

STAGE TERMS GLOSSARY

Common Theater Terms

- Auditions:** Readings before a director to determine casting of a play.
- Call Backs:** An additional audition for the final actors being considered. Similar to semifinals in sports.
- Clear the Stage:** A direction given to all actors, musicians, and technicians to leave the stage area prior to the beginning of a play.
- Places:** The direction for all actors, musicians, and technicians to go to their proper position and be ready for the beginning of a play or scene.
- Strike:** Taking down, changing out and putting away costumes, props and sets after a production.
- Run Through:** An uninterrupted rehearsal of a scene, act, or the entire play.
- Curtain Call/Bows:** The carefully choreographed appearance of actors on stage after the performance to acknowledge the applause of the audience.
- Heads Up!:** A term of warning used to call attention to overhead danger.

Technical Elements

- Flats:** Muslin or plywood covered frames used to build the walls of a stage setting.
- Props:** Small hand held items used by actors to create the period, character or setting.
- Platforms:** Wooden units joined together to build the floors for a stage setting.
- Costumes:** The clothing worn by the actors that helps determine character, time, theme and mood.
- Mask:** A term used meaning “to hide.” Also, a covering for an actors face that disguises or changes their character. often made out of leather, plastic or paper maché.
- Dark:** A time when all lights are out or the theater is closed.
- Stage Manager:** Person responsible for the physical set up, actors, and technical cues of a production as it is performed.

Elements of a Play

Dialogue: Written conversation.

Text: The written word.

Script: A complete scene or play in a format to be produced by actors and directors.

Initial Incident: The first most important event in a play from which the rest of the play develops.

Exposition: The explanation of who, what, when, where, why of a play.

Preliminary Situation: The story of the play as the curtain rises.

Climax: The major event in a play, the turning point of the story.

Rising Action: The series of events following the initial incident. How the story builds towards its climax.

Falling Action/Denouement: The series of events following the climax.

Conclusion: The final outcome of the play.

Protagonist: The play revolves around this character. Often the “good guy” but not always.

Antagonist: This character forces change or creates conflict for the protagonist. Often the “bad guy.”

Theme/Message/Purpose/Moral: What the play as a piece of art is trying to say to the audience.

Setting: Where the play occurs in terms of time and place.

Monologue: A long speech said by a single actor to themselves, the audience, or to another character.

Soliloquy: A long speech said by a single actor to themselves or the audience, but *not* to another character.

Act: An organizational division in scripts.

Scene: An organizational division in scripts. Often several scenes make up an *ACT*.

Terms for the Actor

Pantomime: A story or action performed with out words relying on body language.

Stage Business: Small actions such as smoking, using a fan, pouring a drink, etc. Used to fill time, create character, and sometimes to make the action “more realistic.”

Open Up/Cheat Out: Facing as much towards the audience as possible.

Take the Stage: What an actor does when they take control of the scene or take focus of the audience.

Given Circumstances: The who, what, when, where, why of the play or scene or character.

Focus: Where the director wants the audience to look. The actors point of concentration.

Diction: The actors ability to be understood by the audience.

Volume: The actors ability to be heard by the audience.

Cue: The last words or actions indicating the time for another actor to speak or move.

Ad lib: Lines made up by an actor to fill in where there would be an undesirable pause due to dropped lines, technical problems, etc.

Aside: Lines said to the audience that other actors onstage are not supposed to be hearing.

Pick up Cues: A direction for the actor to begin responding immediately without allowing any lapse time.

Build: To increase the tempo or volume or both to reach a climax in a scene.

Cheating: Using a movement or position that may not be realistic but allows the audience to see the action more clearly.

Mapping the Stage

Upstage: The area of the stage that is the furthest from the audience.

Downstage: The area of the stage that is the closest to the audience.

Stage Right: The right side of the stage from the actor's point of view (facing the audience.)

Stage Left: The left side of the stage from the actor's point of view (facing the audience.)

Center: Center of the stage.

Full Front: Facing the audience.

Full Back: Facing away from the audience.

Cross: Movement from one area of the stage to another.

Blocking: The set movement of all the actors onstage throughout the play.

BACKSTAGE

UP STAGE RIGHT USR	UPSTAGE US	UP STAGE LEFT USL
STAGE RIGHT SR	CENTER STAGE US	STAGE LEFT SL
DOWN STAGE RIGHT DSR	DOWNSTAGE DS	DOWN STAGE LEFT DSL

AUDIENCE (HOUSE)

HOUSE LEFT

HOUSE RIGHT

THE PHYSICAL STAGE

Wings: The areas to the left and right of the stage out of view to the audience. A part of the backstage area.

Proscenium: An arched opening through which the audience sees the stage. Also a style of theater with the audience seated predominantly in front of the stage.

Apron: The usually curved area of the stage closest to the audience.

Backstage/Offstage: Usually the entire stage area not visible to the audience.

House: The audience area.

Backdrop: The drop farthest upstage in most settings. Also a large curtain, sometimes with a picture or design.

Curtain Line: The imaginary line across the stage floor which follows the line of the front curtain.

Fly Loft: The area above the stage where curtains and set pieces are stored and hidden during a production.

Grand Drape/Main Rag: The front, often decorative, curtain of a stage.

Legs: Narrow curtains in the wings to mask the backstage areas.

Cyclorama: A large, usually white, curtain that is lit to create setting and masks the back of the stage behind the set.

Trap: An opening in the stage floor for actors to pass through to make entrances and exits.