



New England Drama Council Theatre Etiquette

Dear Directors,

As theatre educators, our roles are many fold. Two of these are inspiring students to be better performers and technicians and to be better audience members. We spend much of our time teaching production aspects of theatre; festival is a wonderful opportunity to educate our students to be a good audience.

Many of our students spend all of their time in the theatre either on or back stage. Because of this they may need more education than we think to be good audience members. With this in mind, the Board of the New England Drama Council requests that the following points be **reviewed with all students** coming to festival. We also ask that you **share this with any adults, parents, or chaperones** who will be attending.

- Theatre is an illusion. Any disturbance that takes an audience member out of that illusion is detrimental both to the performance and to its impact. Frankly, our students on stage may be so focused that the disturbance may not impact them, but it will certainly affect the audience's impression of the piece.
- The theatre experience is very different from a sporting event, movie or a video watched at home. Conversation, even whispered, is distracting and rude. Hooting, hollering, cheering, oooing, ahing, and whistling are not appropriate. In fact, the only two appropriate responses are laughter and applause. Theatre is an art form, not a basketball game.
- Certain distractions should not be brought into the theatre. These include such items as laser pointers, beepers, beeping watches, ringing cell phones, and food or drink, even in closed containers. Anything with an illuminated screen should remain stowed and off. Texting is very distracting. Please also remind your students of the echoing effect of cellophane wrappers from throat lozenges and candies. If they are needed, unwrap them before the show.
- We are guests in someone else's theatre. Stepping on or over seats and putting one's feet up show disrespect for our hosts and their theatre.
- In any waiting time, i.e., before a show, before a critique, and before the awards ceremony, the audience needs to keep the noise down to a level of quiet conversation. This will enable schools to prepare for performance, and a level of decorum to be established in the theatre. Cheers, chants, "the wave," and other assorted "half time" activities are inappropriate.

The vast majority of students who attend festival show a wonderful enthusiasm for theatre, while at the same time showing a respect for the craft. Most students who act inappropriately do so out of ignorance of appropriate behavior. As directors and teachers it is our responsibility to educate our students. We hope this document will be a starting point for your discussion with your students.

Sincerely,

New England Drama Council