



Beverly Hills Playhouse

THE CHECKLIST

Evolved over many years of teaching, 'The Checklist' is a series of tools an actor can use to help approach their work on a scene. You don't have to use every point for every scene - any one tool could unlock a scene for you.

1. WHAT IS THE EVENT?

What's going on in this scene? Not the theme. Just what's going on. Have I experienced anything like that? And how did I behave?

2. EVALUATION

Am I on fire? Are the choices hot enough, alive? This scene is loaded. The stakes are high. Am I ready for that, or do I need to assume the position?

3. BEHAVIOR

What am I doing physically in this scene? I can't allow myself just to sit here and say lines. What else can I do to be more alive? Push-ups? Clean the room? Put on makeup?

4. PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL STATE

Am I drunk? Do I feel sexy? In pain? Or am I supposed to be feeling great? And is the state consistent throughout the scene? Is it cold the entire time? Or do I warm up during the scene? How do my emotions vary in the scene? I've got to figure that out specifically.

5. WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE SCENE?

Did I just finish the NY Marathon? Did I just get fired? Is it raining outside? Am I wet? Out of breath from the stairs? How does that change now the scene has begun?

6. CREATIVE HIDING

Can I play part of the scene into the tablecloth? Weep into it? Play with my hat as I woo her? Or play the sunset instead of her eyes? Can I be freer through fiddling with the scarf?

7. BE A PERSON

Am I like an actor on a stage or am I like a person? My character is a person. Is my behavior coming from the real life of the character? Am I trying to be emotional or a person trying to control their emotions?

8. INNER AND OUTER LIFE "THE COVER"

Play the clown and pretend the pain inside is nothing? Or play the pain more with less charm? Get more personal and specific. I need to ensure I'm not "playing the cover" without anything cooking underneath.

9. WHO'S THE AUTHOR?

Who wrote this? Woody Allen? Tennessee Williams? What is their point of view on life, their style? What other works are there by the author? Have I read them for clues?

10. IMPROVISATION

I'll pretend I'm going to marry Ophelia, improvise my proposal & see where that takes us. Shakespeare's language is tough - let me say it in my own words, then get back to the Bard.

11. HUMOR

Am I using humor? People use humor all the time to deal with hardship. Or is it too much to suddenly act like Noel Coward, (ref Brando in Last Tango in Paris). All the great performances have humor, charm, irony.

12. TRUST

Do I believe in my choices? Am I having fun? Am I confident in what I'm doing? I've got my choices. Let's go.

13. BEING PERSONAL

Am I personally involved in this scene? Am I telling the right story? Being personal needs to cost me something: My emotional involvement.

14. PATHOLOGY

How sick is this character? How compulsive? Am I giving in to the violence? I have some seed of this in my life. Use it. Expand on it.

15. OBJECTIVES

The character wants to be king, don't deny it. Do I want it enough? I know what it means to want something. Go for it. Remember, at any cost, caution is not my friend.

16. SPECIFICS

Is this my Hamlet, personal and specific? Do I have the father? Is he real to me? The image of my mother in bed with my uncle-- do I have that? The feeling of late of night? The choice of Hamlet's angry explosion?

17. USE OF OBJECTS

Am I using physical objects to connect myself with this environment? Maybe some of my own personal objects will make me more comfortable. Or one that has more emotional value for me? Yeah, let me use one of those.

18. ARBITRARY CHOICES

Kazan says, "Character is revealed through contradiction." What inner struggle is my character going through that might be revealed through an arbitrary choice?

19. MOMENT TO MOMENT: BELIEF

Can this scene be tracked? Am I responding to things moment to moment? Am I really listening, taking the time to respond as a person would? The more I experience, the more I'll believe, and the more I believe, the more I'll experience.

20. MOMENT TO MOMENT: ALTERNATIVES

The script says my character leaves his wife. But have I explored the opposite? People go through tough decision making before choosing. So, I need to go through that process, That needs to be part of my performance.