



Mascot Guidelines for Performers

Mascot Guidelines for Performers

THE FIRST RULE IS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL: **MASCOTS DON'T TALK!**

One of the best ways to develop a character's personality is lots of practice, both at non-critical events and in front of the mirror in full costume. Performing in a mascot costume is very physical, so you must be in good physical condition and be sure to drink plenty of fluids before the appearance.

Dressing the Performer:

You will need someone to assist you in putting on the costume. In order to stay cool, wear only a lightweight T-shirt, shorts and socks inside the costume. If the performer has long hair, it should be pulled back in a low ponytail. A sweatband or bandana will help prevent any perspiration from dripping into your eyes.

Please refer to the specific dressing instructions that were included with your Olympus mascot costume.

Once the costume is on, have your assistant stand back and take good look at you from all angles to make sure everything is in place and in good shape. Have them look for any cords, hair, clothing or skin showing. Any sign of the human performer inside the costume will break the illusion of the character.

Performance Tips:

This section is designed to help you (the Performer) create the personality of the character. This is where you shed your own personality (and all your worries) and adopt the personality of the character; just like playing "make believe" when you were a kid.

Practice first! Try out your facial expressions and body language in front of a mirror. Even though no one will see your face, it'll help if you use your facial expressions in all of your actions, when trying to "speak without speaking". For instance, whenever someone is in front of the camera, they all wave and smile. Your case is no exception; it just needs to be more exaggerated. So, smile when posing for pictures and your body will "speak" for you.

Becoming a mascot, does not happen overnight. It takes practice, both in and out of costume, to master walking, crouching, exaggerated motions, body language and showing emotions, etc.

Emotions:

Another crucial aspect of character development is the use of emotions. Mascots are animated figures, so their feelings must be shown through exaggerated body language. Emotions make great improvisations to practice because they represent situations from hunger to clumsiness. Emotions will directly contribute to the mascot's success in spontaneous reactions.

- **Happy** – can be achieved by straightening your body up high along with your head, while giving it a little bit of a tilt or moving your body around in a “happy” manner, frolicking in a carefree way. “Hopping” is another way to show how happy you are.
- **Shy** – put your finger or hands over your face/mouth area, tilting your head, while twisting your body just a little, away from the person or camera.
- **Sadness** – can be portrayed by slouching your shoulders forward and down, while hanging your head in the same fashion. You can add a sad walk (using the same slouching technique) and give a look back at the person or camera after a few paces to sell it.
- **Stressed Out** – can be done by sitting or standing, putting your hands on each side of your face in a downward angle, while shaking it back and forth.
- **Suave** – can be portrayed by running your fingers through your “hair” (if you can) or by using props like a giant comb, tilting your head to one side and pretending you’re “The Fonz”.
- **Exhaustion** – can be achieved by finding a place to sit (preferably next to someone, to play off of) resting up against a wall or tree (or even the person’s shoulder), and in a very relaxed body pose – as if you’re on a recliner.
- **Sarcastic Respect for Authority** – can be achieved by saluting with the left hand, pretending to be puffing out your chest insanely far. Then playfully mimic the one in charge.

Gestures (waving):

- **“Hello”** is a side-to-side, welcoming motion with your head held high, and position your body to appear “excited” to see them coming in or up to you. The bigger the wave, the better it can be seen.
- **“Goodbye”** is achieved by positioning yourself in a rather shy/meek stance, putting a hand near your eyes and make the “wiping the tear out of your eyes” motion, while holding your head in a downward position. Let them know you’re sad to see them go.
- **“Blowing a Kiss”** is just like it sounds, twisting your body slightly one way or another, and then twist towards the direction where you’re kissing, ending with your hand coming off your mouth and pointing towards the recipient; really “sell” the motion.

- **“Beckoning”** someone can be done by squatting a little at the knees and waist (so you’re lower to the ground – eye level with kids), with your arms extended and motioning them to your chest for a hug or handshake. Use quick wrist and arm motions.
- **“Tilting the Head”** is an effective way to show a variety of emotions, such as: surprise, being inquisitive or showing disappointment (depending on the angle).
- **“Tipping your Hat”** is an age-old technique that is used to show respect to anyone, or being “chivalrous” towards women.
- **“Mimicking”** the person in charge or another patron is a great crowd pleaser. All eyes will be on you, so all you have to do is pick out someone and copy their stance, how fast they’re walking, arm movements (within reason). You have to be careful not to antagonize the person you’re mimicking or it won’t be funny, it’ll be rude.

Walking Around:

There are many different styles of walking that can be used while in character. These help evoke the attitude that you’re trying to convey in different situations, such as:

- “Penguin Walking” is the most basic character style of walking. This can be done by just switching your weight from side-to-side with short forward steps; think Burgess Meredith’s method of walking as “the Penguin” in the 1960’s *Batman* T.V. series.
- The “Big Boy Shuffle” is another effective means of walking when moving a large body around. This is where you let the body pod direct you how to walk. You’ll know when you are doing it right because the extra “movement” of the character’s stomach will move about better, with less bumping into your legs and will feel more fluid and natural.
- “Skipping” can be done just as you’ve always known since you were a kid. It’s a happy-go-lucky method and will stir up the same feelings in kids or adults.

Working with Kids:

Children represent the best “prop” to use in your performance. In their eyes you are a make believe fantasy come to life! The very first thing you’ll notice is most kids want to hug and touch the character, so make sure you encourage this. If they hug you, you hug them back, just not too hard. Show them as much affection as they’re giving you. Never pick up or hold a baby or small child. You have limited vision and dexterity when wearing the costume, so it could be dangerous.

Once the initial excitement wears off, the kids will want to play with you. Have some fun and mimic their gestures, follow them (without their knowledge) and then be surprised when you get caught, dance and wave to get their attention.

It helps to be aware of how some of the different age groups react to a character costume:

- 0-3 years old – This age group may be overwhelmed and scared by the most lovable character. If a baby or toddler “freaks out”, it’s probably best to move away. Otherwise, get down to their level – kneel or squat if the costume allows you to and let them come to you. Sometimes it can help if you act shy also.
- 4-10 years old – The most responsive age group. Characters can be loved to death or even worshipped as heroes by these kids. A gentle approach is always rewarded.
- 10 yrs to Teens – Trouble with a capital “T”. These kids are inclined to treat a character as an object of fun. Physical assault and teasing is regrettably all too common with this age group. The important thing to remember is, NEVER lose your temper. It’s always advisable to have an assistant or guide with a look of authority to assist the performer.

Mascot Commandments:

- Constant motion is a must! The crowd is always seeking entertainment and leadership from the mascot.
- Stay in character while in costume. Be sure to maintain a consistent walk and pay close attention to young children.
- Tactfully mimic situations. As part entertainer, the crowd will go to the mascot for comic relief. Remember, mascots are FAMILY entertainers and audiences represent every age group, ethnic origin, religion, etc. Make a special effort not to offend anyone.
- Uphold a positive image as a representative of your organization.
- Make time for regular water breaks during performances. Food high in carbohydrates such as grains, dried fruit, bread and pasta will help maintain your energy level. Try to keep in the shade on very hot days. Heatstroke is a very real possibility and can kill. Try to restrict the length of your sessions to 20-30 minutes in full costume and then get somewhere you can at least take off the head and relieve the heat.
- Keep your fluid levels up, particularly on hot days. A headache is one warning sign that you are starting to dehydrate. One of the electrolyte replacement products such as Gatorade is ideal for replacing what you’re sweating out. If this isn’t available, drink plain water. Don’t drink soda or other carbonated beverages.
- DO NOT REMOVE, FOR ANY REASON, ANY PART OF YOUR COSTUME IN PUBLIC.
- Only the mascot and assistant should see the character in transition. Find a secluded area to change in and out of the costume. Carry the costume in a large duffle bag, so it’s concealed from any potential audience.

Minor Crisis Situations:

Once in a while, you may be on the receiving end of a sudden mascot crisis. The important thing to do is DO NOT draw attention to the situation, that'll just make the whole thing worse. Instead, try to "ad-lib" the problem.

- If you lose an item of your costume: try to conceal the loss by hiding it in other parts of your costume body (i.e. if your glove is stolen) or use other types of "props" that may be lying around in your car, office, home, costume shop, wherever you can find something that may be considered 'funny looking' and then make sure your assistant is ready with an explanation to why you have on what you do.
- Signal your assistant to let them know that something is amiss.
- Don't run away from the situation, stay and finish if you can... **OR** walk with your assistant to a secluded area, out of sight of the crowd (if you're not able to get back to the dressing room).

If you're missing a component of your costume:

- Call Olympus Group (1.800.558.9620) to replace your component ASAP.
- If you can't call, then improvise with something you find around the home, car or office to take its place until you can contact the appropriate persons to help.

Be Prepared For the Day:

- Inspect your costume for any possible problems before putting it into the duffle bag.
- Have all your equipment and supplies ready the day before you perform.
 - Leave your equipment in the same duffle bag and the same place, so it's routine to just walk by and pick it up.
 - INCLUDE: a towel, clean shirt, socks, shorts, deodorant, water or juice bottle, small sewing kit (for costume emergencies), a wire brush for any fur areas, and a bottle of *Febreze*.
- Each performer should have an assistant to help them in and out of costume and to escort them around and get them out of "tense" mascot areas (if one should arise).
 - Always try to have some "code signals" planned out ahead of time, in case you're in need of making a quick exit.
- Don't "burn out" in the first half hour of be the character.
 - Pace yourself, it gets hot and you can wear out quickly. No one wants a "sloppy" character running around.

- Do not eat anything 'heavy' or 'greasy' before a performance, this will only drain you of your energy.
 - Increase your salt intake before a performance, in order to retain water.
 - Drink plenty of fluids (water, Gatorade or juices) before, during and after your performance; you don't want to become dehydrated.
- Be sure to take breaks. Plan on 30 minutes in costume – 30 minutes out.
 - Try to make sure you at least get your head out of the costume, to help disperse the heat.
- Wear a sweatband around your forehead to prevent sweat from falling into your eyes.
- After each performance, inspect and air out the costume before putting it back into the duffle bag.
 - If you have enough time between performances, take the time to wash and clean it or send it to us for a professional refurbishing.
 - Ship To: **Olympus Group**
 9000 W. Heather Ave.
 Milwaukee, WI 53224
 1.800.558.9620
- In order to help keep you cool during your performance, we have an internal fan cooling system (\$150) that can be installed in the head (depending on how much room there is) and a Cold Kit (\$195) which includes: an adjustable vest with ice panels, an extra set of ice panels, a neck wrap with ice inserts and an insulated tote bag to keep it all frozen.

Storing the Costume:

- Store the costume in a clean room and off the floor.
- DO NOT store the costume in the duffle bag. If you can, try to hang up, neatly fold or lay the costume flat and not in direct sunlight.
- Allow the costume to air out between performances.
- Place the head where the least amount of stress is available, so not to damage the shape of the head.