

In most cases actors have read the script before the audition/callback process in order to understand the play and make decisions about delving into the subject matter. During auditions directors will always alert actors to any physical or sexual moments that an actor may encounter during the rehearsal and performance process. Rarely stage business with sexual content may be added during the process in collaboration with the actor. Although accepting a role is an agreement to perform the show as written and rehearsed, every actor has rights and responsibilities around the rehearsal and performance of all sexual stage business.

Actors bring all aspects of themselves to the embodiment of a character, including their sexuality. We want our storytelling to be bold and our collaboration to be free, and though the work actors and directors do in rehearsal requires risk and exploration beyond our comfort zones, it must be done in a rehearsal environment in which everyone feels safe to take those risks and do that exploration.

At Bellevue College, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual misconduct are strictly prohibited. Many lines and moments can be of an underlying sexual nature, some more so than actual physical kissing and touching. This can lead to an environment of microaggressions around gender and sexuality. Therefore jokes of a sexual nature and objectifying comments about other people's bodies or looks, whether complimentary or critical, whether in rehearsal or outside it, are best left unsaid.

Please look below for the vocabulary used by Directors and Choreographers to direct Intimacy.

Boundaries Consent Renewed Consent Check-In Check-Out
Intimacy Call Modification Intensity Level

In the rehearsal and performance of scenes in which there is explicit sexual content or touching of a sexual nature, from graphic language to kissing to simulated sensual and sexual acts to depictions of sexual assault, the following protocols apply:

1. **Identify the moments** of sexual content or sexual intimacy in the scene, either those clearly called for in the text or those arising from the director or company's interpretation.
2. No scene in which there is sexual content is about the sexual content. **Determine the function** of the moment of intimacy in the larger story of the scene.
3. Discuss physical **Boundaries** for the day's exploration. This is the **Check-In** which will occur every time the intimacy is rehearsed or performed. Be specific about the type of touching and the areas of the body which may or, more importantly, may not be touched.
 - Actors must receive **Consent** by word or action before engaging in physical contact with another actor.
 - Consent for physical contact lies with the person being touched. Permission, which may be given by a director or teacher, is not the same as consent.
 - Consent is never to be assumed and can be retracted at any time.
 - There must be **Renewed Consent** before each rehearsal session or performance.

4. **Establish choreography** or choreographic parameters for the moment of physical contact.
 - Determine the kind and body location of any physical contact within the context of the story of the scene.
 - Come to a shared agreement regarding who initiates the touching what the physical progression of the touching is, its duration and intensity, and how the action reaches its conclusion.
 - Choreography must always be safe, consensual, and repeatable.
 - It is unacceptable to respond to a spontaneous impulse which would change the staging or agreed-upon improvisational boundaries of a moment of sexual touching.
5. After rehearsing a scene with sexual content, **Check Out** with your actors/scene partners. Make sure that everyone is continuing to feel safe in the work. Discuss whether there should be any adjustments to the boundaries.
6. **Intimacy Call:** Before each run or performance the actors engaging in any intimacy or other physical stage business will do a walkthrough of those moments. The terms used for most physical stage business is Fight Call. During this **Intimacy Call** the actors re-establish Boundaries and Renew Consent before the show. They move through the intimacy moments at a slower pace and lower **Intensity Level** a few times then at performance level.
7. At the end of each class, rehearsal session, or performance which includes intimacy, it is useful to **take a moment for closure and Check-Out**, where the work is left behind and company members resume their own lives.

These precepts apply whether working on scenes for class or in rehearsal with a director:

- **Mindfulness** – slow down and examine the moment before proceeding
- **Listening** – make sure you understand your partner’s boundaries
- **Speaking up** – do not hesitate to verbalize your boundaries, to hold the action if anything makes you feel unsafe (for example, when the bounds of affirmative consent have been violated), to bring any concerns to the collaborative team, or to seek the help of faculty or staff.

All project directors and stage managers have received a copy of these protocols and are expected to follow their precepts.

If you have questions about the best way to approach scenes with sexual content in class or any concerns about the progress of the rehearsal of such scenes either in class or production, please reach out to your Instructor, Theatre Arts Chair or Division Dean.

Nudity

In practice, nudity has rarely been a part of Bellevue College productions, but there have been many occasions where actors have been semi-nude onstage. If nudity or semi-nudity is called for in the text or by a director, the director will identify the relevant scenes and bring them to the attention of the Chair. If approved, the context of the scene and the extent of the potential nudity will be announced during the audition process. Actors should feel free to speak without risk of judgment or negative consequences.

Scenes with nudity should be approached by the director with the same attention to context and consent as outlined in our rehearsal protocols for working on material with sexual content. When scenes of significant undress or physical contact are being rehearsed, unless otherwise stated, rehearsals will be closed to all but essential personnel.

With input from Western Washington University, Central Washington University, Spokane Falls Community College, Columbia Basin College, University of Idaho, Boston Court Theatre, The Julliard School, Intimacy Directors International, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC) June 2020