

Adler Exercises

1) What is the Stella Adler acting method?

Here are the main points of this approach to acting:

- **Acting is Doing**
The actor must always do something on stage. He looks for actions in the script (for example, “to teach, to confess, to beg”, etc.) and finds the human conflict in them. He must have a justification for each action (know exactly why he is performing each action).
- **Developing the imagination**
An actor develops his imagination by first observing the world around him in very specific details. He can then create specific images in his mind in order to surround himself with things that are true to him on stage. If he succeeds, the audience will see through his eyes.
- **Training the mind**
Actors must have a real understanding of the play in order to reveal its secrets to the audience. They must study the text and its ideas but also research the social situations of the play.
- **Size**
Actors need strong bodies and voices for the stage so they can bring size to their actions. Adler encouraged actors never to be small. Her students learned to always bring a bigger meaning to the text. Below is a short video where she discusses this “sense of epic” the actor must have.

Stella Adler felt that a lot of actors confused being true and natural with being ordinary and boring. Her approach to acting definitely helps actors break away from “boring”.

2) What can you expect?

- **A lot of rehearsing**
Adler expected her students to prepare for every single activity and action they were going to have on stage. If you study her acting techniques, you will spend a lot of time creating specific images for the circumstances of the play. For example, if you are working on the ‘Where am I?’ in a scene, you will work out in your mind every minor detail of what surrounds you.

- **A lot of thinking**

Stella Adler believed that an actor's most important tool is his mind. She also believed that an actor must completely understand the text of the play to be able to communicate it onstage without faking. So expect to do a lot of research, script analysis and paraphrasing of the play to make it your own.

3) Sample Stella Adler Acting Exercises

- **Imagination Exercise**

Pick an object and describe it. The goal is to get very specific (shades of colors, texture, etc.) but to communicate what the object looks like in a direct simple way that speaks to your audience. The more you do this exercise, the more objects will speak to you and the quicker your imagination will kick in onstage. Then take the exercise to the next level by letting your imagination run free (Adler calls that "traveling"). For example, a green couch can remind you of emerald earrings a woman wore at a party you went to which reminds you of the music that was playing and so on and so on.

- **Paraphrasing**

Pick a book and write down one idea from the book in your own words, then present it onstage to others. Try to experience the idea so you can give it a live dimension on stage. To do that, you first need to understand the idea, then respond to it and make it your own until you feel a real need to communicate it.

- **Inner justification**

Randomly pick a simple line from a play you don't know and bring it to life by imagining in details the reason why you're saying that line. Try to make a strong choice, something that stirs you and creates conflict. This exercise helps actors experience their lines instead of just saying them.