

A note on COMEDY:

Theatre is about characters. Comedy comes from ordinary people put into extraordinary situations. (ex. John and Bob go to Mars). Or, extraordinary people put into everyday situations (ex. Superman and Wonder Woman in detention). "Silly" skits rely on outside forces to make things funny (ex. Slipping on a banana, funny voices), yet in order for them to work, they still need a well grounded character. Keep in mind the difference between "Comedy" and "Silly" when writing your piece. A Comedy is defined as "a light amusing play with a happy ending", while a Silly play would be "lacking in seriousness or importance" (according to Merriam Webster's Online Student Dictionary).

In conclusion:

We suggest you have a teacher or friend proof your piece for spelling and grammar errors before you submit. Although we do not disqualify pieces for incorrect grammar or spelling, a proofed piece will be easier to read and your intention will be clear.

There's a reason that we don't place any rules on format...We love variety! If you like poetry, write a poem. If you love writing skits, write a skit. It's your piece... **WRITE WHAT FEELS COMFORTABLE!!**

BE CREATIVE!! Your mind is a wonderful and interesting place. Write about what you think, like, dislike, wish for, etc. Writing is a great way to express yourself. If what you're writing is interesting to you, it will be interesting to us.

HAVE FUN!! We created ECHOES to be a fun writing experience... we want you to have as much fun writing as we do reading and performing your pieces.



Merry-Go-Round Playhouse Youth Theatre

Lisa Chase, Artistic Director • Erin Katzker, Educational Theatre Manager

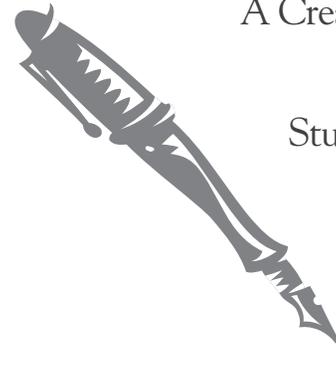
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echoes

A Creative Drama Writing Project

Official Analysis of
Student Echoes Submissions



•• We want to help those of you
experiencing writers block by
giving you these helpful hints.
We hope it makes the ideas flow
a little more freely. ••

The most common ECHOES entries are:

Short Stories, Poems, Skits and Commercials

To help you get started, here are some hints for writing in each of these most often seen formats:

Short Story:

It's easy to go beyond 1 1/2 pages when writing a story. Here are some tips to help you write an interesting, but concise short story:

- Make sure you have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Your story also needs a protagonist (main character), some sort of conflict and a resolution.
- Try to keep your protagonist (main character) in the same place; it will be easier for us to tell your story from one location.
- Details are a very important part of a good story and a great way of catching a reader's interest. But remember, too many details and too little action do not make a good story. For ECHOES, you should focus on incorporating details that directly contribute to the action of the story. Think of it this way; if your story is about an insecure girl, is it more important for the reader to know that her hair is long or that her fingernails are short because she bites them? Which of the following sentences helps move the story along? "She had brown shoulder length hair, brown eyes and glasses" or "Her short, ragged fingernails were the result of the many nervous hours she spent worrying about school." No matter the detail, try to work it in to the action of the story. (Ex.: use "As the teacher passed out the tests, Jane nervously chewed on the sleeve of her green silk blouse." instead of "Jane is wearing a green silk blouse.") • •

Poem:

Before you begin:

- What idea/feeling/experience are you trying to convey?
- Be creative! Poems are a great way to play with words. Use a thesaurus to find new ways of describing things. (For example "The pretty flowers" could be *beautiful, appealing, attractive, elegant, lovely, striking, eye-catching*, etc.) Have fun with your descriptions.
- In addition to great description, poems should let the reader know why or how that description is important or how the poet feels or sees the topic (ex: after describing the beauty of a sunset, let us know how the sunset makes you feel.)
- Poems can be a lot of fun for us to read and adapt. Many poems that make it to the stage are converted into songs. (Read a few song lyrics, most of them are poetry put to music)

Skits/Newscasts:

Skits/Newscasts are easily adapted to the ECHOES stage. Have fun with it, but keep these tips in mind:

- Keep it simple, it's not easy to create a "poof" of smoke and magically change one of our actors into a talking hippopotamus.
- Keep your character(s) in one or two central locations. It will be easier for us to adapt your skit to the stage if the location stays relatively constant.
- Keep "Real Time" in mind. How much time does your skit encompass? Does it span a year... a month... ten minutes? Keep in mind that shorter time frames are easier to adapt to the stage. If it is important for your skit to make jumps in time, make sure that the change in time is very clear in your writing. A scene change is a good way to convey a time change.

Commercial:

Questions you should address while writing a commercial are:

- What are you selling and why will people need or want it?
- Is your product completely new, or does it replace something customers already use?
- What is so special about your product? How will it enhance your customers' life?
- How can customers get or buy it? What does it cost? Does anything come with it? (Have fun with the phone number or contact information, but keep in mind that customers will not buy a product based on a catchy phone number alone, you need to give them more of a reason than that.)
- Prove that your product works: Customer "quotes" and scientific testimonials lend validity to your product, and can be a funny and effective way to show how it is used.
- A few good ways to catch customers interest include (but are not limited to):
 - "Have you ever wondered..."
 - "Introducing (your product)...a new scientific discovery that will change the world!"
 - "Boy, do we have a deal for you..."
 - "Aren't you tired of ____? Then try this product!"

Other great ways to find writing success:

- Ask your teacher, family, and friends for suggestions.
- Go to your library... research the format you would like to write in and read, read, read.