



Co-op Academy
Priestthorpe

Character Exploration Knowledge Organiser



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What? (Definition)

Character exploration techniques are **practical drama** exercises used by actors to deeply **understand and develop** a character's **motivations, background, emotions, and physicality**.

They help actors embody a role beyond just learning lines.



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Why? (Purpose)

These techniques are vital for:

- **Deepening Understanding:** Allows actors to go beyond surface-level understanding into a character.
- **Building Empathy:** Helps actors connect with and understand their character's emotions and experiences.
- **Developing Believable Portrayals:** Enables actors to create more complex, nuanced, and realistic performances.
- **Exploring Motivation:** Helps uncover the "why" behind a character's actions and words.
- **Improvisation & Spontaneity:** Encourages actors to think on their feet and react authentically as the character.

How? (Making It Effective)

To get the most out of these techniques:

Clear Objective: Before starting, establish what you want to discover about the character

Staying in Character (for the "Hot Seat"): If you are the character, commit fully to their personality, voice, and physicality.

Reflect and Discuss: After the exercise, discuss what was learned about the character as a group.

Physicality and Voice: Encourage participants to use their voice and body when playing a role.

Safe Space: Create a supportive environment where actors feel comfortable taking risks as their character.

How? - Key techniques and how to use effectively? (Making It Effective)



Hot-Seating: Interviewing a character (played by an actor) in the "hot seat" to uncover details about their life, thoughts, and feelings. *To use effectively:* Ask open-ended, probing questions. The actor in the hot seat must commit fully to the character's personality, voice, and physicality.



Thought Tracking: The action freezes, and a character steps forward to speak their inner thoughts aloud at a specific moment. *To use effectively:* Select a moment of high tension or decision. The spoken thought should be precise and reveal an internal conflict or realisation.

Role on the Wall: A large outline of a character is drawn on paper (or a whiteboard). Inside the outline, key qualities, thoughts, and feelings (internal characteristics) are written. Outside the outline, external characteristics (what others say about them, their appearance, actions) are noted. *To use effectively:* Encourage group collaboration to brainstorm ideas. Use different coloured pens for internal/external traits. It provides a visual summary for quick reference and deepens understanding.



Conscience Alley: A character walks between two lines of actors who speak conflicting "conscience" thoughts (e.g., angel vs. devil, pros vs. cons) to help the character make a decision. *To use effectively:* Each side of the "alley" should represent a clear opposing viewpoint. The character should react physically and emotionally to the suggestions.



Alter Ego (Angel vs. Devil): An actor physically portrays both the character's rational thoughts (angel) and their impulsive or destructive desires (devil) simultaneously, often standing on either side of the main character or speaking directly to them. *To use effectively:* Clearly differentiate the voices and physicalities of the "angel" and "devil" to highlight the internal struggle.