

BACKstage Challenge

2026 Program Guide

Updated August 3, 2025



Georgia
Thespians

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BACKstage Challenge is a series of events that are designed to test your knowledge of basic skills that every theatre technician should have. In technical theatre both time and accuracy are critical to a successful outcome. As artists we demand excellence in the tasks we are given, but as technicians we also have to perform the tasks quickly and efficiently so as not to disrupt the production process. BACKstage Challenge was developed by Disney Live Entertainment for EdTA.

Event Registration

- **Registration Opens:**
September 28, 2025
- **Registration Deadline:**
December 3, 2025 by 5:00 PM (Registration paperwork and payment)
- **Fee**
\$45
- **Participants**
Must be Thespians registered for the 2026 ThesCon

Only the first fifteen (15) teams from each color track will be accepted.
Once the slots for a track are filled, you will no longer be able to register for the event.

- **Payment:**
 - Payments must be received by Georgia Thespians by the Super Deadline, December 3, 2025, using one of the options below:
 - **Snail-Mail**
2929 Watson Blvd Suite 2
Box 320

Warner Robins, GA 31093

We recommend that you send your packages with tracking.

■ **PayPal**

Information will be provided during registration

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Introduction

Each troupe can bring one team of four (4) thespians from the same school. All needed equipment will be provided.

The BACKstage Challenge consists of preselected team events. These events represent the basic skills that every technician should possess to be well-rounded theatre professionals. Your team must consist of four members.

We are anticipating that the events will be:

- 1. Audio: Cable Relay**
- 2. Costuming: Quick Change**
- 3. Lighting: Hang and Focus**
- 4. Rigging: Knot Tying**
- 5. Scenic: Set Tape Down**
- 6. Stage: Prop Shift**

We acknowledge the fact that there are many ways to accomplish these tasks and that various professionals, vendors, and educators may have different methods. The following information was designed by professionals, educators, and the Educational Theatre Association to communicate the standards upon which the event will be judged. The study materials will provide criteria for your team preparation for each event.

Scoring is based on time spent on the activity, and time penalties will be added for lack of accuracy. Participants will be stopped at the maximum time for each event. A penalty has been added to each event for blatant disregard for the rules. This penalty ensures that no team will do an event as quickly as possible, take all penalties, and still win. This is cheating, and teams will be penalized.

For safety reasons, participants should wear closed-toed shoes. Sandals, flip-flops, etc., are not allowed. Participants will not be allowed to compete in their event until they are in compliance with the shoe policy.

Audio: Cable Relay

In this challenge, your team will be responsible for striking and resetting a simple audio system, focusing on proper coiling of the cables.

The simple setup will be in place, ready to play Ronald Reagan's introduction of Walt Disney, signaling the start of the clock:

"And now, Walt Disney will step forward to read the dedication of Disneyland."

In a relay, your team will take turns unplugging and replugging the source cable and speaker cable from the setup, making sure to change the level at the mixer before disconnecting any components. Cables must be coiled into neat, untangled, circular coils that fit within specified places on a table.

Once the system is reset, the final team member stops the clock by playing Walt Disney's famous dedication:

"To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Disneyland is your land."

REQUIRED SEQUENCE - Max time: 5 minutes

- The basic audio setup in place will include a **SOURCE** (triggered by an on-screen button), connected to a **MIXER/AMP**, which is connected to a **SPEAKER**.
- The correct level of the **CHANNEL** at the mixer/amp, along with the correct **INPUT** and **OUTPUT**, will be clearly indicated. The team will wait behind a line adjacent to a table behind the speaker.
- Player 1 will run to the source and trigger the introduction. They must wait until they hear the word "Disneyland" to turn down the level on the channel and disconnect and coil the source cable (connecting the source to the mixer/amp), placing it on the table in its designated place. The event referee must indicate that the cable fits properly in its marked location.
- Player 2 will disconnect and coil the speaker cable (connecting the mixer/amp to the speaker), placing it in its designated place on the table. The event referee must indicate that the cable fits properly in its marked location.
- Player 3 will take the source cable and reconnect the source and mixer/amp, dressing the cable properly.
- Player 4 will take the speaker cable and reconnect the mixer/amp and speaker, dressing the cable properly. This player will then run to the source screen and trigger the dedication audio file, which stops the clock.
- When placed on the table, the cables must be tied (with attached tie cord) in untangled circular coils that fit within their designated spaces. Dressed cables in use do not need to be taped down but do need to be free of loops and tangles.

PENALTIES ISSUED FOR:

- Cutting off the recorded introduction.
- Unplugging or re-plugging any connection while the channel is hot.
- Coil is tangled or not circular (figure eights are not allowed).
- Coils are not tied off with a bow.
- Coil does not fit in the taped-out area on the table.
- Cables are tangled or knotted when reconnected.
- Going out of sequence.
- Forgetting to turn up the level so we are able to hear the entire dedication.

Costuming: Quick Change

Your team must work together to execute a **QUICK CHANGE** with one of your team members playing the role of Performer. You'll be able to visually examine both **COSTUME A** and Costume B ahead of time to strategize.

The Performer will be pre-dressed in Costume A. All necessary elements of Costume B will be preset in a Staging Area, on a rack or on a table. The Performer will wait in an On-Stage Area while remaining team members get 20 seconds to preset items from the Staging Area in a designated Changing Area.

Ready or not, the Performer will be sent from the On-Stage Area to the Changing Area and your official time will begin. The Performer can help during the change but at some point, must take a drink of water. Actors need to stay hydrated!

When the change is complete, the Performer returns to the On-Stage Area and the other three members must return to the Staging Area leaving nothing behind in the Changing Area. Time stops once everyone is where they're supposed to be, and all costume elements are gathered in a controlled manner off the floor.

We'll ask your team to assist in resetting for the next team waiting to compete. This may factor into your participation score!

NOTE: The designated Performer must wear modest under dressings including a clean t-shirt, athletic shorts, and ankle-high socks.

REQUIRED SEQUENCE - Max time: 5 minutes

- The following areas will be taped out on the floor: On Stage Area, Staging Area, Changing Area
- The Staging Area will have a rack and a table adjacent to the Changing Area with a ground cloth. Teams may visually inspect the costumes ahead of time. Once the designated Performer is dressed in Costume A, they will wait in the On-Stage Area while the other three team members wait in the Staging Area.
- The Referee will signal the start of a 20-second Prep Period, during which the three team members may move items (not the table nor the rack) to the Changing Area, and strategically place them for the quick change. Items may be placed intentionally on the floor if they are on the ground cloth in the Changing Area.
- At the end of the Prep Period, the Referee will start the clock and send the Performer from the On-Stage Area to the Changing Area.
- During the change, keep talking and noise to a minimum; handle all costume pieces and the Performer with care. The Performer must take a drink from a water bottle or supplied water cup during the change, before returning to the On-Stage Area.
- After the Performer has returned to the On-Stage Area, the three remaining team members return to the Staging area with all costume pieces gathered in a controlled manner and stop the clock.

PENALTIES ISSUED FOR:

- Any incorrectly worn or attached item.
- Any missing item.

- Excessive talking/noise (yellow flag warning for first incident, penalty for each additional).
- Unnecessary roughness.
- Any item on the floor not intentionally placed on the ground cloth.
- Placing things in your mouth.
- Any item left behind in the Changing Area.
- No drink for the performer.

Lighting: Hang and Focus

This classic Tech Challenge entry has been reconfigured as a relay, involving all four members of your team. Each member will participate in a specific part of the sequence of properly hanging and focusing a **SOURCE FOUR ELLIPSOIDAL**, including using a **GOBO** and **GEL**.

The challenge setup includes a pipe stand for the instrument, and a surface to project the image on. Necessary tools and supplies will be on a table a few feet from the pipe stand. Opposite the table is a designated surface to display the gobo-produced image.

Person 1 starts the clock and securely hangs the instrument on the pipe stand. Person 2 powers on the instrument and focuses it at the designated wall surface. Person 3 inserts and focuses the gobo image. Person 4 adds the correct gel color and fine tunes the focus before stopping the clock.

All adjustments will be made from behind the instrument, heeding a line on the floor (imagine this is the edge of a catwalk or a scaffolding platform).

Wrenches and gloves will be provided. Teams may not use their own wrench but may use their own gloves.

For this exercise, instruments must be hung with the pipe clamp opening facing you. The tools you select to use must be tethered to your wrist and cannot be placed on the floor or in your mouth.

REQUIRED SEQUENCE - Max time: 5 minutes

- The instrument and all necessary tools will be preset on a table a few feet from the mounting pipe. Items may be brought from the table to the pipe stand, but may not be placed on the floor, tethered around the neck, or put in your mouth. Team members wait behind the table.
- **Person 1:** Start the clock, bring the instrument to the pipe stand, hang the instrument with the **CLAMP** opening toward you (working behind the instrument). Close the clamp, attach the **SAFETY CABLE**, then tighten the clamp using the wrench. You may unwrap the power cable and open the **SHUTTERS**. No further adjustment should be necessary to the **PIPE CLAMP BOLT**.
- **Person 2:** Unwrap the power cable, tilt the instrument into position, and open the shutters if not already open. Plug the instrument into the provided receptacle, managing the cable. Power on the instrument and focus the **BEAM** to a hard-edged circle on the designated projection area. No further adjustment should be necessary to the **YOKE** bolt or yoke locking knob.
- **Person 3:** Put the supplied gobo in its holder and insert it properly into the instrument. Sharpen the focus to project the image correctly onto the designated surface. (Note: If the instrument is upside down, you must correct this error and incur a penalty.) No further adjustment should be necessary to the instrument's focus.
- **Person 4:** Roll the die to determine the gel color. Select the correct gel and put it in its frame. Insert the gel frame into the instrument slot carefully, closing the clip, being careful not to affect its focus. (Note: If the instrument is upside down or loses focus, you must correct these errors and incur any penalties.) Once the instrument and image are in focus, stop the clock.

PENALTIES ISSUED FOR:

- Dropping items, placing them on the ground, or in your mouth.
- Gloves are not always worn.
- Items tethered around the neck.
- Gel frame not installed properly.
- Pipe clamp opening not facing installer.
- Instrument hung upside down.
- Safety cable not used properly.
- Instrument powered on with shutters closed.
- Any adjustment not sufficiently tightened.
- Failure to follow sequence.
- Incorrect gel selection.
- Leaving image backwards or upside down.

Rigging: Knot Tying

This is a relay, as your team uses three ropes and four specified knots. Your knots will be inspected to make sure they are correctly tied, leaving at least a 6" tail at each end.

REQUIRED SEQUENCE - Max time: 5 minutes

- The team waits behind a table with all three ropes on it. The cart to tie the ropes onto will be placed approximately 10 feet away from the table.
- PLAYER 1 takes ROPE 1 and ties an end to one of the anchors on the side of the cart using a CLOVE HITCH before running back and tagging Player 2. (Refer to "Clove Hitch (Rope End)" at <https://www.animatedknots.com/clove-hitch-knot-rope-end>)
- PLAYER 2 takes ROPE 2 and ties it to the free end of ROPE 1, using a SHEET BEND to make the rope long enough to secure our cargo. Player 2 tags Player 3. (Refer to "Sheet Bend" at <https://www.animatedknots.com/sheet-bend-knot>)
- PLAYER 3 takes the end of ROPE 2 and ties a TRUCKER'S HITCH to the other anchor point on the other side of the cart, securing the cargo to the cart. Player 3 tags Player 4. (Refer to "Trucker's Hitch" at <https://www.animatedknots.com/truckers-hitch-knot>)
- PLAYER 4 takes ROPE 3 and secures the end of the rope to the handle of the cart using a BOWLINE before pulling the wagon into the designated spot on the floor using ROPE 3. (Refer to "Bowline" at <https://www.animatedknots.com/bowline-knot>).

PENALTIES ISSUED FOR:

- Going out of sequence.
- Putting any part of the rope in your mouth.
- Each incorrectly tied knot or knot that comes untied.
- Any tail shorter than 6".
- Stopping time with the cart outside the taped out location

Scenic: Set Tape Down

Your team is tasked with taping out a portion of the set for a rehearsal of *Beauty and The Beast – Live on Stage*.

You will be provided the following:

- A set **FLOOR PLAN** with an indicated **SCALE**
- Two rolls of tape
- Two tape measures

Once time starts, work together to tape out the elements (indicated on the floor plan) onto the floor. Use the pre- taped **CENTER** and **PLASTER LINES** as reference points.

Use the tape efficiently!

Do not crumple excess or wasted tape as you work. Once you are done, unused tape will be measured and you will be penalized for each inch.

Once your floor plan is checked for accuracy, you will be asked to reset the space for the next group. This may factor into your participation score!

LEAVE THE CENTER AND PLASTER LINES IN PLACE.

REQUIRED SEQUENCE - Max time: 10 minutes

- You will be shown the stage space, indicated by the plaster line and center line, pre-taped on the floor.
- Your team will receive two rolls of tape and two tape measures. If you reach the end of one roll of tape, a new roll will be immediately supplied to you. Communicate with the referee if you see yourself getting low on tape.
- The tape, tape measures, and the supplied floor plan must remain on the table until the referee announces start.
- Tape out all indicated walls, platforms, and **LEVEL CHANGES** as specified on the supplied floorplan, according to the indicated scale.
- When your team feels they have completed the assignment, return the tape rolls, tape measures, and floorplan to the table and press the button on the table to stop the clock.
- Return any unused tape that was removed from the roll but not used in your floor plan (tape removed from the roll cannot be put back).
- The referee will check your work for accuracy and add any applicable penalties to your time

PENALTIES ISSUED FOR:

- Any indicated elements from the floorplan that are missing.
- Any indicated elements from the floorplan that are out of place.
- Any indicated elements from the floorplan that are not to scale.
- Any excess/unnecessary tape on the floor (penalized per inch).
- Any unused tape removed from the roll but not used in the floorplan.
- Any unused and/or crumpled tape.

Stage: Prop Shift

This challenge must involve your entire team and must be accomplished in silence.

The On-Stage table will be set for Scene A, while all props for Scene B will be located on an organized prop table several feet away. A **PROP PLOT** showing both Scene A and Scene B table settings will be located at the prop table as well (but cannot be moved from the prop table).

Some props are used in Scene A only. These will need to be struck and returned to their designated locations on the prop table. Some props are used in Scene B only. These will need to be set according to the diagram at the prop table. Some props are used in both scenes. These may stay at the On-Stage table but may require some altering or repositioning.

You'll want to note specifics, such as the position of the chairs at the table, and height of the candles.

When the change is complete, your entire team must be behind the prop table before stopping the clock. The referee will then check your work and add any penalties for items out of place (both on the on-stage table and the prop table).

We'll then ask your team to assist in resetting for the next group waiting to compete. This may factor into your participation score!

REQUIRED SEQUENCE - Max time: 5 minutes

- Two tables (On-Stage table and prop table) are set up approximately 10 feet from each other. The On-Stage table is set for Scene A, and a diagram for both Scene A and Scene B is on the prop table.
- The prop table has the following on it:
 - Props that must be added to the on-stage table to set Scene B.
 - Marked spaces for props that are used in Scene A but not Scene B and will be struck from the On-Stage table. These props must be placed back in their proper corresponding places.
 - Props that are used in neither of these two scenes (you might imagine they are props from other scenes... or you might call them red herrings).
- Some props in Scene A will remain for Scene B but may require some specific repositioning, placement, or other alteration. This includes the positioning of the chairs around the table.
- Your team must wait on the opposite side of the prop table until time starts. You'll be given a 10-second warning before time starts for any last-minute planning.
- Once time starts there can be no talking. Any audible signals/sounds may result in a penalty. No items may be placed in pockets, on the floor, or in your mouth!
- Your team will stop the clock when you think the change is complete. Scene B must be fully set at the on-stage table, props struck from Scene A must be in their place on the prop table, and all four team members must be on the opposite side of the prop table (from the on-stage table) before you stop the clock.

PENALTIES ISSUED FOR:

- Any incorrectly placed item on the on-stage table.

- Any incorrectly returned item to the prop table.
- Any drops, spills, or damage.
- Any prop or item placed in pockets, on the floor, or in your mouth.
- Any speaking or audible signals while the clock is running.
- Stopping the clock before the team is all behind the table.

Awards

The following awards will be given to teams upon completion of the events and awards and rubrics will be available for pick up from the registration desk on Saturday morning. The winning teams will receive BACKStage Challenge medals for their team members.

Award categories will be:

- 1st Best Time Overall per track (Yellow and Blue)
- 2nd Best Time Overall per track (Yellow and Blue)