



Character Monologues: Development, Writing, Staging

Updated October 25, 2021

INTRODUCTION

This character monologue overview is a combination of Comedy Spot sketch comedy curriculum written by Brian Crall, character class curriculum developed by Jeff Sloniker. This curriculum was compiled for Comedy Spot performers and students to develop more successful characters for performance.

CHARACTER DEFINED

Characters are original, fictional people you create that are defined by one simple, unusual trait (pattern). That trait can be a want, motivation, focus, desire, or gimmick. Your character's pattern is just an unusual funny trait you will keep coming back to during your monologue.

The inspiration for a character's pattern can come from a ton of different places, including people watching, a name, someone's walk or movement, speech pattern, a writing exercise, something unusual someone says, and even a fragment of a real person's personality.

Once you have your character's pattern, you have to develop the character so that despite having this one, simple unusual trait, they have to be honest and real and connect to the audience.

Impressions

For the purposes of performing in character showcases at the Comedy Spot, you can also do an impression of a character from a movie or television show, but the monologue should be an original piece from you. In other words, you can NOT present a monologue **from** a movie or television show. You are doing an impression; finding a pattern for that character and then presenting an original monologue.

DEVELOPING A CHARACTER

To develop a character that is both unusual/funny and real and honest, you have to be a good observer of people. Really listen to what your friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and family members say and how they say it. What do they really want? Look at how people dress, walk, talk, breath, use their hands, and use facial expressions.

Once you have an idea of what you want your character's pattern to be, it's time to start to develop that character.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself when you are developing your character. These questions can help you discover your character's voice, ways to hit your pattern, and help you define or clarify your pattern.

Eventually, you will want to be able to pitch your character and pattern as succinctly as possible.

What is your name and what is your pattern?

Example: *My name is Matt Foley, and I am a motivational speaker who lives in a van down by the river.* You may not really know your name or pattern until you have completed some of these questions.

Why is this an important moment in your life?

What does this character love or want more than anything else?

What does this character hate?

What do you do, or where do you work?

What do you hide from most people?

Where are you emotionally?

Where do you live?

What is your catchphrase?

What do you wear?

What do you sound like?

Do you use your hands to talk?

What is one thing you always say?

What is an adjective to describe you?

Who or what is your opposite? (Example: Batman & Joker)

Do you have a family?

Are you married or single? Why?

Where did you grow up?

Do you come from a big family or a small one?

What was your childhood like?

What were you like as a kid?

Did you have imaginary friends?

Other pointers when developing your character:

- “Crazy” is not a pattern. “I collect squirrels” is a pattern, “I am crazy” is not.
- No matter how big a character is, having a heart is what people will resonate with. If it’s just a gimmick, it won’t sell as well.
- Really unusual characters have to have something grounded that the audience can connect with.
- The audience loves to see the cracks and flaws in “good” characters.

WRITING A CHARACTER MONOLOGUE

For the purposes of performing at the Comedy Spot, a character monologue is a funny, 1-2 minute presentation by one character to an audience where the audience plays the other character or characters. Also for the purposes of performing at the Comedy Spot, a character monologue can feature more than one performer. It's important that the "monologue" still be presented to the audience and not be a scene between two characters (sketch).

This is the basic structure of a character monologue:

Beginning

Introduction - Who is your character?

Establish your who, what, and where right away. (Order doesn't matter.) It's also important that we establish why it is important that today is the day we meet our character. You will be entering the stage as your character. This is the first thing the audience will see- how can you make it memorable?

Pattern - What is your character's one simple, unusual trait or want?

State your character's simple pattern succinctly, as close to the beginning of the monologue as possible, the same way you would at the beginning of an improv scene.

Middle

Hit and heighten your pattern

Have your characters show the audience three examples (hits) of their pattern. Each time you hit your character's pattern, it should heighten (have more impact). The rule of threes will never let you down.

End

End your monologue

Wrap it up! The endings are always the hardest part, but if you foreshadow (hint) why you will be leaving, earlier in the monologue, it makes it way easier.

Example: You are the teacher on a bus in charge of the kids on a field trip, and you have had enough. At the beginning of the monologue, you might say, "Great, and now I see that Johnny is missing!" At the end of the monologue, you might say, "Now, I am going to get off this bus to find Johnny; and let's face it, he better be dead. But if I come back, and I hear anyone making a noise, I will destroy your life force forever. Are we clear? I SAID, ARE WE CLEAR?! [Keeps going till the audience says yes.] Good! Quiet coyote." [Makes the quiet coyote hand signal. Indicates that she will be watching everyone. Ms. Johnson exits the stage.]

End with a hit on your pattern, or as close to the last hit on your pattern as possible. End at crazy town, or the most heightened hit on your pattern. You will leave the stage as your character. This is the last thing the audience will see. How can you make it memorable?

VIDEOS EXAMPLE OF CHARACTERS

[LuLaRoe by Sharon](#)

[Gina Rosen's Paint and Sip](#)

[Leon, Professional Recorder Player](#)
[Characters Welcome on TikTok](#)

STAGING YOUR CHARACTER MONOLOGUE

When you rehearse your monologue you should think about things like entrances, movement on stage (blocking), and your exit. The monologue is presentational to the audience. Try to include them as characters.

- Memorize your monologue and be flexible enough to interact with the audience.
- Commit to your character costume.
- Make strong choices and follow through with them.
- Stay in character.
- Use your full voice. Even if playing a shy, timid character, you still need to project your voice.
- Use the stage.
- Open up for the audience.
 - Block your scene so the audience can see your face.
 - Only turn your back if you mean to turn your back