖ It's not rocket surgery, it's a play, so have fun!
- ❖ Avoid strong language. Yes, we all use it, but it instantly raises the emotional stakes of the situation, so don't let it become a habit.
- ❖ This should go without saying, but do not discriminate, either practically or verbally, by protected classes (race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, age, mental or physical ability, veteran status, or citizenship).

Collaborate

- ❖ Know the chain of command.
- ❖ Every day is a job interview and everyone you meet is a potential employer, employee, or colleague, so behave with kindness and respect.
- ❖ We operate in a community of art in which everyone knows everyone else. Employment is most often offered to colleagues with a positive history and reputation, so do not burn bridges.

- ❖ Give good email. Start with a salutation ("Dear...") and end with a valediction ("Sincerely..."). Smile (not facetiously) while you type and your phrasing will become more pleasant. Do not type while angry. Brief statements come off as cold, commanding, or just plain mean. Do not use emojis, memes, all caps, or comic sans in professional communications.
- ❖ Detach your art from your self. Once an idea leaves your brain, it belongs to the group. Don't take criticism of an idea as a criticism of your person.
- ❖ It's everyone's art, so appreciate everyone's contribution, don't sell anyone short. Participation in putting together the show gives a more thorough ownership of the art and builds community.
- ❖ Acknowledge the cast, crew, and design team's presence: nod or say, "Hi." They're your friends, as well as future employers, employees, and colleagues. Learn their names and they'll learn yours. Treat cast and crew with the respect of a colleague. They are there working with you, not for you. Always thank cast/crew and be polite.
- ❖ Love your SM and ASMs. They are there to take care of you and keep everyone safe.
- ❖ Learn the technical vocabulary of every area (e.g. wagon, paper tech, Meisner) so that you can effectively collaborate.
- ❖ Do not complain about the design of your costume. It is part of a grand scheme and is not always designed to make you attractive or interesting. Bring up design concerns with only the costume designer, and at your fitting. Don't be afraid to collaborate with the designer. Wear your costume in the manner you are told to wear it.
- ❖ Actors vs. Techs is a MYTH. There is a common, but false perception that actors and technicians are in a constant battle with one another. This conflict does not exist. However, there is often a communication gap between the two fields: actors and designers prepare for a show completely separate from one another. Looking at the same project from two different sides, actors and designers can unintentionally

develop in different directions if both participants do not strive to collaborate. The best way to collaborate is to simply talk to one another, ask what your intentions are for specific choices, and find the common ground. Above all, respect one another. We're all in the same boat, working on the same show. We may disagree sometimes, but if we don't communicate, we don't get the chance to find our touchstone and grow together.

Little Choices Make Big Differences

- ❖ Say, "Thank you, five," when the SM gives you a five-minute call.
 - ❖ Maintain quiet backstage.
 - ❖ Find your light. Feel the warmth on your face. Your face is usually most important.
 - ❖ Do not touch projectors or lighting instruments. If either implement type is jostled, let the appropriate crew member know.
 - ❖ Sign in when you arrive. Do not leave the building after sign-in.
 - ❖ Hit your spike mark. Some light, prop, or set piece may depend on that. When the design elements fall out of place, they can disrupt the action, take away from the overall design, distract, or become dangerous.
 - ❖ Vocal blending and articulation must change with the space.
 - ❖ Take care of your mic and beltpack. Make sure the cables are never bent, the sweat-protection is on properly, and the mic head is placed properly. Keep makeup off the mic head and cable.
 - ❖ Be absolutely silent 30 seconds before your entrance and after your exit. Your mic may be heard during this time.
 - ❖ Do not wear costumes outside of the building or for post-show meet-and-greets. You are responsible for preserving the illusion.
 - ❖ Be patient.
 - ❖ Keep your face up so the designers can see it.
 - ❖ "Freeze" means to hold a pose until told to rest. "Hold" means to stop whatever you are doing and look around for possible dangers.
- ❖ Note rehearsal spikes, particularly stairs. The purpose of spacing is to combine the crafts of set and performance.
 - ❖ Touch only your props and costume pieces.
 - ❖ If you find something broken, tell the person whose job is to fix it
 - ❖ Try to walk up and down stairs in the center of the step, not on the edge of the tread. Walking on the edge can damage the facing.
 - ❖ Hair, facial and otherwise, is a privilege, not a right. Once cast, do not change your hair or weight, but be willing to alter.
 - ❖ Keep your personal space tidy and organized.
 - ❖ Do not eat, drink, or smoke in costume (except water).
- ❖ Nobody's perfect. We all make mistakes. Acknowledge, apologize, fix it, and move on.