



There is a CODE OF CONDUCT by which any Actor worth his or her union membership should abide. Most of these you know — they're just common sense. So when you are lucky enough to work, follow these simple rules.

# Actors' Equity Actors' Etiquette

## MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES:

- ❑ Do not rehearse or perform without a signed Equity contract.
- ❑ Give your best possible performance.
- ❑ Maintain performance as directed or choreographed.
- ❑ Make no unauthorized changes in costume, make-up or hairstyle.
- ❑ Take proper care of all costumes.
- ❑ Appear at curtain calls as directed.
- ❑ Be on time for rehearsals and the scheduled half-hour.
- ❑ Notify the Stage Manager before half-hour if you are ill or unable to reach the theatre in time.
- ❑ Observe the rules as posted on the callboard.
- ❑ Fully cooperate with the Stage Manager.
- ❑ Consult the Deputy and Stage Manager in case of disputes.
- ❑ If disagreements cannot be resolved by the Deputy and/or the Stage Manager, you have recourse to appeal to the staff, Equity executives, the Regional Boards and, ultimately, to the Council.

**PUNCTUALITY** — You've heard about it your whole life and being a professional means there are no excuses for lateness to a rehearsal or performance. There are moments when a real crisis may disrupt you from your appointed arrival time, so PLAN for those moments by arriving well before the designated time. Those extra minutes will allow more time to warm-up, build an ensemble, or get you in the right frame of mind. If lateness is truly unavoidable, you must call your Stage Manager (funny, *they're* never late) and let him or her know your expected arrival time.



**READ WHAT YOU SIGN** — Even though Equity's major benefits are our negotiated contracts, business representatives, and member services, read everything you are asked to sign, EVEN FROM EQUITY.

**REHEARSALS:** For many, this is the most exciting time of being in a show. Take time to explore your character (Why do you cross on that line?), fine-tune stage business or justify your choreography. Even if you can't wait to get in front of an audience, let those Actors who love it, relish it.



**CELL PHONES** — Turn them off when entering a rehearsal or performance space. There are appropriate times to use them, so hang up!

**NOTES: Getting them:** Always be gracious, even if you disagree. Say "Thank you" after the director gives you the note, or "May we speak about this later?" if you don't understand or disagree. The note session is not therapy for your character, but rather a session of quick fixes for MANY elements of the show. Find time for you and the director to solve issues that affect you or your character only.



**Giving them:** NEVER, (Did you read that?) never give another Actor notes and never allow yourself to receive notes from another Actor. A response could be, "Thanks for your help, but I think it's best we do this kind of thing through the Stage Manager or Director." There is no room for flexibility here. Wouldn't you resent it?

**COSTUME FITTINGS** are tricky. Let the designer know your concerns but avoid doing his or her job. Too much unwanted advice to a designer, and you could end up in a tube top or out of a job.



**GOSSIP** — You know it's wrong. We heard you say it.



**QUIET!** As you learned in the last rule, sometimes keeping your mouth shut is a good thing. We will expand on that theme — keep the noise down when you are backstage. Avoid all talking and/or whispering, some theatres actually DO have good acoustics. Keep your voice and laughter down even when in the dressing room. Like the song says, “Hush, hush. Keep it down, now. Voices carry.”

**TECH REHEARSALS:** You know what we’re going to say, right? That is the only time the designers get to fine tune their work with you there. So, pay attention. Don’t disrupt their rehearsal and stay close to the stage, because they’re always going to go back a few scenes when they resume.

Equity rules prohibit members from working, with or without pay, for any employer who is not a signatory to an Equity agreement or code, unless Equity has given prior written permission (for example, granted for performances sponsored by a religious institution or to fulfill academic requirements).

Working without benefit of contract is so serious a breach of your professional responsibility that such behavior will subject you to disciplinary action. Such non-union work seriously diminishes Equity’s ability to stimulate professional work opportunities, undercuts all other agreements, creates unfair competition, and is ultimately detrimental to the welfare of all the members. Should you have any questions regarding this very important rule, immediately contact Equity staff in the nearest office.

**BACKSTAGE DRAMA** — Just because we play dramatic characters on-stage does NOT mean we must portray them off. When you are in a show, the theatre becomes a tiny universe. Remember, it is temporary, and there is a REAL world outside those theatre doors. Don’t be the stereotypical diva or demanding Actor. If love should bloom while in a show, great! Keep it outside! If you have a personal struggle, sorry, but keep it outside. You were hired for your performance abilities; perform.



**HALF-HOUR** is a misnomer. The Stage Manager may set ANY reasonable arrival time for any Actor in any show. You should welcome your time in the theatre. So get there early; there are many things to do.

**PROPS:** Two major rules here -- never play with a prop and always check your props before each show (luckily you got there before “half-hour”). Those two rules seem instantly understandable but are rarely followed. Follow them. The first night you discover the climactic letter in your pocket is missing before your entrance, you’ll understand.



**ILLNESS** — There are sick days built into many contracts; use them when you NEED to.

**AD LIBS and changes to the script:** As the performances wear on, you may feel that you understand the character better than the playwright. You don’t, so quit making up lines.

**OPENING NIGHT:** Congratulations! Have fun at the party but remember, you have a show tomorrow night.



**MARKING a performance.** The lone audience member today paid the same ticket price as the full house that loved your performance last night. You have a responsibility to all involved to perform the show as rehearsed and to do your best. If that doesn’t sway you, that lone audience member may be someone important in the business. Now, you’re listening.

**MAINTAINING a performance.** You can look at a long run either as a chore or the world’s best acting class. You get to ply your craft and test your choices in front of an audience (“Why did I get that laugh last night and not tonight?”). Quit complaining and stay fresh. There are worse things than having a job.

**RESPECT** — Our final category is perhaps the most obvious and the most abused. We appeal only to the **basest of reasons** for having respect (Remember, nothing spreads faster than your reputation):

**For Staff**—They can hire you again.

**For Crew**—They can hurt you.

**For Directors**—They can make your life miserable.

**For Designers**—They can make you look stupid.

**For Actors’ Equity Association**—They can help you.

**For other Actors**—They can upstage you.

**For Yourself...** That means, value your contribution to the show by following the above guidelines and taking care of yourself when rehearsing or performing. Keep healthy throughout the run.



You were chosen over many other Actors for this role, so respect yourself and live up to everyone’s belief in you.