



STAGE KISSING POLICIES

A stage kiss is a simulated or actual kiss onstage between two or more performers. Stage kisses are choreographed and rehearsed before being acted out onstage. Stage kisses might look like the real thing but aren't representative of the actors' true feelings about each other—merely the appearance thereof for the purpose of the performance. Stage kisses only mean something in the context of the play.

Like other gestures and movements onstage, the stage kiss is an important part of an actor's body language. When executed well, it adds emotional depth to a performance, allowing actors to better connect with the audience. But when executed poorly, it can break the audience's suspension of disbelief. To keep viewers engaged and invested, actors must approach the stage kiss with the same level of commitment and professionalism they give the rest of their craft.

There are some options for those who would prefer **not** to lock lips with their fellow actors.

- The staged stage kiss: In this technique, one actor cups the other's face in a way that appears natural before drawing them in. Right before they connect, the former places their thumb over the latter's lips so that no direct mouth-to-mouth contact occurs.
- Blocking: The director can position you in relation to the audience in a way that disguises what's going on up close.
- A blackout: The technical director can cut the lights just as the kiss is supposed to occur. If you and your partner are positioned to suggest a kiss is happening, the audience will fill in the blank with their imagination.
- A different action: Your director may be willing to substitute a kiss for another physically intimate movement that conveys the same meaning, such as a loving embrace.

Stage Kiss Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- A good stage kiss isn't only about the meeting (or approximated meeting) of mouths—it's also about body language, such as eye contact and the embraces that lead up to the lip lock. Rehearse the scene as much as possible and refine your body language before taking it to the stage.

- Practice good hygiene: Show respect to your fellow actor by brushing your teeth before a kissing scene. Avoid contact if you have any communicable disease or condition.
- Go beat by beat through the scene to block and stage, just like you would any other movement in the show, with intentionality and with safety for all involved in mind.

Don'ts:

- Use tongue: Onstage kissing should be closed mouth only
- Go off-script: Intimate scenes should be blocked with you and your partner's boundaries in mind and then set.

How to kiss onstage

Read the script. Familiarize yourself with the storyline and characters so that you know what's expected of you in a kissing scene.

Determine the kiss type, i.e., comedic or serious. Both actors should consider the following questions before ever getting physical:

- What are the given circumstances for the kiss?
- Do you need a long, passionate kiss or a short, sweet kiss?
- How do each of you imagine the kiss starts?
- How long do you think it will last? Three seconds or 10?

Set bodily boundaries. Decide what parts of your body you're comfortable (and uncomfortable) with your costar touching. There are multiple ways to tell the story, so knowing those things ahead of time is going to be helpful. What story do you want to tell? Whatever your limits and preferences or your partner's are recognize and set them ahead of time.

Rehearse. It's vital that you rehearse your kissing scene so that you become comfortable with the choreography and build chemistry with your partner. However, you don't need to kiss your partner until you're onstage. For rehearsals, a deep hug while pressing each other's cheeks together or making a 'mwah' sound can easily take place for the actual staged 'kiss,' It should not be practiced off stage or alone.

Keep checking in. Once the show opens, we will have an 'intimacy call' to rehearse the intimacy scenes beat by beat to ensure safety, accuracy, and consent, just like you'd do with a fight scene.