

Instructional Touch and Theatrical Intimacy Recommended Practices Department of Theatre and Dance, the University of Texas at Austin

The Department of Theatre and Dance is in the process of making an intentional culture shift with the implementation of recommended intimacy practices, a change which takes intentional practice, time, and effort on everyone's part. In combination with intimacy education, our intimacy policies are living documents that are designed to support our living and evolving practice and culture.

The Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas at Austin adopts the following recommended practices in alignment with evolving industry practices and standards for theatre training and intimacy.

Instructional Touch is any physical contact made between instructor and student. Instructional Touch recommended practices are also to be encouraged between students. Examples of Instructional Touch include:

- Adjusting alignment/positioning
- Bringing awareness to physical use
- Partnering for demonstrations
- Correcting actor placement in space
- Adjusting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Costume and Wig Fittings

Instructional Touch Recommended Practices

- Ask before you touch
 - Be specific about the contact
 - Where
 - For what purpose
 - Try using open questions
 - “Does that work for you if I _____?”
 - “How would you feel about _____?”
 - “Would you be open to _____?”
 - Be prepared for “no”
 - Offer alternatives
 - Visualization
 - Demonstrating on yourself
 - Using Props
 - Careful observation and note-taking
- Establish boundaries when engaging in exercises that may involve contact.
 - For large group activities that involve contact, an instructor can establish ‘general boundaries,’ meaning there will be no contact to the breast/chest, genitals or buttock areas. An instructor can also add any additional boundaries for group activities which they feel will serve the group.

- Establish standard verbal and non-verbal exit or self-care cues.
 - Exit cues are used to briefly hold an activity to clarify a boundary or if a participant needs to step away from an exercise.
 - For a verbal exit, we suggest using the departmental exit words “**tapping out.**”
 - For a non-verbal exit, participants can raise their hands and back away from the activity.
 - If a participant uses an exit cue, check in with them and ask what they need to continue.
 - If a participant uses an exit cue because they have crossed a boundary, encourage the use of ‘I’ statements to acknowledge the misstep, apologize and move on.

Please note: Instructional Touch is different from touch used in an attempt to prevent or minimize injury or harm. In those situations, all participants should act immediately to reduce harm or risk in accordance with their safety training. Check-in afterward regarding touch if necessary

Recommended intimacy tools and practice, including boundary communication, is happening in classes and in production throughout the department. Training is available to any member of the Theatre and Dance Department upon request. Please contact Resident Intimacy Director, Andy Grapko at andrea.grapko@austin.utexas.edu to schedule a class or area training.

*This policy was created based on content originally created by Theatrical Intimacy Education.