



Mime Illusions

These are some mime illusions that I use in some of my shows.
Teachers can use these instructions to teach the illusions to students.

Isolation:

The basis of mime technique is a move called isolation. When we isolate a part of the body, we move it separately. For example, we can isolate the head by moving it forward and backward (like a chicken).

A little more difficult is isolating the head side to side. Start by bringing your hands up over your head, putting your fingertips together. Pretend that your elbows are whispering secrets to you and listen to each elbow by sliding your head towards the elbow.

If possible, practice in front of a mirror. When you can do it, slowly bring your arms down and keep your head moving side to side.

If you can move your head side to side, add in the forward and backward movement, and you will get a circular head isolation. This is an eye-catching move that will impress your friends and...scare your enemies!

The Wall:

The wall illusion is probably the most effective and recognizable mime illusion, and the easiest to learn.

Start by placing your hands in front of you on the 'wall', fingers outstretched, hands hard and flat. When you take one hand off the wall, let it relax. When you put it back, make it hard and flat, slapping it into place, one hand at a time. (Make sure the other hand stays hard and flat on the wall.)

Now try a little isolation. Keep your hands in place as you move your body side to side. Try to feel your hands touching the wall as you move your body.

Now let's put it all together. Move your right hand to the right about twelve inches. Then move your left hand to the right twelve inches. Bring your body over to your hands by stepping with the right foot, then the left. The rhythm should be hand, hand, step, step; hand, hand, step, step. Practice in front of a mirror to help you see if you are doing it correctly.

The Balloon:

Take the balloon out of your pocket and shake it out. Hold it in both hands and stretch it out. Try to feel the resistance as you stretch the balloon. Place the balloon to your lips, and hold it with your fingertips. Begin to blow and use your hands to show it filling with air. Each time you blow a breath your hands move outward a little with the expanding balloon.

Now use your hands to trace the circular shape of the balloon from top to bottom. Take the balloon from your lips with one hand, and with the other, stretch the end of the balloon, wrap it around, and tie it nice and tight.

Hold the balloon in one hand to the side of the body. The balloon begins to float up into the air, and your hand goes up with it. Use your other hand to pull your arm back down. The balloon pulls your hand and arm up a little further, and you pull it back down.

Next the balloon pulls your hand, your arm and your shoulder, and you pull it back down.

The last time it pulls your hand, arm, shoulder and pulls your body up to your tiptoes. Let go of the balloon, watch it float away, and wave goodbye.



The Robot:

The robot is a fun and familiar mime illusion. This illusion is an extreme example of isolation. The robot moves one part of the body at a time. Like turning the head to right, then center, to the left, then center. Make each movement crisp, and pause between each movement.

Try not to blink the eyes, and keep them from focusing on anything so that they stay in the center position. If the eyes move around, it will give you away.

Bend your arms at 90 degrees and keep your hands in a rigid karate chop pose. Try moving an arm up and then back down in front of your body. Move from the shoulder so that the elbow and wrist joint remain frozen. Be sure to keep the hands (and the rest of the body) rigid. Use a sharp start and stop to the movement. This gives the move a more mechanical look.

Turn the full body a quarter-turn, in one piece, by pivoting on the heels. Turn right, then center, then left, then center. Pause between each movement.

Turn the body a quarter-turn to the right. Bend forward from the hips, over the right leg, keeping the back and neck straight. Turn the head to the left (where the audience would be). Use movements of the forearm to bring the body back up (as if you were jacking up a car). Raise your arm, wave to the audience by turning only the hand at the wrist.



Mime Improvs and Sketches

Tug-of-War Duet

The purpose of this exercise is to allow kids to put together a simple sketch emphasizing cooperation with a partner and expression of emotion.

1. Have the students work in pairs.
2. Teacher has students practice tug-of-war, taking turns being the puller and pull-ee. Tell the students to feel the resistance of the rope and pull the rope using their full bodies (not just arms), moving forward and backward on the floor. Exactness of technique is not important - physicality, fun and emotion is.

Statues

The purpose of this game is to help the kids to loosen up, think on their feet, work together, and use their bodies in expressive ways.

1. Students work in groups of three
2. The teacher calls out a cue word: e.g. *beach, family, football, zoo, underwater*
3. The first group runs across the room and forms a tableau (frozen group picture) that represents the word.
4. Teacher can comment on what makes the tableau effective, and can offer suggestions for what can make it more so which the students can then try.

Objects

The purpose of this exercise is to help students create a short mime sketch by personifying inanimate objects.

1. Students work in groups of three to create a mime of an object.
2. One or two students may be the object and the other/s will be people interacting with or manipulating the object.
3. Teacher assigns the object and allow 5-10 minutes for the group to prepare.
4. As the students are preparing the sketch, teacher should move from group to group and make sure students have a workable idea. Help the students to come up with a very simple idea, and help shape the choreography of the sketch.
5. Make sure that the sketches are clear, and have a beginning, middle and end.
6. Encourage the students to find some "personality" in the objects, as they personify them. Also look for imaginative ways to suggest aspects of the object.
7. Have the students show their sketches to the class.

