Clown Games 1 – Warm up

About this collection

These exercises and games have emerged from our work with Rebel Clowning, Physical Theatre and creative political education. The collection draws on experiences from different projects, trainings and international collaborations, particularly the collaboration between Clownlabor Schweiz and Theater der Unterdrückten Wien (TdU Wien), supported by Movetia, and the work and exchange with clown practitioners Hilary Ramsden and Robin Hambrook. The methods have been tried, adapted and further developed in different groups and contexts.

We share them as an open resource for clown groups, youth workers, educators, artists, activists and anyone interested in Rebel Clowning as a practice.

We see this collection as a commons – shared knowledge that can be passed on, adapted and further developed.

The collection is intentionally open-ended. If you have developed exercises or games that you would like to share, please send them to us at clownlab@proton.me . We are happy to include new contributions, perspectives and experiences from different contexts.

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A Name game: Missis Hit

Name game in a circle. One person says a name, and the person with that name must touch the shoulder of someone else, who then says another name, and so on.

A Name game: Volley

The group plays volleyball. Each time someone hits the ball, they must say the name of another person. This name is repeated each time the ball is hit until that person hits it.
Then a new name is called, and the process starts again.

Variation: Increase difficulty by trying not to let the named person touch the ball as a group challenge.

A Name game: Zombie Game

Name game in a circle. One person is the zombie and walks slowly to their target. The target chooses a saviour and looks into their eyes. When eye contact is established, the saviour can rescue the target by saying their names before the zombie catches the target. If not, the target becomes a zombie. Level 1: only one zombie at a time. Level 2: several zombies.

Variation: the victim can say any name to be safe and the person mentionned becomes the new target of the zombie

Anchoring in Trio

Three people, one standing upright in the center, relax and find their anchor point, while the two others stand on each side, pressing their weight on the shoulders and giving feedback on the person's anchoring.

Attention Exercise

Take 5 minutes of doing nothing in silence -> Concentration, but relaxed.

Bless You!

The group stands in a circle. One person sneezes theatrically, and someone responds with "Bless you."
If multiple people sneeze or multiple people say "Bless you," the game must restart — unless someone howls like a wolf, which saves the show.
If multiple people howl at once, the show can still be saved if someone gobbles like a turkey.

Body Isolation
An individual body part becomes autonomous. The following sequence is practiced:

1. The body part becomes independent,
2. The clown notices the autonomy by looking at the part,
3. Troubleshooting, where the clown looks for a solution to the problem, always visible to the audience.
   *Alternative version***:** The autonomy/dissociation of a body part causes different emotional reactions in the individual.

Butt to black
A part of de body is mentionned and has to touch something of a mentionned color

Cat and Mice
The group forms pairs who stay connected by touch (but not by holding hands).
One pair is designated as the cats, the rest are mice.
When a mouse pair is caught, they become the new cats.

Clocking
1st step: Walk through the space in a specific direction. 2nd step: stop at a given moment. 3rd step: look into a new direction. repeat

Second level: do the three steps as a specific animal

Clown Detective
Two clowns, one imitates the other as precisely as possible without being seen.
Second Level: Role change in an autonomous way (requires good listening).
Third Level: Open the group: each clown in the group chooses another clown to imitate without being noticed.

Clown Encounter
Every clown walks across the room, and when crossing another clown, eye contact is made.
Second level: Room running with an emotion, and each time you make eye contact with someone else, the emotion changes.
Third level: Two clowns on stage.
Option to facilitate the exercise: Perform all levels with music.

Clown Walk
A trio walking in line, with changing music.
The first clown sets the pace and may always walk behind or change the direction. The second clown follows correctly, and the third clown is slightly out of sync.

Clown wake-up routine
Awaken the voice: Yawn and visualize sending the sounds to distinct points.

Awaken the body: Play different materials, machines, body organs, or different animals in combination with distinct emotions.

Tipp: To awaken your clown, develop a personal routine to get into clown mode in 10-15 minutes (awakening your availability in the present moment).

Collective Stretching
Hold hands in a circle and explore stretches.
Second Level: Transform the circle, without letting go of hands, and search for intuitive stretches.

Collective Voice Exercises
One or more people perform a sequence of gestures, and another person acts as the narrator, commenting on what others are producing with words, noises, sounds, songs, grumbles, etc.
Room running: the whole group makes vocal

Discipline game
The group forms three or four rows of people. The game master gives the order to the first row to jump 8 times in synchronicity. At the 8th jump they turn around the left side 180 degrees. The following rows do the same. When the last row turns around they jump 4 times only before they turn back, facing the other row. The the other rows repeat the 4 times jump rhythm and when its the first rows turn again they jump only two times. Then it goes back to the last row. And they only jump one time, passing it all the way to the front again.

Tipp: before starting everybody bows in unison and says something together to find the synchronicity.

Dodge the Bullets
One person stands in the middle while the others form a circle. One at a time, players run straight toward the person in the middle with an outstretched arm. The person in the middle must dodge. Over time, the speed increases and multiple players join in, dodging together with body contact, avoiding the “bullets.”

Fantasy Battle
There are three classes, each with a corresponding sound:

Dwarves ("Pitschipitschi"), Giants ("Oooh"), Witches ("Mnimnimni").
Dwarves hunt giants, giants hunt witches, and witches hunt dwarves.
For each class, a movement type is defined. Then two groups are formed. Each group decides which class they are. The two groups face off, and on the count of

three, each group plays their class. Depending on which classes are played, one group hunts the other. Captured people switch groups, and the groups decide their new class, facing off again. The game continues until only one group remains.

Free Movement
Let the body move automatically, but not in a soft slide—listen to the body's intentions and follow them, also with sound.

Focus game
Walk around in the space and imagine an insect crawling on the floor before you. Follow it precisely with your eyes, at some point it can also fly. Then find a partner and you follow the partners fingertip. After you change roles. Then you play a delay so that you fixate the fingertip and when your partner moves it you play your emotional reaction of loosing sight of it until you find it again.

Golden Ball
Visualize a golden light energy ball placed in different parts of the body, and let the entire relaxed body be guided by this ball.
Second Level: Pair up and pass the ball back and forth.

Handshake game
everyone of the group closes their eyes and turns around three times. Then everyone walks around in the room very slowly, hands in front. When meeting another person, feel and discover each others hands. At some point develop a handshake together that you can recognize. Then continue walking around the room, meeting other hands. Then try to find your initial partner by recognizing the handshake you invented together.

Heart of the Clowns
Form a group, and stick together without touching, moving as one organism—no individuality, no ego play, just existing together. -> Later, break away from the group in a clear way for individual games, with the group giving all focus to support and expand the individual play.

Hugging
group game, Play catch, one person ist hunting the others and if somebody is touched, they become the hunter. But you can protect yourself from being catched by hugging another person. The protection holds max. for 30 seconds.

Jump - 2 - clap
played in pairs, first person jumps, the 2nd says "two", then the 1st one claps and it starts again with the 2nd person jumping. 2nd level: Play facing the public

Onomatopoetic Dance
The group sits in a circle, one person in the middle, and those in the circle make sounds imitating machines, animals, or other noises, but at most two sounds at a time. The person in the middle has their eyes closed and follows the body impulses to the sounds.

Pass the Line
A line is placed in the middle of the space. The game master chooses two opposite feelings. then everyone walks towards the line playing one feeling. The game master indicates to gradually increasing or decreasing that feeling when approaching the line. When Passing the line the feeling is switched and gradually increased or decreased while walking away from the line.

Variations: Choose tastes, colors, attributes etc. instead of feelings

Performative Writing Exercise
A clown comes on stage with a stool. The instructions are: "Take a stool, place it in the middle of the room, and sit on it." What detours or obstacles arise from this simple task?

Planting a Seed
For clown training, it's important to set a particular intention before or during meditation, e.g., "audacity," "lightness," "eros," "curiosity" -> Afterward, all exercises are done under the pretense of this intention.

Power Game
In pairs, one follows the hand of the other like a puppet.
Variation 1: You can also steal other puppets.
Variation 2: Dark Vader, one has the Jedi power and can manipulate the other as they want, while the other fully submits (listens and says "yes" bodily).

Private Dance
Pairs, music, one dances, the other stays neutral and takes just in, while both maintain intense eye contact. When the dancer stops, roles change

Rainbow Breathing
Lie on your back, bend both legs, and turn to the left side. Stretch your arms out to the sides, and with the inhale, extend your right arm in a curve toward your left arm. While exhaling, bring the right arm back over your chest to the right side. Relax your whole body during the process.

Relaxation Exercise:
Stand upright, relax, and ground yourself, eyes closed. Then lean the body forward, backward, and to the sides, identifying tense areas and focusing on

relaxing them. Grounding, physical presence, lightness, "creating space inside," calm, attentive awareness.

Rhythm Circle
One person stands in the center and throws a ball to someone in the circle, establishing a rhythm. Players must maintain the rhythm. Anyone in the circle can replace the center person by saying “Go,” without breaking the rhythm. *Optional*: Add music to define the tempo.

Tree and the Bear
One clown is the tree, solid and rooted, and the other(s) are the bears rubbing against the tree. -> More fun with music!

Samurai
Circle game: One person attacks another in the circle with an up-down arm movement and the sound “Ha!” The defending person makes the opposite arm movement and the sound “Ho!” the two people neighbouring the defender make a diagonal arm movement and say “Hee!” Then the defender attacks someone else.

Sequential / Triangle of Partner Play

1. Partner’s input,
2. Personal reaction to the input ("recharging") in front of the audience,
3. Release the "charge" back to the partner, to give them an input.

Exercise: Form pairs, and one person gives inputs to the other’s body, which reacts with "yes, bodily," from there, sound is added, and finally, audience gaze. Variation: Two clowns meet and play situations such as arguing, neighbor conflicts, declarations of love, etc.

Sharing Circle
The whole group forms a circle. A clown enters the middle, looks into each person's eyes, and eventually expresses something for the others, optionally with music.

Sinfonia idiotica
The clowns choose three onomatopoeic sounds/noises for each person and practise them. Then a concert is given: either a soloist with a choir/rhythm section setting the tempo, or a conductor and an orchestra (the rest of the group) following instructions given through body language.

Slapdance
Players form pairs. They face each other and take four steps together, one advancing while the other retreats — all in rhythm with music. On the last step, the advancing player tries to slap the other, who must duck to avoid it.

States of tension
Everybody walks in the space. The game master introduces 8 States of tension (after John Wright). The states are the following

1. / 8. Exhausted/Rigor Mortis (no movement)
2. Laid Back
3. one movement at a time
4. neutral
5. is there a bomb?
6. there is a bomb!
7. the bomb is about to go off!

The GAME
find the game, play the game, recognise when the game is over, find a new game

Trust Exercise
In pairs, A closes their eyes, B places their hand on a part of the body, and A reacts by following or resisting. Then it becomes a fluid game of managing and following between A and B, or B places their hand rhythmically on different parts of the body.
Step 2: B uses the whole body, not just the hands.
Step 3: Both A and B close their eyes and dance/play while always keeping part of the bodies in contact.
Step 4: One pair plays, and a third clown comes in to explain what's happening.

Trust Exercise 2
Circle, one person in the middle, closes their eyes, and falls in any direction. The others catch them.

Vertebrae Massage
Lie on your back and push the whole body up and down using only your feet.

Voice Warm-up
Yawning to open the throat "Ahhehhihhohhuhh," then without yawning, just sound: Imagination is a color pot, into which the hands are dipped to paint the environment with color -> corresponding, rolling, opening body movement.

Place a hand on a body part, "breathe into the hand," and express a sound as you release.

Repeat tongue twisters with a clown voice.

Ways of Entering the Game
"I see" -> Visual sense

"I know" -> Intellectual sense
"I feel" -> Introspective sense
"I imagine" -> Creative sense
Exercise: Perform the four ways of entering the game, one after the other, in pairs, applying them to the other by describing what you see, know, feel, and imagine (one sense at a time).

Whisky Mixer
Circle game: One person gives an impulse to their neighbour by saying “Whisky Mixer”. The impulse goes around until someone says “Messwechsel”, this means the impulse changes direction with the word “Wachsmaske”. Additionally you can send the impulse across the circle to someone else with the word “Fichtendickicht”. Whoever laughs has to walk around the circle.

Wolf and sheep
Two groups, one group is the public, the other plays the game. From the playing group one person is chosen to be the wolf, that hunts the sheep. Everybody has closed eyes and is moving. Whenever the wolf howls, the sheep have to respond with a sheep sound. This serves the wolf as orientation for the hunt.

Zombie variation: Instead of the wolf there is a zombie. There are no sounds, but when two people of the group bump into each other, they put the hands into the hands of the other and clap once with each hand, exept if one of them is the zombie, then he*her claps twice in the hand of his*her partner and the person dies. The dead open their eyes and join the public until there is no one left.

Yes and
A pair develops a story by always answering “yes and” to the proposal of the other person to continue the action
Variation: The group moves freely or in unison until someone proposes an action or movement to which everybody replies in unison “oh yes” and follows the idea until someone else proposes something

Zap Game
People form a circle and pass a clap around by clapping toward the person next to them.
With the word "Zap," the direction changes.
With "Didilidi" and a sweeping hand gesture, a person is skipped.
With "Zoom" and a pointing hand gesture, the clap is sent to anyone in the circle.
With "Boing," the clap is rejected or sent back to the sender.

Zoo Volley

The group forms a circle, and one person stands in the middle. The others pass the ball to the person in the middle, and each time they pass the ball back to the circle, they imitate an animal using both their body and voice.