

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Foundations of Acting: Given Circumstances and Objectives

This worksheet was created to accompany Episode 2 of Ovation Academy: Classes with Katy, and is designed to guide you through developing and staging your very own open scene.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Your challenge is to create a scene using a short section of dialogue known as an **open scene**. An open scene contains dialogue that is open to many different interpretations and has no specific information about setting, characters or plot.

Once you choose your scene from the options at the end of this worksheet, find someone to perform the scene with you. Decide who will be “A” and who will be “B” and read through the lines a couple of times. Then, it’s time to get creative! Now you get to decide with your scene partner on the situation and the **given circumstances** of your scene. Since there’s no specific information in the dialogue, it’s all up to you! Use the questions below to guide you through deciding on your given circumstances.

### SETTING

**Where** does your scene take place? \_\_\_\_\_

**When** does your scene take place?

Time period: \_\_\_\_\_ Season: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of day: \_\_\_\_\_

### CHARACTERS

#### Character A

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe **who** Character A is, giving at least three specific details. Some examples include: gender, race, class status, job, and values.

---

---

---

---

## **Character B**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe **who** Character B is, giving at least three specific details. Some examples include: gender, race, class status, job, and values.

---

---

---

---

## **RELATIONSHIP**

**How** do your characters know each other?

The relationship between our characters is \_\_\_\_\_

---

**How long** have you known each other?

Our characters have known each other for \_\_\_\_\_

---

What is your relationship like **now**? Has it **changed** over the time you have known each other?

---

---

---

---

## **MOMENT BEFORE**

What **just happened** right before your scene begins?

Right before this scene, \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## **CONFLICT**

### **Character A**

What is your character's **objective**? What is your goal?

I want to \_\_\_\_\_

What is your character's **obstacle**?

What is getting in the way of me achieving my goal is \_\_\_\_\_

What **tactic** is your character using to achieve your objective in this scene? How are you trying to overcome your obstacle? (Remember that this should be a verb, not an adjective! You can use the word bank of possible tactics at the bottom of the page to give you some ideas)

The tactic I am using to achieve my goal in this scene is \_\_\_\_\_

### **Character B**

What is your character's **objective**? What is your goal?

I want to \_\_\_\_\_

What is your character's **obstacle**?

What is getting in the way of me achieving my goal is \_\_\_\_\_

What **tactic** is your character using to achieve your objective in this scene? How are you trying to overcome your obstacle? (Remember that this should be a verb, not an adjective! You can use the word bank of possible tactics at the bottom of the page to give you some ideas)

The tactic I am using to achieve my goal in this scene is to \_\_\_\_\_

### **Some Possible Action Verbs to Use as Tactics (there are many more to choose from!)**

Reason with	Threaten	Trick	Hurt
Persuade	Intimidate	Lie to	Soothe
Convince	Guilt-trip	Belittle	Command
Coax	Bribe	Reject	Befriend
Caress	Flatter	Shut out	Ignore
Beg	Appeal to	Infantilize	Charm
Suck up to	Seduce	Attack	Include
Share with	Get ___'s attention	Provoke	Exclude
Bully	Educate	Antagonize	Show
Confront	Explain	Force	Reveal to
Get ___'s help	Touch	Get ___ on my side	Scare
Inspire	Suppress	Incite	Enlighten
Crush	Encourage	Destroy	Ensnare
Tease	Cheer up	Reassure	Justify
Mock	Aggravate	Deceive	Enchant

## STAGING

Now you're finally ready to stage your scene! With your scene partner, decide on the **action** for the scene. Remember that action can occur between lines of dialogue, before dialogue, and after dialogue. Don't be afraid to include some moments of silence to build the conflict!

When determining the action for your scene, keep in mind that since the lines do not provide much information, what you do within the scene is even more important. Use **strong, clear, physical actions** to communicate information about the given circumstances to the audience, just like we explored in the activity in the video.

You may deliver the lines in any way you like—put in pauses, change a question to a statement, or vice versa—but **do not change any of the words**.

Feel free to use props and costume pieces you can find around the house to help tell the story of the scene you created, but don't be afraid to keep it simple. It doesn't have to be fancy to be effective!

I hope you had fun staging your open scene! I can't wait to see all your awesome work. Don't forget to **share your videos with us** so we can see what you've been working on!

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out at [OvationTC@gmail.com](mailto:OvationTC@gmail.com), and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Happy creating!

Katy

## OPEN SCENE 1

**A:** Hi

**B:** Hey

**A:** Whatcha doing

**B:** Nothing

**A:** Doesn't look like nothing

**B:** That's what it is

**A:** Can I do nothing too

**B:** Up to you

**A:** Doesn't sound inviting

**B:** Do you need an invitation

**A:** No

**B:** What do you think you're doing

**A:** Nothing

**B:** I wouldn't call that nothing

**A:** What would you call it

**B:** I would call it something

**A:** What would that something be

**B:** I don't know

**A:** Why not

**B:** Look, what do you want

**A:** Isn't that clear

**B:** No

**A:** Now it is

## OPEN SCENE 2

**A:** Stop

**B:** Oh

**A:** Oh no

**B:** Can you uh

**A:** No, here, use this

**B:** Come on

**A:** I told you to be careful

**B:** I was, it just happened

**A:** There, let me see

**B:** Oh—where are you going

**A:** For help

**B:** And leave me here? You can't leave me here

**A:** You stay here—I'm off to get help

**B:** No, no, please, one more time—Try it again

**A:** Stay here, I'll be right back

**B:** Ah

### OPEN SCENE 3

**A:** Hi

**B:** Hello

**A:** You all right

**B:** Yes

**A:** Are you sure

**B:** Yes, I'm sure—A little headache, that's all

**A:** Oh, good—You want some aspirin

**B:** No—Don't be so helpful, OK

**A:** You are upset

**B:** Good Lord

**A:** OK, OK—I thought you might want to talk

**B:** About what

**A:** About anything

**B:** I'm going away

**A:** What do you mean

**B:** I'm going away, that's all

**A:** Where

**B:** Not far—Don't get excited

**A:** When?

**B:** Now

## If you loved this activity...

### **ABOVE AND BEYOND**

Stage the same open scene a second time, with a completely different set of given circumstances. Get creative and see how different you can make the same set of dialogue!

### **KEEP ON LEARNING**

As mentioned in the video, this activity just began to scratch the surface of the most foundational acting concepts. For example, in this exercise, you only identified one tactic. In reality, however, you would most likely use many different tactics throughout the scene. Anytime you change tactics, that is called a **beat**. Identifying the beats in a monologue or scene by **scoring your script** is a very helpful tool as an actor, because it allows you to really break it down and make different choices for each moment. The attached extension activity on the following pages provides a bit more detail about these terms as well as the ones already discussed. Then, there is an example of how to score a script, and an opportunity to try it for yourself!

# Scoring a Script

**Rationale:** Scoring a script means to mark it up in order to make **specific choices** about the dramatic choices you are going to make when you are performing a character. Actors score their scripts because it forces you to slow down your brain, think about making deliberate choices and not “just talk.”

**RULE #1 in Acting:** As a character, you ALWAYS WANT SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE. You are never just saying things for the heck of it. Words are your weapons to achieve what you want.

**Terms to Know:**

Objective	What your character <b>needs</b> more than life or death. This is your <b>goal</b> or motivation behind everything you say and do.
Super-objective	What your character <b>wants deep-down</b> more than anything else in the world. This is the thing that drives most of the character’s decisions. It is a primal (basic, animal) need. This <b>never changes</b> .  Examples: Your father’s love. Your child’s safety. Security. A legacy that will live on after you die. Revenge. Security. To be safe. To be free. For your mother to finally approve of you.
Scene objective	What your character <b>wants</b> to get FROM ANOTHER PERSON <b>in a particular scene</b> or monologue. You may not always achieve your objective, but you definitely want it badly. At times the objective can change midway through the scene.  Examples: To get my wife to stay with me. To convince the boss to hire me. To persuade my son to give me another chance. To trick my friend into going to the surprise party. To make my mom get out of my business. To make my boyfriend tell me the truth .
Obstacle	What is <b>in the way</b> of your character achieving your objective.
Tactic	<b>What you DO</b> to get the other person to give you what you want. With every beat, your tactics change. If one thing doesn’t work, you try something else.  Tactics must always be <b>ACTION VERBS</b> (persuade, intimidate, coax) that you do to the other person with your words. They should never be adjectives ( <del>angry, sad, excited</del> )
Beat	A section of a monologue or scene. Every time you shift what you are feeling or thinking about, have a realization or <b>try a new tactic</b> , that is a new beat.

## Example

**Objective:** My objective in this monologue is to get Troy to recognize that he needs to recommit to our relationship.

**Command his attention**

**Make him see me**

I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. / I got a life too. I gave

**Appeal to his sympathy**

eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. / Don't you think I ever

**Make him jealous**

wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? / Don't you think it ever

crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and

forget about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel

**Force him to see his selfishness**

**Make him recognize my sacrifice**

good? / You not the only one who's got wants and needs. / But I held on to you, Troy. I took

**Touch his**

**heart**

all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams...and I buried them inside you. / I planted a

**Belittle him**

seed and watched and prayed over it. / And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out

the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never gonna bloom.

### **Some Possible Action Verbs to Use as Tactics (there are many more to choose from!)**

Reason with	Threaten	Trick	Hurt
Persuade	Intimidate	Lie to	Soothe
Convince	Guilt-trip	Belittle	Command
Coax	Bribe	Reject	Befriend
Caress	Flatter	Shut out	Ignore
Beg	Appeal to	Infantilize	Charm
Suck up to	Seduce	Attack	Include
Share with	Get ___'s attention	Provoke	Exclude
Bully	Educate	Antagonize	Show
Confront	Explain	Force	Reveal to
Get ___'s help	Touch	Get __ on my side	Scare
Inspire	Suppress	Incite	Enlighten
Crush	Encourage	Destroy	Ensnare
Tease	Cheer up	Reassure	Justify
Mock	Aggravate	Deceive	Enchant

## TRY IT YOURSELF

Now it's your turn! The process of scoring a script can be used for a monologue or a scene, but it can also be very helpful with a song. In musical theatre, scoring a song as if it is a monologue helps you to focus on what the lyrics are actually saying so that you don't just perform it like it's a concert. Let's give it a try with "Stay with Me" from *Into the Woods*! Read through the monologue once, and then follow the instructions at the top of the next page.

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

### WITCH

What did I clearly say? Children must listen. What were you not to do? Children must see—and learn. Why could you not obey? Children should listen. What have I been to you? What would you have me be? Handsome like a Prince? Ah, but I am old! I am ugly. I embarrass you. You are ashamed of me. You are ashamed. You don't understand. I was not company enough? Don't you know what's out there in the world? Someone has to shield you from the world. Stay with me. Princes wait there in the world, it's true. Princes, yes, but wolves and humans, too. Stay at home—I am home. Who out there could love you more than I? What out there that I cannot supply? Stay with me. Stay with me; the world is dark and wild. Stay a child while you can be a child. With me. I gave you protection, and yet you disobeyed me. You lied to me! Why didn't you tell me you had a visitor? I will not share you. But I will show you a world you've never seen.

*From Into the Woods, by Stephen Sondheim*

Who is your character talking to? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your objective? \_\_\_\_\_

What obstacles are in your way? \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have answered these questions, follow the steps below:

1. At the top of the page, write your **objective**.
2. Go through the monologue and break it into **beats**. Put a slash mark / each time there is a new beat.
3. For each beat, decide what **tactic** you are using to overcome your obstacle and achieve your objective. Write a tactic over each beat. Remember that it needs to be an action verb, and remember that it must be something you are doing TO the other person. Refer back to the word bank if you need ideas!

Remember that there isn't a right or wrong answer - there are endless possibilities! Scoring a script is a tool that is meant to be helpful to you as the actor, so you should choose an objective, obstacle, and tactics that make sense to you.

## **APPLY & ANALYZE**

Now that you've tried your hand at scoring a monologue yourself, let's take a look at how this concept relates to performance. Watch Donna Murphy perform as the witch in the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3cwpB7fP3U> As you watch, look closely to see if the actress uses any of the beat changes or tactic shifts that you identified.

Afterwards, answer the following questions:

What moments did you notice where Donna Murphy separated the song at the **beat breaks** you identified? **How** did she show this change in beat?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Do you think Donna Murphy was playing any of the **tactics** you chose? What **evidence** can you pick out of these tactics being used?

---

---

---

---

---

---

Did Donna Murphy do anything **differently** than you expected? What did you like or dislike about this choice and why?

---

---

---

---

---

---

I hope you enjoyed exploring further how to apply the concepts of objectives, obstacles, tactics, and beats to the process of scoring a script. Next time you are working on a monologue or scene, try it out and see how doing this work on paper first impacts your performance!