

Safe Touch Policy

This policy aims to ensure that safe and appropriate communication and contact is maintained between students and staff in the context of Actor Training. It is important to remember that whilst the acting industry may require intimacy and or nudity, in these situations the professional actor has the choice whether to agree to the casting. Therefore, no tutor or director should require a student to engage in these practices and should be mindful of the power dynamics involved in directing; the consent, not only of the student performing but those observing; and any likely triggers that may cause emotional distress.

- Some physical contact may be deemed necessary between tutors and students, however good practice must be observed
- Physical instruction, which involves safe touch towards certain areas of training is sometimes essential to aid effective teaching and learning i.e. awareness of correct muscle usage, correct posture, correct line and breathing techniques.
- Acting is about portraying real life, therefore physical contact will be necessary between students during certain scenes; In addition, acting may require lifts or physical contact to portray abstract ideas or themes; tutors should facilitate good practice where this occurs
- Students should adhere to the good practice set up by tutors and any physical contact outside of these guidelines would be deemed a disciplinary matter
- The school respects that everyone has the right to set personal boundaries in respect of physical contact and these boundaries may develop over time; tutors should be mindful and sensitive about how these boundaries are communicated and received
- IDSA policy states that sexually explicit scenes are prohibited unless an intimacy coordinator has been specifically employed to deal with such material; the intimacy director may NOT be the same person as the director

Good Practice

- Tutors should always work in an open environment avoiding private unobserved situations and encourage open communication with no secrets
- It is the tutor's responsibility to set up clear expectations and explanations about what will happen in class and facilitate signals both between them as the tutor and between students using such phrases as 'is it okay if I just place my hand on your shoulder?'

- Wherever possible, students should be partnered with each other, rather than with a tutor, so that tutor student contact can be minimised and only occur where completely necessary
- In scenes when working with impulse is necessary, students should speak before the improvisation or scene to set their personal boundaries and should be clearly empowered to stop the scene at any point should they so wish.
- The intention behind all physical contact should be professional and unambiguous.
- Any physical contact during teaching should be precluded with verbal permission and be direct and necessary.
- Any student has the right to refuse any 'hands on' tuition, without question.
- Tutors and fellow students should treat all students equally and with respect and dignity.
- The group should always put the welfare of each student first, beyond artistic goals.

Essential Practice for Weight Bearing/Lifting

- The tutor is responsible for the health and safety of all students in the room and must set clear and unambiguous guidelines and signals for safe practice.
1. The tutor should instruct the class that no lifting should occur without a tutor present *and aware that they are supervising a lift.*
 2. Check the room for any potential hazards- make students aware of the checks and get them to remove hazards or move them to a safe location.
 3. Tell students to be especially aware of low ceilings when lifting as they can catch a student by surprise and cause serious injury.
 4. Give clear verbal and physical instructions with spotting and safe practice put in place.
 5. Ensure students are aware of potential injury/constriction sites such as the neck and lower back, to ensure nobody stands on these areas of another's body. Remind of safe practice such as bending knees to lift etc.
 6. In the first instance the class must work in silence and listen to the tutor's verbal instruction
 7. In the next instance the class should continue to work in silence (tutors should be aware that often students become excited when lifting and noise creates hazard, as the class may not hear essential instructions)
 8. Once sufficient rehearsal has been put place and the tutor is satisfied that all students are aware of health had safety concerns, the lift may be incorporated into the scene.

Stage Combat

- All stage combat (such as slapping, punching, pushing, stabbing etc.) should be choreographed by a qualified stage combat instructor, unless observed and approved by the Head of Acting.
- It is expressly forbidden to bring in any kind of weapon, even if the script requires it. Please be aware that it is an offence to carry a weapon, and therefore if a tutor or a student is bringing a weapon or replica weapon to class they may be stopped and searched and get into serious trouble.

- If the scene requires a weapon e.g. a character threatens someone with a knife, or includes a physical fight, then please email the Head of Curriculum for advice and they will attend a rehearsal to discuss solutions with the tutor/director.

Scenes of a sexual nature/kissing/nudity

- Scenes of an explicit sexual nature are strictly prohibited.
- Full frontal nudity and/or bare buttocks is strictly prohibited
- Partial nudity, such as appearing in substantial underwear is permitted, provided it is not gratuitous and strict guidelines are adhered to avoid any inadvertent nudity (please refer to the student's handbook for costume guidelines.)
- Tutors and students should seek permission for any partial nudity and have this approved by the Head of Curriculum.
- Scenes with kissing may be suggested by the student. Tutors should avoid suggesting such scenes, with permission from the Head of Acting.
- Kissing should not involve tongues, and if of a romantic/sexual nature, be carefully choreographed by the tutor/director, ideally with the student coordinator present. Once again, tutors should be mindful of student consent and be sensitive to any signals of discomfort and/or inappropriate behavior from students.

Further information for professional engagements including intimacy can be found here:

<https://www.intimacyonset.com/intimacy-on-set-guidelines.html>

Practices to be avoided

- Avoid spending time alone with students away from others, save in essential one to one situation when extreme care should be exercised.

Practices never to be sanctioned

- Allowing or engaging in sexual horseplay, physically or sexually provocative games.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a student, even in fun.
- Ridiculing a student or isolating a student as a form of control.
- Improvised or unsupervised lifting
- Improvised or unsupervised stage combat
- Improvised of unsupervised scenes of a romantic or sexual nature
- Failing to act on and record any allegations made by a student.

Incidents that must be reported and recorded

If any of the following occur during or in the context of an IDSA activity, it should immediately be reported to the designated safeguarding leads (Head of Wellbeing and the Head of Acting.)

- If you or a student hurt a student, accidentally or otherwise

- If a student displays behavior that may indicate developing a crush on you or a fellow student
- If a student contacts you inappropriately e.g. through social media
- If a student appears to be sexually aroused by your actions or the actions of others.
- If a student misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- If a student is unusually distressed and you have any suspicions of or concerns about potential abuse.
- If you hear about any allegations of inappropriate behaviour from a tutor or student, including yourself