

BETTER ACTOR



Print at home



Use on PC

Situation

Who & When? <i>Who is in the scene? What year are we in? What day and what time?</i>	Where? <i>How does it look, smell, sound, feel like?</i> Use all senses to familiarize with environment and get into the moment with "living truthfully"	What happened to me before?	What happens now? <i>In three words: What is being done to who? (E.g. "X gets hurt", "Y gets win")</i>
--	---	------------------------------------	--

Emotional Prep

Character's affective memories <i>Which important situations did the character have in the past that influence them today?</i> <i>Which situations did he have with the other characters?</i> Be as detailed as possible. Write everything down. How did he feel, his 5 senses, etc.	My personal affective memories <i>Which one affective memories do I have that I can apply to this scene?</i> <i>Where have I felt the same? Where was I in a similar situation?</i> <i>Where, When, How, Why, With Whom? How did I feel in that situation? Use 5 senses. Which objects remind me of that situation?</i>	Underlying emotions <i>What are the underlying base emotions that drive me?</i> <i>Craving, Longing, Hope, Greed, Lonely, Need for affection, Horny, Joy, Love, Admiration, Bravery, Fear, Anger, Hate, Jealousy, Sorrow / Grief / Sadness, Compassion / pity / sympathy</i> <i>These base emotions have to be always (verbally + nonverbally) dominating for me. However: Do not play mood. Bring variation.</i>	Really analyze what I feel <i>Where does all of this come from? Why?</i> <i>When people are in a tense emotional situation: What are all the fears, worries, thoughts, considerations, whirling in my head?</i> <i>Who does it happen to? E.g. Do I get hurt (fear) or the person I love (empathy + fear for them + need to protect)? Do I get joy, or am jealous of someone's joy? => Go really deep</i>
--	---	---	--

Who am I? <i>Name, Age, Looks, Occupation? Confident vs. shy? What is my position in society? My 3 biggest hobbies?</i> <i>What is my world-view? In which mental world am I living? What are the 3 criteria / measurements I use to evaluate everything that's happening?</i>	Personality characteristics <i>Intro vs. Extroverted: Confident vs. shy: Talkative vs. silent: Intelligence: Manners: Humble vs. Arrogant: Friendly vs. Rejective: Experimentive vs. traditional: Nervous vs. calm: Agreeable vs. discursive: Energy level.</i>	Relationship to the others <i>What's my status in regards to them? High vs. low, friend vs. stranger, love vs. hate, ... Am I used to this status? Or is it new for me?</i>	Style of effort, communication, scene <table border="1"><tr><td><i>Sense of distance</i> Talk next to me _____ Far away, must shout</td><td><i>Energy projection</i> => How much transfer till they do what I want? Little _____ Extreme</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"><i>Subtlety vs. Elaborativeness: How much do I gesticulate, stress and emphasize things, ...</i></td></tr><tr><td>Subtle _____</td><td>Elaborative _____</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"><i>Real life vs. Hyperlife</i></td></tr><tr><td>Real life _____</td><td>Hyperlife (soap opera) _____</td></tr></table>	<i>Sense of distance</i> Talk next to me _____ Far away, must shout	<i>Energy projection</i> => How much transfer till they do what I want? Little _____ Extreme	<i>Subtlety vs. Elaborativeness: How much do I gesticulate, stress and emphasize things, ...</i>		Subtle _____	Elaborative _____	<i>Real life vs. Hyperlife</i>		Real life _____	Hyperlife (soap opera) _____
<i>Sense of distance</i> Talk next to me _____ Far away, must shout	<i>Energy projection</i> => How much transfer till they do what I want? Little _____ Extreme												
<i>Subtlety vs. Elaborativeness: How much do I gesticulate, stress and emphasize things, ...</i>													
Subtle _____	Elaborative _____												
<i>Real life vs. Hyperlife</i>													
Real life _____	Hyperlife (soap opera) _____												

My Superobjective <i>My overarching goal What do I want at the end?</i> E.g. "I want to be the most famous mafia boss."	Psychological needs from the other <i>Safety Agreement / Reassurance / Confirmation Acceptance Esteem / Admiration Love Affection Power / Obedience / Subordination</i> => Try to align with my underlying emotion from above	Objective <i>What is my goal now?</i> <i>External, Tangible, Finishable</i> E.g. "I want you to kneel down.", "I want you to leave the room.", ... MY GOAL IS EVERYTHING! Commit to the choice!	Obstacles <i>What holds me back? Why do I not just take my goal?</i> <i>Internal, intangible, emotions</i> E.g. "I want you to leave the room, but I also love you and do not want to hurt your feelings." <i>List all the conflicts: external and internal</i>	Head vs. hearth <i>My head says:</i> <i>My hearth says:</i> => Are both in line, or different direction which creates conflict for me and struggle?
--	--	---	--	---

My strategy <i>How do I get my goal from the other person? Usual form: "...ly"</i> E.g. Charmingly, Flirtingly, Shoutingly, ... <i>Actively manipulate the other person! Look for the other's weaknesses and levers, and think about how you can use them. Be creative: Killing you through faking kindness</i> <i>Let the strategy be my primary behaviour. All my lines are just used for my strategy.</i>	<i>List of possible strategies</i> <i>Make a long list of possible strategies: What could the role do to get their goal?</i>	Stakes <i>Why do I want my objective? What happens if I don't get my objective?</i> <i>How high are the stakes? Death? Disaster?</i> <i>To make a scene more interesting, "up the stakes" => As high as possible</i>	Rituals & Usual modes <i>How do I usually interact with people, solve such challenges, ...</i> <i>What's my usual modus operandi?</i> <i>What is different in this situation? Why can't I do it here (in relation to obstacle)?</i>
---	---	---	---

How do I talk? <i>Based on personality & body & my strategy + With intention</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Tone:Intonation:Melody:Tempo: Slow, fast, educated, meaningful, nervous, certain, uncertain, word searchingSpecialities of my voice / speaking:Accent:	How do I move? <i>With intention, in relation to my strategy.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Center of gravity when walking:Speed:Confidence level:Specialities of my walking: <i>Anchor your role in the body.</i>	How do I dress? <i>With intention, in relation to my strategy. What was my role thinking in front of their wardrobe in the morning for the tasks they had today?</i> E.g. Poor guy dresses up for wedding, rich guy dresses down to show humbleness, Doktor wears coat and glasses for authority, etc.	Restrained vs. Wild <i>Am I restricted? Do I hold myself back? Am I making my movements in a restricted area? What holds me back? Shame, shyness, fear, education, ...?</i> vs. <i>Do I go completely wild, no limits, no borders, my body and spirit take all the place they need, go into all movements very deeply and strigly, eaggerated?</i> Restrain & controll _____ Wild & extensive	Specialities <i>Do I do any other special things?</i> <i>Do I use additional senses like tasting, smelling, feeling?</i> <i>Do I as a person have any special characteristics?</i>
--	---	---	--	--

Degree of influencability <i>How much is my strategy dependent on / receptive to outside input? Do I just want my goal and nothing else with all force? Or does the character need to react to others? How much do I observe / react to opponents? How much do I play together with teammates?</i> I am _____ I am a force receptive & listen _____ of nature & push	Actions <i>Which actions do I perform for my strategy? Which actions do I perform alongside the scene?</i> <i>When we talk with people, we seldomly just look at them.</i> <i>Do I complete a task on the side? Do we do any task together?</i> E.g. push someone, destroy something, ... E.g. Drinking, playing, doing laundry, ...	Movement on stage <i>Always to get objective. Always with intention.</i> <i>Which movements do I do in the space? Why?</i> E.g. Do I hide on corner of stage, or do I go center front confrontation? Do I chase someone? Do I get away from someone? Do I play with time / with someone by walking away from then?	Use of props <i>Always to get objective. Always with intention.</i> <i>Write down possible props, when to use, why?</i>
---	--	--	--

The Others

Who else is in the scene?

What do they want?

Preparation Exercises

- Exercise to dive deep into background story and character**
 - Hot Seat exercise:
 - Be the character on a seat.
 - Let yourself be interviewed about all details of your life & past moments.
 - Will prompt you to think about new details & aspects
 - Also used to develop affective memories
 - Use childish joy to get into the role and situation:
 - Imagination, joy, and 100% commitment. I am this now.
 - How do I feel as this role? What do I do? How do I move? What do I want? What makes me happy? What pisses me off?
- Prepare Script Line by Line**
 - What specific goal do I strive for with that line?
 - What is the subtext of the line?
 - Is there a specific motto/intention (E.g. "You have to be kidding me" ...)
 - Make a list of all the possible different strategies (shouting, begging, loving, ...)
 - For each line, try to find a different strategy
 - There is a reason the line is there. It is always a new approach / a new try to get my goal.
 - Ask "What if...?"
 - If this happened in real life, how would I feel / think / want / do / react?
 - Imagine the situation visually and emotionally
 - If this happened in real life, how would I say the line?
 - What real-life situations can I compare the line with?
 - Was I led by logic or by emotions (maybe even against logic) to say that line?
- Focus on goal**
 - "Up the stakes" => Imagine highest possible wager
 - Reflect: How would this look like in real life? How far would this person go for their goals, if all this was at stake?
 - Mediter Repetition Exercise:
 - Always repeat the last line your partner said (For monologue: just do your lines + subtext)
 - Let it sink in. How does that affect you? Do through the thought process.
 - Speak all the subtext you can think off: How do I feel about that? What do I want now? Why?
 - Take your time!
 - May be very different from the line.
 - When you feel that you have a reason for your next line: Say it
 - Partner has to do the same
 - Individual exercise: Write long text with your story & goal. Ask yourself "Why?" three times: "Why do you want this...?"
- Communicate Intention**
 - Play the same scene with limited verbal capabilities
 - 1) In "Alien" language: Nonsense language, but you know the meaning
 - 2) Only use the words "Me, You, Yes, No, Maybe"
 - 3) In both cases: Use nonverbal communication, intonation, mimic and gesticulation to actually convey your intention
 - 4) Talk with everything: Body, Feet, Hands, Looks
- 80% of communication is nonverbal.**
- Play script through in different ways**
 - Try multiple variations and form the best final composition by playing the script through in multiple ways:
 - Once as if most words come to you spontaneously, reluctantly
 - Once with a period behind every word.
 - Once very slow, with as many pauses as possible. Make it intense.
 - Once with humor and sarcasm at every line.
 - Once whispering everything.
 - Once as a casual conversation with a friend. Every line as naturally as possible.
 - From each run, take the best parts for final performance
- Standards: Emotional Memory Exercise: Mediate Subtext**
 - Do a meditation about 2-3 key situations / memories:
 - What did your character experience there?
 - Meditate further and further into the situation
 - What was the situation? Where? Who was there?
 - What did my 5 senses feel (What did I see? What did I smell? What did I say? What did I hear; in the environment and from other people?) Focused on the other person as well: How did they smell? How did they feel? What did we do?
 - Focus on the situation. Let the emotions come naturally.
 - Impro-Exercise with partner: What happened 10 years ago? What happened shortly before the scene?
Always after scene: Take time to get OUT again.
=> Anker yourself in the here & now
- Find a flow and particularities**
 - Go back to the script one by one, and enhance performance:
 - How do I break in special parts? Slow, fast, long, short, ...
 - How does my voice behave
 - Do I vary my voice to get the attention? Height of tone, loudness, ...
 - Do I search some words?
 - Do I sometimes streek, get loud, does my voice crack, do I get a sore throat because of my excitement?
 - How do I work with time for my strategy?
 - Pauses: The most important thing when speaking
 - Most dramatic: The particulation in the middle of a sentence
 - My thought process on the stage
 - In real life: People don't have a script. They constantly form their thoughts spontaneously
 - Where in the script do I have to grasp words?
 - Where do I think long, react, come to realizations?
 - Where do I use humor as a defense mechanism?
 - Where do I get special resistance from the other one? Use resistance to create additional energy for my fight.
 - Influence of emotions
 - Where do emotions shine through during speech?
 - Where do they result in emotional outbursts ("Oh", "Acht", "Laughing", ...) and disrupt my speech?
 - Where do I try to suppress them?
 - Where do I actively use them for my goal?
 - Are there any moments where I break completely free? Go wild.
 - Which gestures do I use in intense moments?
 - In which moments am I actively reconnecting with the other person? Through looks, gestures, intonation? Get their attention!
 - Intentional: Build or make**
 - Special object meditation:
 - Find an object that is special to you because it reminds you of a person / a memory / an incident which is important and meaningful to you.
 - Look at it, imagine situation.
 - Place it further away, imagine situation, place it further away...
 - Always: You can't touch the object.
 - When at maximum tension: Resolve by touching it.
 - => This feeling of desire is the one you should feel on stage
 - Think about other situations where you really wanted something. Remember the feeling and drive.
 - Intentional: Find or make**
 - Tell the monologue to a friend without telling them it's a monologue.
 - Just do a normal conversation
 - You really want them to believe you and do the objective you want from them.
 - => Makes lines more natural
 - Observe other interesting situations in everyday life that you want:
 - What is their goal?
 - How do they feel?
 - What do they show?
 - What do they keep back? Why?
 - Observe goal, strategy, obstacle.
 - Getting used to camera:
 - Filming yourself during everyday moments.
 - Getting used to being filmed.
 - Ignoring the camera.
 - Just doing what you normally.
 - Before the scene**
 - Warm-up voice
 - Warmup up to stage:
 - Explore it and own it
 - Visualize environment of the scene
 - Get yourself out of bounds: Get crazy, Break free, do everything, stretch, exaggerate face, do everything 200%
 - Unleash the inner child with imagination, fun, dedication
 - Get back into an affective memory / fantasy
 - Listen to music with fitting emotion / objective
 - Take a deep breath
 - Focus 100% on the other person
 - Say your goal in one line "I am going to..." => Step on stage
 - During the scene**
 - Take time
 - Play with your partner, focus 110% on him.
 - Use their resistance to influence your strategy and strengthen your emotions (Get in there).
 - Think about the stakes!
 - Open completely up:
 - During the scene, while everybody is looking at you: Open the last doors to your inner being and feelings
 - Simulating different states:
 - Nervosity: Run on spot for 30 seconds before entering
 - Anger: Deep, sharp, quick breaths
 - Calmness: Meditate beforehand
 - Being drunk:
 - Don't show drunkenness, instead try to be drunk
 - Drunk people always try to act as if they are not
 - One suppresses the shifting thoughts, movements.
 - One tries to come back to focus. => Do that.

General Advice

Inner source & combination
During preparation: Dont focus on the external world. Explore and investigate the inner world, ourselves, our soul.

How all things play together to form strategy:

Objective
=> The most important, very first step: Really wanting a GOAL from the other person

Think about: The lines of the script are nothing. What are my true, underlying, intentions and feelings?

Truth & Intention

Really be in the situation:

- Don't simply play or imitate
- Don't act for the camera. It's not there.
- This is the situation. You are in it now.
- You do a normal conversation with a person.
- How do I behave, if something like this happens? => Really behave like this
- Avoid moods, tones, and paths.
- Always ask yourself: Am I still close enough to real life, or did it already become "showing emotions" again?

Unleash your inner childhood:

- Everything is real
- Imagination is reality, creates worlds, connections, and characters. Fantasy!
- Every object can become anything. Every person can become anything.
- Don't just understand, feel.
- I am this character now!
- 100% Joy. 100% Dedication. No limits.
- Aware, that it's a game, but playing the game with all seriousness.

Actions with true intention:

- If you want to do a task on stage (writing a page, doing laundry, etc.), really do it. => Helps being in the moment
- Whenever you want someone to do something (take a bottle, close a door, ...):
 - Really want them as actors to do it.
 - Really make the movements, gestures, and statements with wanting them to actually do it.
- All actions, movements, objects: Do them with intention. If you push someone, don't just push him to show anger. Push him with intention to hurt or make him go.

Truth in a monologue:

- Option A) Interact with someone in audience
 - You want a goal from them
 - Imagine that they are reacting to you, and you react to them
- Option B) Interact with yourself
 - You have a thought popping up in your mind, you then have to react to it, contradict it, ...
 - => Arguing with your own thought, worries, conflicts
 - E.g. "She doesn't love me", "Yes, she must, she did this..."

Strategy first, not lines

Strategy first, not lines

- 80% of strategy and intention is nonverbally
- You don't know lines beforehand
- The lines come to the character spontaneously, as part of his strategy
 - I am desperate for my goal, I will use whatever comes to my mind.
- The strategy should actually fight against the script. Do the unexpected!

Result of strategy

- How the role talks, moves, clothes is result of strategy + specific person's background
- Try to understand how this person with this status and this background would act to get this goal from this person by this strategy
- E.g. "I want to intimidate somebody. How does this role talk to do that? How do they move? ..."

Living & true emotions

Make it less obvious

- Don't play foreshadowing
- You don't know what is going to happen in 5 lines of the script
- Son't play how the story will end! Fight against the script! Do the opposite of the expected, and let the story drag you back later.

Life means hurdles

- You say each line because you want to influence someone. Watch: Does it work?
- In situations where they neglect my wishes, ignore me, etc.: Use this to get even deeper into the emotion.
- Activate your frustration of not getting goal
- Think about the stakes!
- => Use your partner's reactions as a bouncing spot to influence and strengthen your strategy and your emotions.
- Fight against the script! The partner's script does not matter as well. I only want my goal. Cut them off, push through it.

Suprise & Impulse

- Embrace the uncertainty!
 - Accept mistakes, accidents, errors.
 - Be open & sharp
 - Wake up, improvise, adapt, live
- Best moments are spontaneous
- Real life: You won't know what will happen. Action & reaction now.
- Always be playful/mean and surprise your partner and yourself. Forces you to get back to real thinking, acting, improvising. -> Performance comes to live.

True emotions

- Emotions can be byproducts or obstacle
- Emotions are byproducts!
- Don't try to focus on getting or showing a specific emotion or result ("I need a tear")
- Process: Inside => Out: Focus on story, memories, empathy in situation. How do I feel deep down? Why? My thoughts?
- Where is the deep want? The conflict?
- Find the resistance. A good actor will always find option with highest resistance. You are hurt, but you don't want to show it... When emotions come up
 - Do I want to show them, or do I want to hide them from the other person?
 - Often in real life: Emotions come naturally in the situation, but we try to hold them back, fight it, suppress.
 - => A fight / struggle is most interesting to watch
- Never play mood or tone! Never be always sad, always angry, always happy, ... Start scene completely different: From happy to devastated, from sad to angry, from love to hate... Be creative! What is the most opposite emotion to start scene with?

Acting partner & technicalities

What to tell your acting partner

- Should look you in the eyes
- For camera: Should stay on right side of camera lense

Sometimes it helps to try scene with a different acting partner

Final run: Forget all the preparation. Get a new acting partner. Just focus on them and what you want from them.

Even with all the analysis...

Leave space for new discoveries and emotions!

Play and have fun!

The Role Preparation Canvas helps **actors to develop roles and monologues**.
The Canvas was built in cooperation with **acting coaches & working actors**.

Obviously, acting is a very individual and emotional art form, and can not be "standardized".
However, this Canvas can aid you as a **starting point for your role preparation journey**, and helps you think about all the **different important aspects** (e.g. motivation, objective, movement, speech) when preparing a role.

The Canvas is built upon the popular acting theories of **Stanislavski and Meisner**.
Whilst there are a lot of books to learn these theories, you can get a feeling for their main idea by looking at the following **example**:

On the one hand, probably everyone knows the typical "evil stepmom" represented in movies. She hands the protagonist a poisoned apple, and grins into the camera with a stereotypical smile.

On the other hand, Stanislavski proposes an acting technique which does not focus on "showing" (intentions, emotions, ...), but **truthful actions**. That is, you really research the background of your role, you emphasize with their **objectives and emotions**, and you play a truthful performance on stage.



Should evil characters behave that obviously?

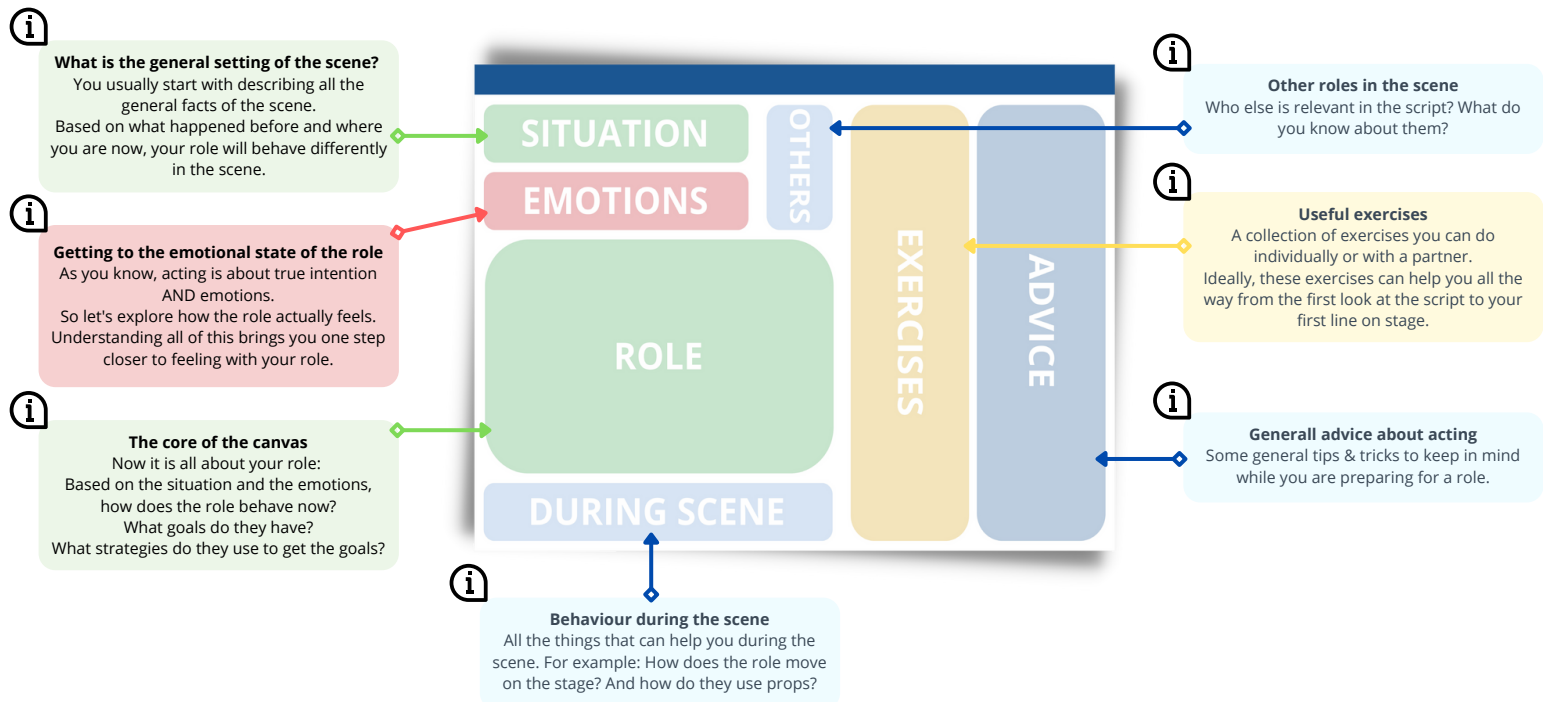


Or is it more interesting to watch when they play a perfect game?

Basic structure of the Canvas

As you already realized, the Canvas contains a lot of information. In order to keep it simple, the Canvas uses structure & colors.
The Canvas consists of different "main areas", which are marked by different colors.
Each main area will guide you through a different aspect of the scene, e.g. the emotional state of your character or what you should watch out for during the actual playing of the scene.

Below, you can find a general overview of the "main areas", as well as some short explanations of what you can expect:



Individual Cards

Now that you know the basic structure of the Role Preparation Canvas, you probably already noticed the cards:

Each of the "main areas" of the Canvas contains different cards. Every card is used to guide you through one aspect of your role exploration.

For example: The "During Scene" area of the Canvas contains a Card "Movement on Stage".

