

SESSION 7 -- LEVELS & MECHANICS

Working With Lines

HOMEWORK REVIEW:

- 1) How did the monologues go? Have you committed at least one to memory?
- 2) How did you do with movement, walking, talking, and business?
 - Continue to work on different types of movement
 - Make it a goal (over time) to have at least three different monologues fully prepared. You'll be so glad you did!

Below is the script Coach Banks will be using in this session. Follow along:

83

NEIGHBORHOOD In East Los Angeles... foggy and forlorn as THE CHALLENGER passes... drives down a street of box homes with fences and gated windows.

CUT TO: INSIDE THE CHALLENGER the scanners are turned low... RICK watching the GPS ...

RICK

It's half way down the block, coming up on the right. Here, 36-57 North Burns.

LOU pulling up... parking behind a dumpster and ANGLE ON THE DARK CAR from the home invasion tucked beside a bleak row home as LOU LOOKS THROUGH THE CAMCORDER. Night vision view... zooming tight on the license plate...

RICK

That's the car?

LOU

That's the car.

RICK

You think there's a reward?

LOU

There's a reward.

RICK

How much?

LOU
50,000.

RICK
Do I get any of it?

LOU
I just gave you a raise.

RICK
That's salary. I'm talking about a bonus.

THE LEVELS AND MECHANICS OF THE CRAFT: Actions & Intentions

1. ICE COLD READ (ICR): This level happens when you read your material for the very first time, speaking it aloud as you go. This is the most unfamiliar level of scene work.

A. ICR...A Training Tool

- ICRs are mostly used for training purposes. Most ICRs you will read to yourself. However, you may practice them in a classroom setting with other actors. You'll very rarely, if ever, be asked to Ice Cold Read in an audition.

B. Quick Analysis Tips for (Ice) Cold Reads:

- Though you may not be asked to ice cold read in an audition, it's standard practice to cold read. For example, after your audition, they may ask you to read for a role you didn't prepare for. In this case, they'll likely hand you sides that you've never seen and give you just a few minutes to prepare for an immediate cold read. It's under these circumstances that you'll be extremely grateful and appreciative for this training--I promise!
- Here are some insights on what you should be looking for during your Ice Cold Read so that you'll be better prepared:

(1) What does the Page number tell you?

- Review the example copy Coach Banks read on the previous page of this workbook. The first page of the sides begins on page 83, indicated in the upper right hand corner. This tells you that this copy is from the third act of a feature. (Because anything over 75 pages is generally a feature length movie).
- Page Numbers can also help indicate where you are in the story arch (Act I, Act II or Act III).

(2) Ellipses

- They look like this: ...

b. They are often used like this: “Listen Jim... I don’t ever... forget it!”

c. Ellipses are used to indicate pauses, beats or breaks.

(3) Case Lettering

a. If a character’s name (or any significant noun) is in all CAPITAL LETTERS that means the character (or noun) is showing up for the first time.

(4) Punctuations

a. Read all punctuation out loud to better understand writer’s intent.

(5) Writer’s Intent

a. Remember, the copy/script is the blueprint of the story.

(6) Practice and Train

a. The more you do ICRs the more your ability to handle them will improve over time.

b. If you practice often enough, you’ll be able to pick up an Ice Cold Read and perform it at a Cold Read level.

2. COLD READ (CR):

A cold read is the read you do out loud after you’ve already read the material a few times. Before your CR, you should’ve completed some basic script analysis. However, at this level of becoming more familiar with the text, you’re still actively analyzing and breaking down the script as you go along.

Here’s a link to the CBSI Cold Read Prep Sheet: <http://bit.ly/1SBEA59> (Also located under your Resource Documents for Download section).

A. Line Lifting Sheet:

- Use the Line Lifting sheet to improve your Cold Reading skills. With the Line Lifting sheet, practice splitting your attention 90/10. Also practice the ratchet technique as your eyes shift up and down. Working the Line Lifting Sheet over time will help you to become a strong, powerful and effective cold reader. This is one assignment you do not want to skimp on! The LINE LIFTING SHEET DOWNLOAD is available under the Resource Documents for Download section of this session.

B. Pillars of Scene Work

- Flesh out the Who, What, Where, Needs, Wants, Intentions and Relationships.

C. Most Auditions Are Cold Reads

- You need to know how to properly handle your copy and your body during a cold read. These things will either help, or hurt your audition. Here are some Do's and Don'ts:

(1) The Don'ts:

- a. Don't place the copy down anywhere like on your lap, a chair or a table.
- b. Don't hold the copy with two hands - this looks too presentational and weak!

When reading with another actor:

- c. Don't hold the copy with your upstage (away from camera) hand. Don't position your downstage (towards camera) leg forward. These positions close you off to camera.

(2) Do's:

When reading with another actor:

- a. Do keep the copy in your downstage hand (the hand closest to the camera). This opens you up when you're facing your scene partner. Adjust this whether you're facing stage left, or stage right.
- b. If you're in a scene with action and you're constantly moving around, you need to keep adjusting your body and copy position so that you're always open to the camera. As you work with this, it will eventually become automatic.
- c. Regardless of the direction you're facing, your downstage hand should hold the copy and your upstage leg should be forward. Again, this opens you up to camera.

NOTE: When you hold copy, consider it an extension of your body, or a tool, a utility that needs to become unnoticed. In other words, the copy should seem invisible. When you're facing forward towards the camera (or Casting Director) directly, it doesn't matter which hand the copy's in... and changing hands is completely acceptable.

D. Memorize the First and Last Lines of the Copy

- A cold read is not memorized, but whenever possible, you should try to memorize the first and last lines. Doing so will allow you to deliver them to your scene partner (or Casting Director) without looking down. When you do, you appear stronger. You line lift the rest of the lines.

E. Listening and Eye Contact

- After you say your first line, listen while looking at the other person. Wait until they're done with their line then go down and get your next line. Once you have it, you can look up at your scene partner again. Don't look at the copy while your scene partner is reading or speaking (even if they're not looking at you). Find your rhythm. Eye contact is key, but not at the cost of a broken up read.
- The copy is NOT the principal player in the scene! Your strongest connection is with the person or people you're speaking to.
- Most of the time, your eyes will be on the other person's eyes or on the copy. If there is a reference to another person or object, you may look, but then you must come back to the principal character in the scene.

Example: The car being referenced in the scene read by Coach Banks.

- However, while training, (especially when first starting out), it's best to focus primarily on your copy and your scene partner's eyes only.

F. Actions & Intentions (Not looking like TALKING HEADS)

- What do I want or need? What's taking place in the scene? How do I avoid looking like a talking head?
 - Talking Head Definition:** Just saying lines with no actions or intentions.
 - Intention:** Your purpose, plan, want, need, drive, motivation.
- When you've clearly defined your beats (what you want or need to accomplish in every single moment of a scene), your actions will manifest naturally.
- The more you understand your character (through script analysis), the better you'll understand the actions and intentions needed in the scene.

G. Embrace the Location in Your Scene.

- Your actions will depend on your location.

Example: Being in a Car vs. Being in a Park.

- In a car: there's a street, a rear view mirror, you're buckled in, confined, etc.
- In a park: you're outside, open surroundings, natural distractions, etc.

H. Allowing for MOMENTS

- **Moment** - A seemingly magical occurrence in time that takes place naturally due to the fertile environment of being in the moment. You can force a moment... but true moments happen as you develop your instrument and better your understanding of timing. Some of acting's greatest moments happen when in The Zone*.
 - The Zone - The special place, different from the rest, where you can do no wrong! Everything just works, effortlessly and brilliantly.
 - **Moments are Created in the White Lines** - It helps if you know the actions and description of the environment. Often times, the location of the scene will be provided by the writer. Knowing your location will assist you with white line moments.
 - **Moments are Created with Intention** - The moments come when you make room for them and when you have clear attitudes and intentions. As you experiment, you'll discover where and when they'll work most effectively.
- I. **Flat-lining:** When a word, phrase, or line of dialogue is delivered without the appropriate accompanying emotion. Simply put, it's saying words without activating them.
- The more you actively listen to what's going on in the scene, the more you'll be affected by everything going on in that scene. Active listening places you in the moment(s), resulting in believable, organic, emotional responses.

3. MEMORIZED/MEMORIZATION

A. Memorization - The process of receiving, storing and recalling information.

There are many different ways to memorize material. Here are just a few examples:

- Read your copy out loud over and over.
- Record the other person's lines and say yours opposite the recording. (*For more detailed instructions on how to do this, see this section's homework.)
- Work with your friends and have them read opposite you.
- Work with your scene partner(s).
- Write out your lines.
- Connect your lines with the applicable blocking and movements of the scene.

B. Memorized/Off-Book - This means that there's no script in hand. You know your character, the story and you know all of the lines. In other words, you are memorized, off-book and ready to do the next level of scene/character work.

- When you get to the memorization stage of your scene work, it's important to become fully memorized as quickly as you can. This will allow you to move on to do creative character work and advanced scene study. As you pull everything together, you'll be on your way to a more exciting and interesting level of performance.
- In order to operate at a performance level (where you get to play freely with the white lines), you must first completely memorize the black lines...inside and out, upside and down. They've got to become a part of you. You personalize your acting by not only knowing the black lines intimately, but also knowing what's happening underneath them. You're in relationship with them. This is where the actor's intent strongly comes into play.
- To understand Memorization in greater detail, check out the blogs written by Coach Banks on the topic--they have been compiled into a pdf and can be found under your Resource Documents for Download section.

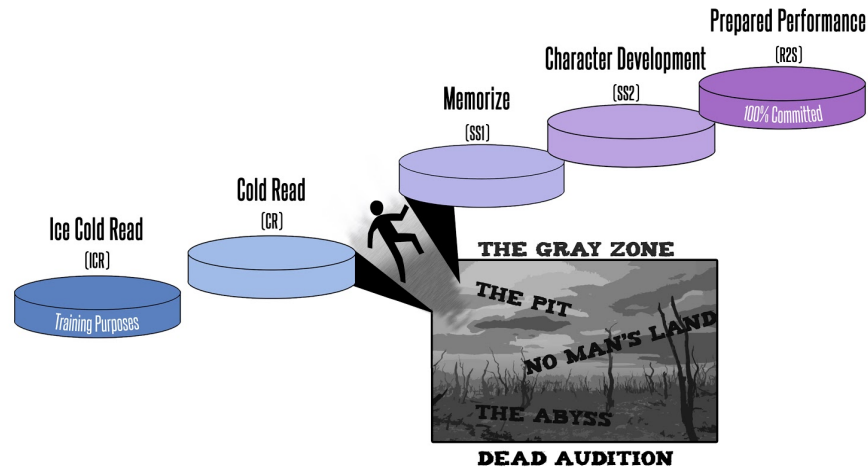
4. THE GRAY ZONE

A. The Pit - The Abyss - No Man's Land - The actor needs to be clear as to where they are with each level of the process. The chart below shows the different stages of SCENE WORK. When auditioning, it's customary for the read to stem from either the COLD READ or MEMORIZED levels. When this doesn't happen (which is significantly more common than not), the performance falls somewhere in between. This 'in-between' place we commonly refer to as THE PIT or, THE GRAY ZONE!

- In the pit, your performance will not be clear. Your read will most likely be choppy and disjointed. You may lose your place in your script as you scramble to locate lines on the page. This can result in you getting stuck in your head, trying to pull lines from memory. Bottom line-- you're not committed to a cold read, but you're not committed to being memorized. You're in some vague place in between. Therefore, your performance will appear uncommitted, weak and ineffective... lost in the abyss!

SS = Scene Study: 1st level, 2nd level, and so on -- the number of levels depends on how much work is needed before the scene is at a true performance level R2S (Ready to Shoot).

- **Beware! Many actors fall into THE PIT!** Why? Because the actor has not yet become an effective cold reader and also has not yet fully memorized the material. They're lost in the GRAY ZONE in between CR and SS1! (See illustration)
- You'll look great in an audition if you have solid cold reading skills. You'll look great performing if you're fully memorized and prepared because you aren't preoccupied with trying to remember the lines. When you're not operating strongly in either one of those two places, a CR or SS1... your performance will be lost!
- Here are two ways (or reasons) an actor winds up in the pit:



1. First, they don't know that the pit actually exists. Think 'trap'!
 2. Second, even if they do know it exists, they can still fall in by not developing strong cold reading and memorization skills. Think 'untrained'!
- To understand the Gray Zone in greater detail, read Coach Banks' Blog on the topic: Don't Get Caught in the Abyss - Nowhere Land - The Gray Zone. You can download a PDF of the blog post, available under your Resource Documents for Download section.

Once again, actors who fall into the pit either simply didn't know it was there (like a trap) and/or they didn't put the necessary work into avoiding the pit (being unprepared). The good news is--you aren't one of them!

You're here, taking in this information, doing the work! You're taking this course, so you're not going to make the mistake of falling into the pit. You're being given powerful information and the tools necessary to work effectively. Simply do the work and you'll develop amazing cold reading and memorization skills. So...NO PIT FOR YOU!

5. PERFORMANCE LEVEL

- A. Performance Ready / Prepared Performance (R2S):** The level you reach once you've effectively completed all the above work/stages and you're ready to perform your scene. Fully prepared. Fully committed!

At the Performance Level you'll:

- Be present in the moment.
- Actively listen.
- Fully participate.
- Bring to life the character you're playing in the situation of the scene.

- Properly tell the story.

B. Professional Performer: Once you've done all the work and you've become amazing at it, people will want to watch you. When they want to watch you enough, they'll pay you for it... again and again.

The actor must act. Sometimes being paid to act...sometimes paying to act. Either way, the actor must keep acting!

~ Coach Banks

HOMEWORK: Memorization

1. Locate Material

- Find a scene (from a script) with a character you'd like to play. All you need to do is search the internet. Type in your favorite TV show or movie title along with the word "script" next to it. And, Voila!

You Can Also Find Material On The Following Websites:

- Drew's Script-O-Rama: <http://www.script-o-rama.com/snazzy/table.html>
- IMSDB - Internet Movie Screenplay Database: <http://www.imsdb.com/>
- Simply Scripts: <http://www.simplyscripts.com/movie.html>
- AwesomeFilm: <http://www.awesomefilm.com/>
- Screenplays For You: <http://sfy.ru/>
- The Daily Script: <http://www.dailyscript.com/movie.html>
- The Screenplay Database: <http://www.screenplaydb.com/film/all>
- Movie Scripts and Screenplays: <http://www.moviescriptsandscreenplays.com/>
- Monologues: <http://www.1minutemonologue.com/2017-written-submissions>
<http://www.claybanksstudio.com/1mm/submitted-monologues>
- Mocksides: mocksides.com

Note: This is a partial list of 3rd-party websites not affiliated with CBSI. We are not responsible for their content or upkeep. Over time, you may find that some of them become obsolete, outdated, or are no longer available.

2. Rehearse & Memorize

- **Memorize a Two-Person Scene (2 pages).** If you have someone to practice a scene with, do this assignment with them. If you can't find a buddy, then you can do some acting opposite yourself* by simply recording yourself on your phone's recording function. Or check out a handy app developed specifically for line memorization and running and rehearsing your lines solo: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/linelearner/id368070258>
- Take a two-person scene and make a voice recording (most smartphones have this capability). Record yourself reading the opposite lines from the character you want to play. As you record the lines, be sure to leave enough room for the response lines.

- Don't record the response lines, just record enough silence to allow you ample time to say your chosen character's lines when you playback the recording. Make sure there's enough dead space or silence for you to not only deliver your lines, but to have all the necessary beats and moments.
- Rehearse with the playback voice recording.
- Keep it simple at first. Try recording one page, then do a practice run. You may find you'll need to go back and make a new recording, adjusting room for your lines and moments. Once you've done this effectively, you can rehearse the scene solo. You can repeat this process again and again with any new scene. Take note that you'll be performing a prepared two-person scene during your 3rd private coaching session... so do the work!

NOTE: Serious working actors do this continually. They ACT! They do it in class, on set, at home--anywhere! They continue to act every day!

DEMO: Levels and Mechanics of Working with Lines.

PART 1: Danielle and Joe will intentionally demonstrate a bad Cold Read.

- 1) What do you notice is not working, based on what you've seen and what Coach has pointed out?
- 2) What should they have done to make the scene better? For example, what needs to be adjusted in terms of blocking? Write at least 3 or more observations.
- 3) What's the difference between Stage Right and Camera Right?
- 4) Where is their energy going and what are they relating to in this example of how not to cold read?
- 5) What is *Paddling?

PART 2: Danielle and Joe will intentionally demonstrate a better cold read.

1) What differences do you notice between this performance and the first one?

PART 3: Danielle and Joe will demonstrate a cold read with:

- More energy!
- Awareness of their environment
- Increased intimacy
- Increased story arc
- Proper use of their copy

1) What are the differences between this performance and the second one?

END SESSION 7

Go over your notes and prepare for the Session 7 Quiz. You'll find Quiz 7 by clicking the Blue TAKE TEST button under this Lesson's main menu.

You must complete and pass the Session 7 Quiz before proceeding with Lesson 10.
