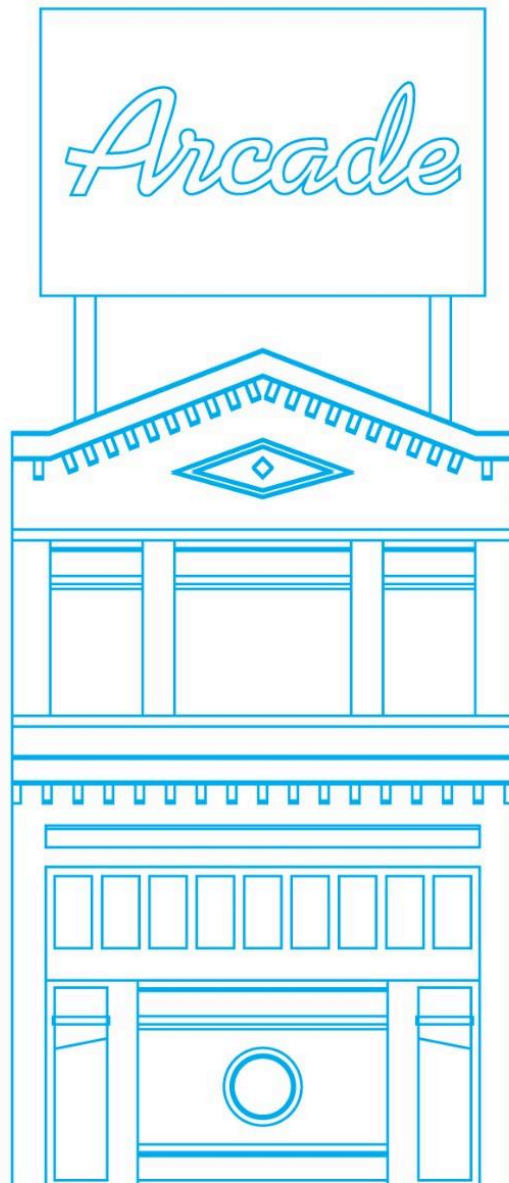




the PLATFORM

**Guidelines for the
Arcade Comedy Theater
Improv Program**



Hello!

This is The Platform, a document detailing the ins and outs of the Arcade Improv House Team Program. We've put together this living document of policies and procedures to provide transparency and guidance for how things work. The House Team experience at Arcade aims to be a fun and fulfilling one, with clear opportunities for growth and success. These guidelines have been created to walk you through the process of improvising with Arcade. We look forward to seeing you on stage!

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House Team Overview

The goals of the Arcade Comedy Theater's in-house improv program are:

1. To provide and manage a program that enables improvisers to excel at their craft
2. To create teams in which improvisers who may not otherwise play together do so for a defined period of time, thus improving the skill and adaptability of all involved
3. To entertain Pittsburgh audiences seeking out high-quality improv comedy.

This document details the policies and procedures for artists involved in our program. These guidelines are overseen and updated by Arcade's artistic team who **make all final decisions within the program**. Input may also come from teachers, coaches, or any other pertinent Arcade leadership. The guiding objectives in any policy, decision, or update in Arcade's improv program are to further the artistic quality of the program, to cast performers in positions where they can excel, and to create a safe and positive performance atmosphere.

Auditions and Forming Teams

Auditions are typically held once per calendar year. General auditions are open to Arcade Academy Students or performers with improv training/experience from other theaters or institutions. *Some amount of improv comedy knowledge/experience is required.* Arcade Comedy Theater values inclusion and welcomes players of all ability, age, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

The audition panel each year will include an invited set of performing and teaching artists from within the Pittsburgh comedy community. This panel, alongside the artistic team at the theater, helps us arrive at a callback list. Following callbacks, the theater's artistic team makes all final casting decisions.

Once teams are formed and players confirm their team placement, individual coaches work with the teams to determine rehearsal day/time/location.

- Rehearsal day/time is determined through majority vote based around Coach availability. If a player can't work with a team's decided-on rehearsal, they may be unable to keep their spot.
- Teams may use Arcade's theater spaces to rehearse in, at no cost to the team, depending on availability. Rehearsal space will be arranged and scheduled through an Arcade staff member. If a team member or Coach has access to an outside rehearsal space that works better for the team or is available when Arcade isn't, they are welcome to rehearse there.

Team Players

Overview

House Teams are the flagship artistic product of Arcade Comedy Theater's Improv Program. Teams are expected to perform together for approximately one program year. Term limits on teams allow for an ever-growing community of improvisers to continually play with new and different members. This emphasis on dynamism benefits Arcade's many improv shows that have rotating casts and/or guest performers.

- Long-form teams practice up to two forms: the Harold and a second form of their choice (from a list of approved forms)
- Short-form teams perform various short-form games.

Players

House Teams consist of improvisers cast through auditions who have accepted placement on that newly formed team. Coaches and/or relevant Arcade staff can make the determination at any time to re-evaluate a player's spot on a House Team due to: a notable drop in skill/performance ability, serious attendance issues, or behavior (see [Good Habits & Behaviors](#)).

If a team needs a new player between auditions, the Coach and/or relevant Arcade artistic staff can select a "sit-in" for consideration of permanent placement. New players added outside of the audition process are considered a "sit-in" for 2-4 rehearsals/shows in order to give the team, coach, and new player a period of time to assess performance and fit on the team. The Coach will determine if/when the player performs in a show during the "sit-in" period. There is no formal "review" at the end of a player's time being a sit-in. The player should feel free to speak to the Coach or Director of Programming during that time if it is not working out, and will be informed by the end of the month if there are any issues on Arcade's end.

The Arcade reserves the right to make any changes to House Teams at any time for reasons including but not limited to: decline of show quality, decline of player attendance at shows and/or rehearsals, loss of cast members, or internal conflicts.

Player Responsibilities

- **Show up! Maintain a 75% attendance average** of team rehearsals and shows. Since House Teams perform on Friday nights at the "House Team Hot Spot" show, Friday night availability is necessary. Things like illness are excused absences, as we don't want house teams getting each other sick. Also, the 75% average does not include if a player needs to take a hiatus (see [Hiatus/Leaving a Team](#)) **Coach discretion will be used in determining if a player's absences need to be reviewed.**

- **Pay dues** to offset coaching costs (*see below*)
- **Be respectful, kind, and professional** in your interactions with teammates, other teams, Arcade staff, interns, audience members, and Arcade theater and rehearsal spaces. (*see [Good Habits & Behaviors](#)*)
- **Promote shows!** On social media, word of mouth –we expect house team members to play an active role in encouraging audience attendance.
- **Support your fellow Arcade House Teams** and other Arcade improv performers by attending and watching them at shows: attending shows regularly will improve your own improv skills (and you can see these shows [for free!](#))
- **Continually seek additional sources of education**, such as Arcade Academy classes, workshops, or independent projects, to improve improv skills.

Player Dues

- To help defray the cost of the House Team program, Arcade asks each House Team member to contribute \$150 total to Arcade. This will offset the cost of the 28 planned rehearsals for the year and some of the expense of coaches attending shows/giving show notes. **The dues can be contributed in one lump sum of \$150 or through monthly payments*** through Arcade's Square account or paid by check.
If a player chooses to pay Arcade monthly, the cost is \$15/month. Both the player and Arcade can/will keep track until \$150 is paid, and their dues payments will end.

Note: Square payments can also be taken when the Box Office Concessions window is open.

- Square Payment for Full \$150: <https://square.link/u/sdFhEhYa?src=sms>
 - Square Payment for \$15: <https://square.link/u/701YpYHc>
 - Check made out to Arcade Comedy Theater
- Arcade does not want dues to be the reason that a player who is selected through the audition process would not participate in a House Team. Thus, **if dues payment is a barrier to participation, any House Team player may be granted a full scholarship for the program.** This will remain anonymous to their team: neither your Coach nor teammates will know who has a scholarship (unless the player discloses it). Scholarship spots are limited, but Arcade will strive to accommodate House Team players' needs. If you need a scholarship, please email Katie at ktarara@arcadecomedytheater.com with your request.

Player Perks

- See [Perks](#)

Team Coaches

Overview

Coaches are leaders in the Arcade improv community and hold House teams in trust for the theater. Being a team coach at the Arcade provides an opportunity to improve one's coaching skillset, with oversight from Arcade Leadership, and a source of compensation for improv work.

Compensation

Coaches are compensated \$50 per rehearsal and \$25 to attend House Team shows/give notes. Arcade Coaches do not solicit dues from players, as Arcade manages all payments. Coaches are paid through Arcade's payroll, twice a month.

Coaches also receive all [Perks](#) that Arcade House Team players receive.

Coach Responsibilities

- Plan and lead 2-hour rehearsals at the cadence set by the theater (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly)
- Attend team shows and craft subsequent rehearsals to address team needs.
- Guide improv teams toward high-quality performances: this entails both supporting players with positivity and encouragement, as well as providing constructive feedback in post-show notes and rehearsal side-coaching, etc.
- Short-form coaches: create show set lists and cast games
- **Secure a substitute coach for rehearsals and shows if absent (coach absence should be a rare occurrence).** Substitute coaches are pulled from a pre-approved list of individuals.
- As improv teams are often the only individuals in the building, **coaches serve as ambassadors to Arcade's facilities and building safety:** ensuring players clean up after themselves, lights are turned off, door is locked, know where the fire extinguishers are, etc.
- Inform Arcade Leadership of any major team changes, issues, or problems

Coaches are not considered "directors" of their team, and they may not make decisions that stray from Arcade's artistic direction of the House Team program. Additionally, House Team Coaches are not responsible for being substitutes for Class Teachers, who provide significant individual, in-depth instruction, because the coach's focus is the overall team. Players needing additional improv education should be encouraged to enroll in a class.

Team Captains

All Arcade teams must have a Team Captain. Generally, someone on the team volunteers for this role, and the team agrees. We encourage teams to switch Team Captains every 3-6 months. This allows the responsibilities of the Captain to be shared among teammates.

Team Captain Responsibilities:

1. Serve as a singular point of contact between the team and the coach and/or the team and the theater. If an Arcade staff member has a question for the team, they will most likely email the captain rather than the entire cast.
2. Communicate team issues that are brought up to them to the Coach and/or Arcade Leadership
3. Help jumpstart the process of transitioning the team to having a new team captain when the time comes

NOTE: Team Captains are ***not intended to serve as any sort of 'authority' figure, artistically or otherwise.*** Captains do not make show line-ups, note other players, or determine what the shows will entail; that is the coach's job.

NOTE: While Captains serve as a helpful communication hub, please know that ***ANY member of a team is welcome and encouraged to bring up problems or sensitive issues with the Coach or any Arcade leader at any time.***

Perks of Arcade House Team Participation

Improvising or coaching in the Arcade Improv program gives performers a consistent opportunity for stage time in downtown Pittsburgh's premiere Cultural District, at a professional theatrical establishment. The theater's staff strives to give improvisers a safe, comfortable environment in which to improvise, with a Stage Manager at every show providing light/sound tech. Also:

- Free rehearsal space!
- Arcade KEY CARD which allows free admission to shows! (*see details below*)
- A clean and welcoming environment backstage, with House Managers and interns available to assist with various needs.
- Arcade staff running the logistical aspect of booking shows, helping with Coach or team matters, etc.
- Exclusive invitations to social/fundraising events and Arcade parties.
- Arcade occasionally makes educational opportunities available to community members early and may provide other Academy discounts/exclusive opportunities.

FINE PRINT about your Key Card:

1. Key cards allow free admission to any regular-priced Arcade show.
2. **Key cards can not reserve your ticket in advance:** you must come to the theater and show the card to the box office.
 - If a show is close to selling out, the box office may hold off on giving you a seat until closer to showtime. If you want to guarantee you'll see a show that's close to selling out, we recommend purchasing a ticket.
 - **Note: Ticket sale revenue from paying guests allows us to provide this courtesy to our performers!**
3. Key Card discounts are for the performer only: guests or plus-ones must purchase a ticket.
4. Key Cards DO NOT provide a discount on BYOB, box office candy/refreshments, or purchases at the Arcade bar.
 - House Team members must still purchase a wristband if they will be drinking and may be carded by a box office employee.

Good Habits & Behaviors

The Arcade seeks to be a welcoming, positive artistic environment so that artists can flourish and be funny. Here is what we're looking for in **all of our performers and coaches**:

1. Performers should be positive, collaborative members with their Coach and teammates. Our organization values the following qualities in our players: collaborative, communicative, dependable, professional, respectful, and safe.
 - a. Be on time and ready to play. Players being late, distracted, or disengaged makes improvising together much more difficult.
 - b. Teammates should not give each other notes on their performance — that's what the coach is for.
 - c. Be good at taking notes from the coach! I.e., don't be argumentative or disrespectful. Allow the coach time to work with everyone: if you have more extensive questions about a note on your performance, arrange a mutually convenient time to speak with your coach 1-on-1.
 - d. Remember that house teams are not replacements for classes and coaches are not replacements for teachers. There is a reasonable limit to how much individual attention a player needs before we recommend supplementing House Team participation with taking more/new classes.
 - e. Share the logistical work of being a team equitably. Helping with administrative matters may not be as fun as performing, but are essential to keeping the team going. Make sure everyone is pulling their weight on and off stage!
2. Treat the theater, rehearsal spaces, green room furniture, set pieces and the stage with respect, in consideration of everyone who shares our multi-use facilities.
3. Promote The House Team Hot Spot and any show your team is appearing in. While the theater markets all shows at Arcade, personal promotion is expected.
4. Be respectful of your teammate's physical/emotional space on and off stage. Inappropriate physical touching or verbal comments may be considered harassment (see [Harassment Policy](#)).
5. Don't perform or rehearse intoxicated. If you're found to be overly inebriated before a show, you won't be allowed on stage.

SUBSTANCE USE POLICY: Any alcoholic beverage on the premises of Arcade Comedy Theater, whether provided by Arcade or individuals, are for persons over the age of 21. Illegal drug use is not permitted at any time. Persons over the age of 21: be responsible. If the use of any drugs or alcohol notably affects your behavior, you won't be allowed to perform. Continued abuse may result in being asked to leave the theater or team: either temporarily or permanently.

Hiatus & Leaving a Team

Hiatus

The Arcade recognizes there are circumstances that may necessitate a player to take a temporary hiatus. Some of these reasons may include:

1. Sickness, mental health, injury
2. Work
3. Bereavement
4. Parental leave
5. A conflicting Arcade improv class
6. An artistic project at Arcade or elsewhere

Hiatuses are granted at the discretion of the Coach with input from Arcade Leadership— the reason for taking a hiatus should be unavoidable and limited.

Before going on a hiatus:

1. Discuss it with your coach and agree on a start & end date (if possible).
2. Either player or coach should email details to relevant Arcade staff (see [Contact Info](#))

NOTE: *Regardless of the reason for a hiatus, the team may determine, with input from the Coach or Arcade, to secure a replacement player should the team need it.*

Leaving a Team

Being a member of an Arcade Team requires a significant level of commitment that's not always possible. Stepping off of a team can be a gracious and positive decision for both the performer and team. It can also give another improviser the opportunity to join a team.

Players who need to step down from a team should first discuss it with their Coach, and either the player or coach must communicate this decision to Arcade. The rest of the team should be informed at the appropriate time. Giving ample advance notice helps smooth the transition off of a team. **Stepping down from a team does not bar anyone from auditioning or appearing on Arcade teams in the future.** The manner in which a performer steps away from an Arcade team, making the process as respectful and professional as possible, helps performers stay in good standing with the Arcade and their community of fellow artists.

Contact Info

Nia Johnson

njohnson@arcadecomedytheater.com

Director of Programming

→ **Contact about:** *primary contact for all House Team administrative or logistical matters*

Anna Faila

inclusion@arcadecomedytheater.com

DEAI Coordinator

→ **Contact about:** *problems or questions re: DEAI issues, sensitive matters between team members and/or coaches, questions about our DEAI policies/procedures*

Robin Hitchcock

academy@arcadecomedytheater.com

Academy Director

→ **Contact about:** *recommendations about classes to take to supplement skills, specific questions about forms*

Katie Tarara

ktarara@arcadecomedytheater.com

Interim Executive Director

→ **Contact about:** *issues with the building/facilities, building security, customer service or box office issues, or an issue about a staff member listed above*

Arcade Facebook Groups: [Friends of Arcade](#)  [Arcade Academy](#)

Arcade Comedy Theater Policy Against Harassment

EXCERPT:

It is the policy of Arcade Comedy Theater to maintain a working, performing and learning environment free from sexual, racial, age-based, religious, ethnic, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, and any other form of discrimination, harassment, or harm (heretofore rereferred to as 'prohibited behavior') of any Theater personnel, intern, performer or student. Such harassment in any manner or form is expressly prohibited. It is also the policy of the Theater that no individual be subjected to any unwelcome conduct that is or should be known to be offensive because of their gender, race, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or other protected category.

The Theater recognizes that, as a comedy theater, the environment is not typical of all work places. Our work (or art) can veer toward being “blue” or “R-rated,” and the atmosphere of the Theater community is social as well as professional.. While this may require a nuanced reading of social cues, it is the hope of the Theater that with a combination of communication, common sense, respect, and empathy, the community can create an environment that prioritizes safety.

All reported or reasonably suspected occurrences of prohibited behavior will be investigated (in accordance with the procedures outlined below) in a confidential manner and as promptly and thoroughly as is practicable. Where prohibited behavior has occurred, the Theater will take appropriate disciplinary, educational, or other corrective action, up to and including termination from a position or team membership at the Theater, the loss of ability to perform at the Theater or Theater-related events or the immediate revocation of a student’s ability to perform internship duties and/or take classes at the Theater without compensation for time spent or refund of tuition paid.

There will be no retaliation against an individual who has complained about or reported alleged prohibited behavior or who has cooperated with an investigation of alleged prohibited behavior, regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

The full text of the policy is available here and all House Team members are encouraged to review the full text: [Arcade Policy Against Harassment](#)

Any House Team member wishing to report prohibited behavior may seek out any Arcade authority member with whom they have a bond of trust to share the details of the situation. . Such figures include coaches, teachers, house managers, stage managers, other contracted or salaried staff, and the Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Coordinator.