

A Guide to WordPlay

This document serves as a guide to WordPlay: what is it, what should you do, etc. If you have any questions, concerns, or in need of any advice, feel free to reach out to Submit2nomads@gmail.com.

WHAT IS WORDPLAY?

WordPlay is a semester long workshop process that culminates in a staged reading of a 40 min excerpt of your play. It is meant to be a space that provides you, the playwright, with some resources, mentorship, and time to work on your play. You may not have a completed or finalized piece by the end of the process, but we hope you'll leave WordPlay with a better understanding of your script. WordPlay is a very self motivated and individual process. No two processes look the same. We (the NOMADS board) are here to support you as much as possible but we have found that the most successful WordPlay experiences have been very playwright driven (in terms of communicating needs, setting goals, determining what next steps need to be taken).

THE PROCESS

WordPlay can be broken down into three primary elements:

1. *Mentorship*

At the beginning of the semester, we pair every playwright with a more experienced mentor (typically either currently enrolled in or graduated from the Columbia MFA Playwriting Program). These mentors can provide feedback on your play, answer questions you might have about playwriting, give suggestions on how to navigate a workshop setting such as WordPlay, etc. They're there to provide more playwright and playwriting focused advice. We would encourage you to grab coffee early in the semester and talk about your goals and any questions you might have.

2. *Actors, Directors, and Rehearsals*

Since theatre is a collaborative art, it can be difficult to work on a script in isolation. Therefore NOMADS will help you find a director and actors so that you can hear your play out loud and start to get a sense of how movement could operate. At the beginning of the semester (and throughout the semester) we will send out interest forms for directors and actors. You are welcome to reach out to anyone on these forms. **NOTE: For WordPlay, the playwright cannot also direct the piece.** WordPlay does not hold formal auditions, but we're happy to book space for you if you would like to audition actors. We've found in the past that asking friends tends to be the most effective way of getting actors. Finding actors and a director can be the most frustrating and difficult part

of this process but this is also the part where the board tries to provide the most support so please don't hesitate to reach out! We will also book rehearsal space for you but we ask that you let us know your rehearsal schedule **at least one week before you need the space.**

3. *Staged Reading*

WordPlay culminates in a staged reading of your work (or a 40 min excerpt if your piece is longer than 40 minutes)! We try to host this event near the end of the semester (November/April). It usually takes place in the Ella Weed room in Milbank or Held Lecture Hall in Barnard Hall (so not a theatre space). We provide minimal technical support for this and can realistically only provide chairs and music stands. BUT this can be a great opportunity to see how an audience responds to your piece and it's a nice conclusion to the semester-long process! We'll also include snacks and pizza and sparkling apple cider!

CHECK-INS AND SCRIPT FREEZE DATE

Most of WordPlay is pretty flexible and driven by you! However, to provide a bit of structure, we'll have two mandatory check-ins! The first will be near the beginning of the semester and that will be one on one with the writing coordinator to just set some goals, clarify any questions you might have, and touch base. The second will be the Sunday before the WordPlay readings and that will be with the entire board (or as much of the board as possible). This is just another check-in to make sure you feel ready and supported for the reading!

I'll also be sending out a script freeze date (likely set for 1-2 weeks before the reading). This is a date where we ask that you lock your script and don't make any edits until after the reading. We also ask that you send us the script. This is just so that the board can read through the script one more time and check for content warnings and the like.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I find actors?

Finding actors can be very difficult since WordPlay does not take part in the auditions in the first week of classes (that many other groups do participate in). We recommend reaching out to people on the interest form and asking friends. WordPlay is fairly low commitment (time-wise) for actors so that can be a good selling point. WordPlay is also a low stakes environment so it might be a good opportunity for new actors!

When will the staged readings take place?

Since the staged readings don't take place in a theatrical space, we can't pre-calendar for it so the dates will be set a little later in the semester (October/February). I'll send out an email asking for your availabilities and the availabilities of your team to figure out the dates.

What sort of tech (lights, sound, set) can I have for the reading?

Since the reading takes place in a non-theatrical space (typically the Ella Weed Room in Milbank or Held Lecture Hall in Barnard Hall), it's difficult to have any sort of lighting cues or extensive set. We can provide a bluetooth speaker to connect to a phone or laptop and a member of your team or the NOMADS board can help with basic cues. However, we won't be able to do extensive or complicated technical things. In terms of set, we find that space tends to be fairly limited (there is no backstage area) so past productions usually stick to just having chairs and music stands.