



# INTIMACY & VIOLENCE GUIDELINES

## Best practice when working with intimacy, violence, or sensitive material

When incorporating scenes of intimacy or violence into productions, it is important to follow protocols and best practice to ensure everyone involved is safe.

This document provides you with some best-practice guidelines should you find yourself working on a scene that involves intimacy or violence. It is not, however, a definitive guide. If you feel any concerns (as an actor, producer, director, or *anyone* working on a project) you should seek professional guidance. The UHT office is a good place to start.

<b>Consent</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Pre-Production</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Auditions</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Preparation and Rehearsals</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Quick Reference: Rules to Follow</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Processes for the rehearsal room</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Template Intimacy Report</b> .....	<b>6</b>

## Consent

**If a production involves intimacy, you must consider consent at all stages of your process.**

Consent can only be given by the performer/s doing the action and the performer/s receiving the action. Consent must be gained from the Performer/s in relation to each and every intimate action. It cannot be assumed, and it may be withdrawn at any time. In order to genuinely consent, a performer must be informed of the intimate scene and its specific requirements *in advance*.

At the point of engagement, consent should be given in writing for any performance of intimacy. To enable intimate content to be realised with the creative engagement and ongoing active consent of the performer/s, best practice should follow in pre-production, rehearsal, and performance.

## Pre-Production

As part of the production's risk assessment, any intimate scenes involving intimacy or violence should be identified and risk assessed as with any other hazard.

Once the intimate and/or violent scenes have been identified, in consultation with the relevant performers (once cast), the production should consider whether it is appropriate to engage an Intimacy Director or Fight Choreographer. Questions to consider:

- Does the scene depict nudity or semi nudity?
- Does the scene involve weapons?
- Is the proposed fight complex (i.e. multiple actions, extended duration, risk of accident, etc.)?
- Is there sexual activity displayed on stage or in audio?
- Are there any sensitive or exposing factors of the scene, e.g. a graphic or violent nature? Individual performer circumstances? Power dynamics? Cultural or other factors?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'yes', engaging an Intimacy Director or Fight Choreographer would be appropriate.

If the answer to a factor of sexual violence is 'yes', then engaging an Intimacy Director *and* a Fight Choreographer is *expected*.

All heads of department and essential crew should be informed of intimate scenes and made aware of these guidelines. In particular:

- Ensure the director is aware of these guidelines and conducts auditions and rehearsals accordingly;
- Ensure costume personnel supply appropriate costume and/or modesty clothing/barriers with fittings prior;
- Consult with stage management and director to identify essential personnel for closed rehearsal rooms/sets and inform them of appropriate protocols

## Auditions

There are **no** circumstances where nudity or semi-nudity should ever be required, proposed, or agreed to in an audition.

Simulated sexual activity will not be performed in an audition. The only exception might be where the entirety of the role entails simulating sexual activity (e.g. an erotic dancer), and the audition is for a scene where the Performer only interacts intimately with themselves. This will be noted in the audition brief.

Un-choreographed fight scenes involving more than one performer should never be enacted in an audition.

The director or producer will provide the performer and/or their agent with the audition script at least 48 hours in advance of the audition with details of any required intimate scenes.

If necessary to depict an intimate scene in a rehearsal, the director should find an approach that delivers the intention of the scene using a substitute action (e.g. to represent a kiss, the convention is to lean in and turn heads away from each other).

A third-party advocate, such as an intimacy director or equity representative, should be in attendance. The performer may have a support person present. The only persons present in the audition room should be the performer, casting director, reader, third party advocate, and support person.

## Preparation and Rehearsals

### Preparation

Producer, Director and Performer/s should jointly consider whether intimate or fight scenes would benefit from the engagement of an intimacy coordinator or fight choreographer.

In advance of rehearsals commencing, performer/s who have consented to intimate scenes or complex fight scenes must be provided the opportunity to participate in discussions with the director, producer, stage management, as well as the intimacy coordinator/fight choreographer if engaged, and any other heads of department as relevant, regarding the scenes. The discussion will cover:

- The director's vision for these scenes
- The extent of any nudity required and what wardrobe (e.g. modesty barriers) will be used
- What, if any, types of weapons will be used
- The type of contact and emotion required by the scene
- What the rehearsal process will be
- Any other questions the performer/s have and any other details that seem relevant

Those participating in this discussion should record the key elements of it in writing in the form of an Intimacy Report ([see template below](#)). A copy of the Intimacy Report can then be shared to relevant production personnel and be treated as a record of the decisions made.

If additional intimate and/or fight scene requirements become identified through the planning and rehearsal process, this process should be repeated.

### Rehearsals

#### **When rehearsing and performing Intimate or Fight scenes:**

- Discuss and agree to times when intimacy/fight rehearsals will be scheduled, allowing sufficient time for an unhurried process
- Ensure there are always three people present in rehearsals, i.e. a third party in addition to the director and performer/s, to keep the work professional
- Do not require performers to be nude or semi-nude for rehearsals, except for technical and dress rehearsals
- Ensure a closed room/set is in place for any intimate rehearsals
- For intimate scenes or scenes involving nudity, outside observation by monitor or other off-stage means is prohibited except by essential personnel
- Ensure there is adequate space around the action for it to occur and that there is no danger of falling from heights or colliding with objects or people
- Nudity is only required from action to stage exit, and performers are covered at all other times
- A separate intimacy/fight call is held prior to each performance to re-rehearse the action involved

## Quick Reference: Rules to Follow

1. Identify whether a production may include scenes of intimacy, sexual content, or violence as part of the initial risk assessment of the work.
  - Ensure appropriate wardrobe for modesty in rehearsals
  - Specify crew requirement for closed rehearsals
  - Consider/budget for an *Intimacy Consultant* or specialist *Fight Choreographer*. These are professionals who are trained in choreographing staged intimacy and violence in order to create safe, repeatable, and effective storytelling. They are concerned with performers' physical and emotional safety.
2. No auditions are to include sex scenes or nudity.
  - If the audition must be filmed, the actor must sign a written agreement that any recording of a nude or semi-nude audition will be confidential. All recorded material will be destroyed once the role is cast.
  - The only people present in the audition room are the Casting Director and/or Director/Producer and Reader, plus a third-party representative and performer/s' support person.
  - The actor may bring a support person to be with them throughout the audition.
3. Directors plainly describe and discuss with the relevant performers all scenes involving intimacy, simulated sex, nudity, and violence at the appropriate times in the creative process:
  - Before signing the contract of engagement
  - Throughout the rehearsal period
  - Into the performance period
4. Consent must be given each and every time by the performer/s when working with intimacy, sex scenes, and nudity
5. Establish boundaries around areas of concern, including an agreed strategy to halt the action where necessary in rehearsals and performances, such as 'time out'.
6. When creating scenes of intimacy or violence:
  - Always have a third-party present
  - Identify the blocking of the scene before attempting it
  - Agree to areas of physical touch
  - Discuss actions using plain words before doing them
  - Separately identify the emotional content of the scene
  - Integrate physical actions and emotional content
7. When the performance includes a sex scene or complicated fight scene, an intimacy or fight call will be held before each performance. Performers must continue to rehearse, so they don't become careless and ensure everyone feels safe. This call is an opportunity to:
  - Check in with performers, discuss previous performance, identify any problems
  - Re-affirm agreement and consent for the action and any possible adaptations
  - First talk through, then step through slowly, then go through at pace, the actions
8. Have a written agreement detailing the nature of any intimate and/or nude scenes to occur
  - There are pre-agreed times when intimacy and/or nudity will occur, and these are documented
  - These times do not change without prior discussion
  - Nudity is only in performance and dress rehearsals – at all other times, performers should be covered
  - Nudity never occurs with genitals touching. Always use patches or modesty barriers.
9. Performers must never vary the agreed action unless discussed prior with other performer/s and the director, and with consent re-affirmed
  - Intimate scenes and fight scenes are *choreographed* – each action involved is discussed and rehearsed in detail so there are no surprises.
10. Have a plan if something goes wrong
  - If someone gets hurt or becomes distressed during a scene, have a plan to make sure that everyone is kept safe and looked after

## Processes for the rehearsal room

### Keep these 5 key elements involved when rehearsing intimate or fight scenes

#### 1. BLUEPRINTS

When planning the scene, think about:

- **THE STORY**  
The physicality should exist within the world of the play and further the action of the scene. What storytelling is being told through the interaction of these bodies? The story should incite both actors to action
- **THE CHARACTERS**  
What specifically is each character after? Is it the same thing? Are they at odds?
- **THE AUDIENCE**  
What do you want the audience to get out of this moment? What is the tone of this moment – how is it designed to affect your audience? What do you want them to feel or understand?

#### 2. NO FLY ZONES / PERMISSION & TOUCH

Asking what is not allowed. Specifically discussing in plain language before you begin a sequence: where is okay to touch and where is not? Where are your boundaries?

#### 3. SLOW MOTION

Start in slow motion first. Slowing the tempo provides more than simple body control – it gives the mind time to assimilate stimuli, evaluate courses of action, remind us of proper technique, warn of impending issues, and circumvent developing problems. Slow motion is necessary to begin – start at 10% of normal speed and gradually work up.

#### 4. REPETITION

Real speed and safe actions is gained by simple, smooth, and well-balanced movements. The only way to acquiring these is repetition – calm and consistent repetition.

#### 5. DEVELOPING TRUST

Trust is central to any intimate or fight scene. It only takes one mistake, one hit that lands too hard or a moment of lost control, to lose any trust that has been established. Good partnering requires constant and mindful vigilance.

---

### Reference

MEAA. (2022). *Equity Intimacy Guidelines for Stage and Screen*. Retrieved from MEAA Equity: <https://www.meaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MEAA-Intimacy-Guidelines-for-Stage-and-Screen.pdf>

## Template Intimacy Report

### From MEAA Equity's *Intimacy Guidelines for Stage and Screen*

To assist in recording agreed best practice for the production.

<b>Performers</b>	Write the names of all performers involved
<b>Director</b>	Write the name of the director/s
<b>Intimacy coordinator</b>	Write the name of the intimacy coordinator consulted/engaged. Intimacy coordinators are recommended for intimate scenes and expected for simulated sex scenes.
<b>Fight choreographer</b>	Write the name of the fight choreographer consulted/engaged. Fight choreographers are recommended for complex fight scenes and scenes with weapons, and expected for scenes of sexual violence alongside intimacy coordinators.
<b>Intimacy meetings held</b>	Details of meetings held to clarify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree of intimacy/nudity</li> <li>- Specifics of simulated sexual activity</li> <li>- How the scene is being performed</li> <li>- Rehearsals scheduled</li> </ul>
<b>Cast consultations</b>	What conversations have been held with cast about consent and what are their expressed needs/expectations?
<b>Scene description</b>	Overview of what happens in the scene
<b>Scene breakdown</b>	Write a detailed breakdown of the scene as consented to and rehearsed by the performer/s and director
<b>Blocking</b>	A description of the general blocking of the scene and/or reference to script
<b>Nudity required</b>	Outline in plain language the nudity that will be required of all performers throughout the scene
<b>Modesty clothing</b>	Modesty clothing/barriers to be provided by production. List here what will be worn by the performers.
<b>Reviews with performers</b>	What practices and protocols have been put in place and implemented to review the intimate work with performers throughout the production?

*Signed by the Performer/s, Producer, Director, Intimacy Coordinator (if applicable), Fight Choreographer (if applicable):*