

U Choose to Know

Making role-plays work for you and your students

Some teachers say that role-plays are one of the hardest activities to manage during sex education. Students can feel awkward or get out of hand, and teachers sometimes feel they just want to “get it over with.” But here are some ways to make role-plays both fun and meaningful for your students.



To see teachers modeling two different versions of a role-play, check out this resource from [ACT for Youth](#).



The day before:

- » Read through the whole activity. If you are fully prepared, you can focus on providing clear directions and setting the scene.
- » Ask two of your more reliable students if they would be willing to model the first role-play. This will help the other students understand what is expected.

Setting up the role-play:

- » Set a positive tone. Students will take their cue from you to see whether role-plays are a good way to learn. Be enthusiastic and remind students that role-plays are like practicing for a sport—they practice effective ways to communicate so that it becomes automatic.
- » Remind the class about group agreements, like showing respect and not making hurtful comments. But don't set such a negative tone that students will not feel they are able to be authentic when they role-play.
- » Set the scene by fully reading the scenario and directions before asking anyone to volunteer. This gives students a chance to think before they volunteer.
- » Remind students that they have a “right to pass.” Some students with a history of trauma may not feel able to participate, and you'll need to identify an alternate activity for them.
- » Where possible, ask students which person they would like to be in the role-play—and don't automatically assign girls to girl roles or boys to boy roles.

During the role-play:

- » NEVER model a role-play yourself with another student. This can be very troubling to students, and could get you in trouble if the relationships, characters' statements, or behaviors included in the role-play get misinterpreted as flirting or even coercion.
- » Be supportive and encouraging. Role-plays are challenging for students, and it's OK to tell them that you know it can feel awkward. A little joking can be OK, but make sure it doesn't cross the line into teasing.
- » If students are practicing in front of the class, allow them to ask for suggestions from the class if they are having trouble. This helps ease the pressure.
- » Distinctly end the role-play and transition quickly into processing questions. Make sure to talk about what the actors did well, and relate it back to the key messages in the curriculum.
- » If something goes wrong or the role-play gets out of hand, don't be afraid to say “CUT!” like you are on a movie set. Ask the class to imagine they are hitting the rewind button and suggest different actions or dialogue that could help the role-play go more smoothly.



For more information, visit: UChooseBaltimore.org