

# NEURO ACTING™



## THE COLLECTED TABLES OF ACTIONS

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A resource for a common language of creating behavior  
that is truthful, sizable and repeatable for both actor  
and director.

'Actioning' (the process of assigning a verb to an actor's behavior) is helpful for both actors and directors. It gives actors a process for creating performances that are truthful, varied and repeatable. Directors find this a helpful way to give clear, concise and practical directions to their actors (see special note for directors at the end of this document.)

## SECTION 1: TERMINOLOGY



- **SUPER-OBJECTIVE:** the single driving need in the character over the course of the play. It motivates all action, but it may be unconscious to the character.
  - *Death of a Salesman: Willie needs to believe that the American Dream is real, so that he can hope to rise above his own sense of inferiority.*
- **UNIT or EVENT:** a description of what happens in the scene, expressed as if it happened in a story. "A unit is the largest piece of text in which one event, pertinent to all the characters present, takes place." from Freeing the Actor by Mike Alfreds.
  - *Willie's argument with Howard ruins his hope of getting a better job in the office.*
- **OBJECTIVE:** what a character **wants, needs or desires**. These are steps along the way to reaching his or her super-objective.
  - *Willie wants to PERSUADE Howard to give him the desk job.*
- **OBSTACLE:** what **prevents** the character from achieving what they want (internal or external).
  - *Howard is more interested in his gadgets than in Willie's safety.*
- **BEAT:** the smallest, most precise action that an actor plays to reach her objective. A new beat starts when there is any transition, however small, or any

shift of thought, attitude or action. There may be several beats within larger actions. This change of dynamic affects only one person, as opposed to a Unit. (see page 7)

- **ACTION:** what the character **does** to achieve their objective (i.e. to get what they want.) An action is a tactic expressed in a verb that you do to another person, or to yourself.

## The OBJECTIVE: What do I want?



### **AN OBJECTIVE IS NOT A NOUN.**

#### **SO, INSTEAD OF:**

I want a car.  
I want a boyfriend.  
I want attention.  
I want order.

#### **SAY:**

I want to EARN enough for a car.  
I want to WIN Jack's heart.  
I want to FASCINATE everyone.  
I want to ORGANIZE this mess.



### **AN OBJECTIVE IS NOT AN ADJECTIVE.**

#### **SO, INSTEAD OF:**

I am angry with her.  
I am nervous.  
I am frustrated.  
I am in love.  
I am being charming.  
I am confused.  
I am friendly.  
I am arrogant.

#### **SAY:**

I want to DESTROY her.  
I want to FOCUS my attention.  
I want to FIND a way out.  
I want to TAKE CARE of him forever.  
I want to DAZZLE the guests.  
I want to FIGURE OUT a solution.  
I want to WIN him over.  
I want to BELITTLE him.



## **FIRST CLASS OBJECTIVES HAVE:**

### **1. A VERB:**

I want... to WIN .....  
I want... to AWAKEN ...  
I want... to REDUCE ....  
I want... to IGNITE .....  
I want... to PERSUADE ..

### **2. A RECEIVER:**

Richard's .....  
my father's .....  
my friend .....  
the crowd .....  
Romeo .. ....

### **3. A DESIRED RESPONSE:**

admiration.  
enthusiasm.  
to tears.  
to riot.  
to kiss me.

## The ACTION: What do I do to get what I want?



### **THE MARK OF A GOOD ACTION:**

An action word must always be a **transitive verb** – a doing word that you can actively do to someone else. It is always in the present tense and it goes from you (the subject) to the person you're speaking to (the object).

### THE TEST:

1. Place it between the words 'I' and 'you' and see if the sentence makes sense.
  - GOOD: I 'charm' you. I 'encourage' you.
  - BAD: I 'interfere' you, I 'anger' you.
2. Ask yourself:
  - a. Is this something I could 'put my shoulder' into?
  - b. Is this something I could do for minutes at a time?

### **VERBS THAT ARE ACTABLE AND UN-ACTABLE:**

#### **GOOD: Actable**

hurt  
 inspire  
 suppress (push down)  
 incite (stir up)  
 enlighten  
 crush  
 encourage  
 explain  
 organize  
 destroy  
 prepare  
 build  
 ensnare (catch in a trap)  
 tease  
 cheer up  
 reassure  
 justify (prove to be right)  
 mock

#### **BAD: Too intellectual**

reciprocate  
 atone  
 glean  
 repudiate  
 reign  
 blame  
 mollify  
 vilify  
 obfuscate  
 ruminate  
 reinstate  
 postulate  
 avow  
 require  
 accomplish  
 adjust  
 narrate  
 impugn

#### **BAD: Too behavioral**

walk  
 listen  
 cry  
 laugh  
 shout  
 run  
 eat  
 sit  
 stand  
 fear  
 like  
 endure  
 hiccup  
 belch  
 wait  
 record  
 see  
 recover

#### **BAD: Too Existential**

think  
 use  
 try  
 be  
 live  
 exist  
 become

#### **BAD: Too Triggering**

slap  
 slice  
 shoot  
 kick  
 touch  
 kiss  
 quit

