

Science Enters the Chat: Enhancing Communication Skills through Improv

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Why Do Improvisation?

Improv is a practice of listening and engaging with a conversation partner. In science communication, it is important to hear the questions that are asked of you and how you answer those questions as well as where those responses might lead the conversation. It is also important to know if your conversation partner understands you. Two-way communication is expressing a thought and allowing the other person to add onto it meaningfully and personally. Practicing these skills is helpful for anyone, but definitely for scientists who communicate complex information or question answers.

Rules of Improvisation

Agree - Say Yes	In improv, you are required to agree with whatever your partner has created. You start with an open-mind.
Yes And	Once you agree and say yes you must add something to the conversation. It's your responsibility to contribute to the conversation.
Make Statements	Make a statement instead of a question. Questions put pressure on one person to come up with all of the answers. Making statements is more positive and shows can show confidence.
There Are No Mistakes	In improv there are no mistakes only opportunities and possibly happy accidents.

Alda, A. (2017). *If I understood you, would I have this look on my face?: my adventures in the art and science of relating and communicating*. Random House.

Fey, T. (2011). *Bossypants* (1st ed.). Little, Brown and Co.

Improv Game - Bus Exercise

1.	We will line chairs up like a bus. Mrs. Ingram or Mrs. Barnhart will be the “driver” of the bus.	
2.	One person will “enter” the bus. As they do, they will tell a story of their character using one singular emotion. You can not repeat an emotion that has already been used.	
3.	When a new person enters the bus, all of those on the bus will listen to understand the emotion and adjust their story to fit the new emotion.	
4.	After the new person sits down, the bus carries on “driving.” At this point, everyone talks about their story at the same time with the “newest” emotion.	
5.	The bus comes to a stop when the bus is full and everyone has played their turn.	

