

# A GUIDE TO THEATER ETIQUETTE



## What Is Theater Etiquette?

Coming to the theater to see a live performance is a special experience. To be a good audience member it's important to know how to act in the theater. It's quite different from watching television, going to a football game, or even going to the movies. Audiences in general, will receive better performances if they are involved in the story and are supporting the performers, not distracting them. Here are some tips explaining what is expected of audience members.

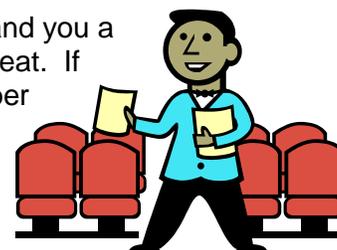
## Before You Arrive

- ❖ Purchasing a ticket is required for a live theater performance, and it will be for a specific date and show. Be sure to check your ticket when you buy it, because tickets are not usually refundable or exchangeable.
- ❖ These days, performing arts audiences wear anything from sequined gowns to ripped jeans to the theater. We suggest wearing something in between, staying away from dirty jeans or sweatpants. Depending on the type of performance you may want to make it special by dressing up for this special event. Try dressing up and you'll feel different!
- ❖ Be aware that hats and large hairdos make it hard for people behind you to see
- ❖ Be on time. Often in a live performance, audience members will not be admitted if they arrive late, because they disturb the performance for the performers and other audience members. It's best to arrive about 15 minutes early so that you have time to read the program before the show starts.



## Entering the Theatre

- ❖ An usher will usually greet you, ask for your ticket, and sometimes hand you a program. With a general admission ticket, you get to pick your own seat. If your ticket has a row and seat number, the usher will check the number and show you to your assigned seat. Be sure to sit in the seat you are given so that you don't cause confusion for other audience members.
- ❖ Once you are ushered to your seat, make yourself comfortable, enjoy reading the program and look over the theatrical space. Imagine what you will be seeing during the show. Your program will be a guide to the show for you. It contains things like pictures and names of the performers, a list of the numbers performed, and other information that will help you understand what you are going to see. It will make the show more enjoyable and you'll learn things that might surprise you.
- ❖ Take care of personal needs (drinks of water or restroom) because you won't be able to leave your seat until the intermission or until the performance ends.
- ❖ Lights will dim just before a performance, and then go dark. Show your knowledge by sitting calmly.



## What Not To Do During a Performance

- ❖ You should not eat, chew gum, or drink any beverages while watching the show.
- ❖ You may not notice it, but candy or cough drop wrappers, whether unwrapped quickly or slowly, make a lot of noise! Please don't unwrap them during the performance. If you suspect you will need one, have a supply on hand already unwrapped.
- ❖ Feet stay on the ground, never on the seat in front.

- ❖ Fidgeting: Please sit still. Ramming elbows into your neighbor or kicking the seat in front of you is highly annoying.
- ❖ You can't get up and move around during the performance.
- ❖ When the lights are dimmed all talking stops, and there is no talking during the performance, unless encouraged to do so from performers.
- ❖ Turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers, alarms, any thing that can disturb the production, actors and the audience members during the performance. It is very impolite to have it go off during a performance. You'll be embarrassed if it goes off in the middle of a tense moment of the show, and it will break the mood for everyone.
- ❖ If you have to take a call, please go to the lobby, and don't talk until you are away from everyone.
- ❖ Usually photography or video cameras of any kind is prohibited during a performance.
- ❖ Please stay in your seat until the break between acts (intermission) unless it is an emergency.
- ❖ Intermission is the time for you to visit the restrooms, get a drink from the drinking fountain, look at the artist's merchandise, and discuss the show with your friends and family.



## What to do During a Performance

- ❖ Enjoy the show!
- ❖ Be polite and attentive. Many people come to see a show for a special occasion like birthdays, holidays, etc. You can help keep their evening special.
- ❖ Respond! This is a live performance before a live audience. Your part is to let the actors know that you appreciate the show. That means laughing at funny parts, cheering when it's called for, and applauding when you like something. Remember to always respond respectfully and appropriately. These are live performers and their performance will be affected by your reactions.
- ❖ Listen! This is important because you will be hearing performers perform live for you. It's important that you listen very well so that you don't miss anything and so that you don't disturb others around you.



## What to do at the End of a Performance

- ❖ It is customary to applaud at the end of the show.
- ❖ Stay in your seat for the curtain call! At the end of the performance there is usually a curtain call. This is when the actors come on stage to receive your appreciation. Don't leave during the curtain call. Wait until it is over and then exit with the rest of the audience.
- ❖ Stand and applaud if you really liked the show! Actors are thrilled when they receive something called a "Standing Ovation." If you want to pay them the highest praise, you might stand and applaud. It's reserved for the best performances!
- ❖ Encore! At some musical performances you might hear audience members shouting "Encore!" This is another form of high praise and appreciation. The audience is asking the performer to please go on performing. In many cases, an entertainer will sing or play another song, making it a special performance.
- ❖ Try to remember elements of the program for later discussions
- ❖ Do tell all your friends, after the show, what a great time you had.

