

STAGE COMBAT SAFETY

Stage fights are a vitally important part of many productions, and the truth is that when a fight is not properly staged, even a simple slap can be dangerous.

Accidents can and do happen, so throughout the training, rehearsal and performance process you must constantly be aware of the safety principles that keep you and your partner safe. It's easy to get carried away when punching or reacting, and hurt yourself or someone else—students can be injured if they stray into another group's space. Keep partners aware of others around them at all times!

The basic principle and motto of stage combat:

**Safety first,
Safety last,
Safety always!**

SAFETY IS A STATE OF MIND

STAGE COMBAT GUIDELINES

- WARM-UP FIRST.
- PAY CLOSE ATTENTION.
 - Keep on the lookout for accidents that can happen around you and your partner.
 - Watch out for the other performers wandering around you to make sure they don't unknowingly enter your practice space.
- FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS EXACTLY.
- NEVER GOOF OFF / FOOL AROUND.
- KNOW YOUR DISTANCE.
 - Minimum distance: an outstretched hand span.
 - Note: There are some controlled contact strikes. These must be performed as instructed.
- START IN SLOW MOTION.
 - By example, set the ideal slow-motion tempo and have them practice it along with you. Also demonstrate what it means for everyone to work at the same tempo.
 - You *never* fight at full speed, even performances are only in $\frac{3}{4}$ time.
- The *victim determines* the movement.
- Keep a first aid kit handy in case of accidents.

STAGE COMBAT SAFETY TIPS

- Work in a clear open space.
 - Each performer should be able to move about freely in all directions for several feet before running into a fellow performer.
- Remove all jewelry and empty your pockets.
- Use tumbling mats to cushion any accidental falls.
- Before beginning each session, look around and make sure your space is clear of furniture, other actors, and that the floor is clean.
- Work in lots of light.
- Avoid staging, or rehearsing fights in tight spaces.
- Wear non-restrictive, comfortable clothing and supportive and protective footwear.
 - Avoid high heels, boots, slippery shoes or socks.
 - When rehearsing the "clothes grab," wear heavy, loose clothing, such as sweatshirts.
- All partner A's face the same direction and all B's face the same direction.
- Don't try to accomplish too much or too little in practice session. Rushing the learning process can be dangerous and frustrating, and spending too much time on one technique can cause the performers to lose interest.

- Always respect and take care of your partner AT ALL TIMES. Everyone learns at a different rate of speed and it can be dangerous if one performer feels pressured to speed up before they are ready. Remember:
 - Work at the same tempo as your partner whether you are working in slow motion while you learn a technique, or whether you are moving at a faster pace when you bring it up to performance speed. If you are uncertain what the tempo is, take a moment and make that decision together.
 - Respect the slower speed if two partners are working at different tempos.
 - When training, never use too much force or speed. Even rapidly changing your fighting distance can lead to injury.
 - Respect your partner and work at their capacity and training level.
- Understand that it should take several rehearsals to bring the fight scene to performance level.
 - Don't expect to put these techniques safely to use after one or two sessions.
- In performance situations, always rehearse the fight before performing, so that memory is not a problem

STAGE COMBAT CHOREOGRAPHY TIPS:

- Always remain in fighting stance with your arms up.
- Avoid hitting the head.
 - If you are going to "hit" the head remember to stop short.
- Look at your target area, don't follow what was there.
- Only stick to things your body will let you (i.e. a high kick to the face may or may not be doable by you).
- Fall on your side or tail end.
- Don't be too tense nor too relaxed.
- Unless you know that the victim will evade/block your attack, don't attack.
- If it doesn't work, but you really want to use it; drop it and choose another move. Perhaps adding it in later on.