



Duo Interpretation: Partners, Blocking and Chemistry.

For two performers and their parents. Understand the standard Duo rules, plan blocking without touching, learn eye-contact conventions, and run an eight-week partner rehearsal plan.

The basics of Duo

Duo Interpretation is a memorized performance by two partners of a published piece, which can be humorous or dramatic. At NSDA tournaments the limit is 10 minutes with a 30 second grace period, and no props or costumes are used. Each performer may play one or more characters, as long as performance responsibility stays as balanced as possible.

Verify with your league

NSDA says partners perform without direct eye contact or physical contact with each other. Focus may be direct during the introduction but must be indirect (off-stage) during the performance itself. Other leagues can word these rules differently, so confirm yours before choosing blocking.

Blocking without touching

Because partners generally cannot touch or look directly at each other, the audience must believe they are interacting. You do this with **focus and spacing**.

TECHNIQUE	HOW IT WORKS
Offstage focus	Both partners look at a shared point above the audience or to the side, as if the other is there
Spacing	Stand close together for intimate scenes, far apart for conflict
Levels	One sits or crouches while the other stands to show power or care
Mirroring	Echo the partner's posture to show agreement
Reaction timing	Respond to your partner's line with a breath or a head tilt before you speak
Peripheral awareness	Sense your partner's position without looking, using sound and rhythm

Mark each scene with a simple map: where each partner stands, who looks where, and when positions change. Rehearse transitions slowly, then at tempo.

Partner chemistry

- ♦ **Match energy, not volume.** Both partners should feel like they are in the same story.
- ♦ **Share the load.** Split lines and roles so neither partner always supports.
- ♦ **Give and take.** One leads a scene, the other reacts. Swap in the next.
- ♦ **Agree on feedback rules.** Use 'one thing that worked, one thing to try' so notes stay kind.
- ♦ **Plan for emergencies.** Decide what to do if someone forgets a line: a simple cue phrase or a pause keeps the piece moving.

