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THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Drama/Theatre

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HOW TO START A DRAMA/THEATRE GROUP

1. WHAT TYPE OF GROUP?

- This decision will depend on interests of prospective members
- Whether there is a willingness to participate in practical drama
- Enthusiasm

2. POSSIBLE GROUPS

- Play-reading
- Going to theatres to see plays / shows
- Play study group – sometimes through showing dvds of plays
- Practical drama workshops
- A combination of all of these

3. WHEN?

- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Occasional days or consecutive days
- Other

4. WHERE?

- Small groups might meet in private houses for play study or play reading. This would be conducive to interplay of ideas and responses to plays
- Larger groups and those involving dvd projection or practical drama activity will need to use larger premises, usually hired. It is important to try to get the size of the room right – for example to accommodate a large group watching a dvd comfortably and using a digital projector, or a smaller group of no more

than 16 doing practical drama work needing a medium-sized room with space to move about and away from other distractions or casual observers.

5. WHY?

- What do group members want to learn or experience?
- How committed will they be to attend regularly?
- Will they be willing to contribute to group discussions - or to take part in group activities?
- Will some be willing to 'teach' as well as 'learn' – that is will the group be one where there is shared delivery of the course or activity's material?
- Will learning goals be clear for all participants though sometimes different amongst participants?
- If previous experience is necessary for full involvement in the group how can those without it be accommodated? For example, by pre-course sessions for those unsure about participating in practical drama work.
- The enthusiasms of the leader should encourage learning, not overwhelm course members.

6. PARTICIPATION

- It is a fundamental principle of U3A that it is a self-help organisation to which all members should contribute. A course should always be aware of this principle.
- Drama is a socially-interactive process whether this is through practical work or in response to a play studied or seen in a theatre. Usually, there is no single 'right way'.
- Discussion, however, should not be another word for individuals to state opinions but not listen to others.
- Seating arrangements are important and, usually, a circle or semi-circle is often best where everyone can see everyone else.
- Listening is as important as talking – this includes 'the leader'!

7. ORGANISATION

- When visits to theatres are involved financial arrangements need to be sound and related to an individual U3A's financial policy.

- The theatre visiting group is often set up as a separate sub-committee within its U3A, with a designated bank account. This account should be run with exactly the same rules and regulations as the main U3A bank account i.e. under committee control.
- Such a group needs one person to act as an administrator for theatre tickets and coach bookings.
- When deciding which plays to visit or study, group members should feel they can make suggestions that will be properly considered by the leader and the rest of the group.

8. USEFUL INFORMATION

- For choosing plays: 'The Theatre Guide – A Comprehensive A-Z of the World's Best Plays and Playwrights' – Author: Trevor Griffiths – Publisher: A&C Black – ISBN 0-7136-6171-2
- Sets of plays can usually be borrowed from county libraries. Otherwise: The Drama Association of Wales, The Old Library, Singleton Road, Cardiff, CF24 2ET – 02920452200
email: dewi.daw@virgin.net
- Pay the copyright premium to National Office and then photocopy extracts from plays. Obtain videos and dvds of plays [especially Shakespeare] and seek further resource advice from:
Elizabeth Gibson at National Office's Resource Centre –
Tel: 020 8315 0199 Email: resource.centre@u3a.org.uk
- Publications available from the National Office:

'Group Leaders' Handbook' [available on national website]
and
'Time to Learn – Facilitating non-formal adult learning – A Guide'
- National Drama / Theatre Network Coordinator:

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