



SLIP-STICK COMEDY

Physical comedy is a theatrical art form that uses exaggerated movement and visual humor to entertain audiences. Use this activity to guide students through an exploration of physical comedy techniques and clowning fundamentals!

Materials Needed: one chair per student

Space Setup: This activity works best with chairs arranged in a circular formation, though it can be adapted for students seated at desks.



1. To begin, invite students to take a seat. Explain that you'll be facilitating an exploration of physical comedy and clowning techniques. Tell students that they are now amateur clowns who are about to find themselves in a very slippery (and sticky) situation!
2. Guide students through a slapstick scenario by saying, "Sit upright in your chair. Plant your feet firmly on the floor and rest your hands on the sides of your chair. Suddenly, you notice your chair has become unusually slippery! Begin to slide slowly from your seat, gradually descending all the way to the ground until you land on your bottom. When you attempt to sit back down in your chair, the same thing happens again!"
3. Then ask students: *How does your clown character respond to this situation? What emotions or reactions does this predicament inspire?* Allow time for students to explore various reactions to their slippery chair predicament. **Note:** *Consider modeling this and subsequent steps before inviting students to explore independently.*
4. Next, mime retrieving an imaginary container of glue and a brush. Encourage students to do the same, pantomiming the careful application of glue across their chair's surface. Once finished, turn to your students and, using only gestures, demonstrate that you've successfully coated your chair. Invite students to stand in front of their chairs, extend their hands forward, sit down and place their hands in their laps. Now it's time to discover just how sticky that chair has become!
5. Tell students, "Without using your hands for leverage, reach forward and attempt to stand. You're unable to! Try again—still stuck! On the third attempt, place your hands on the sides of your chair to assist yourself."
6. Now ask: *What inventive and humorous solutions might our clown characters discover to escape this sticky situation?* Consider modeling several possibilities (e.g., you pull your hand with tremendous force, and when it finally breaks free, you accidentally strike yourself in the forehead; OR you discover a mysterious release button on the back of your chair that, when pressed, launches you high into the air, landing you dramatically on your feet).
7. Explain that this genre of comedy is called slapstick—a performance style characterized by exaggerated physical action and comedically awkward predicaments.
8. Next, have students partner up and challenge them to devise their own inventive conclusion to the slippery/stuck chair scenario. Then, invite volunteers or pairs to present their physical comedy creations for the class!

Reflection Questions:

Which moments from today's exploration resonated most with you?

What discoveries did you make while investigating physical comedy and clowning techniques?

How did the collaborative process of creating an original slapstick routine with a partner feel?

