

HOW TO ACT NATURALLY

*What feels natural is only what you are used to.
Acting naturally is something you learn.*

Manan Periwal. THE BRAIN BRAKE. Twenty two lines.

This book is yours. Write on it. The back of every page is for your answers after you have watched yourself, and nobody marks them.



How to use this book

There are twenty two lines in the film. Each one has a page. On the front is what you say and how to find it. On the back are four questions you answer after you have filmed yourself saying it.

At the bottom of every page there is one reminder. One. Not two. By the end of the book you will have twenty two of them, and each one arrived while you had room to take it in.

You will finish this book knowing more than you did at the start, so the first lines will be your weakest. That is how it is meant to work.

When you reach the end, go back to the beginning and do it again. The second time through is where the film is.

Do all of it on your phone. Film yourself, then sit and watch it. That is the whole method. You will see things in one minute of watching that nobody could tell you in an hour.

There is no rush. You have more time than it feels like.

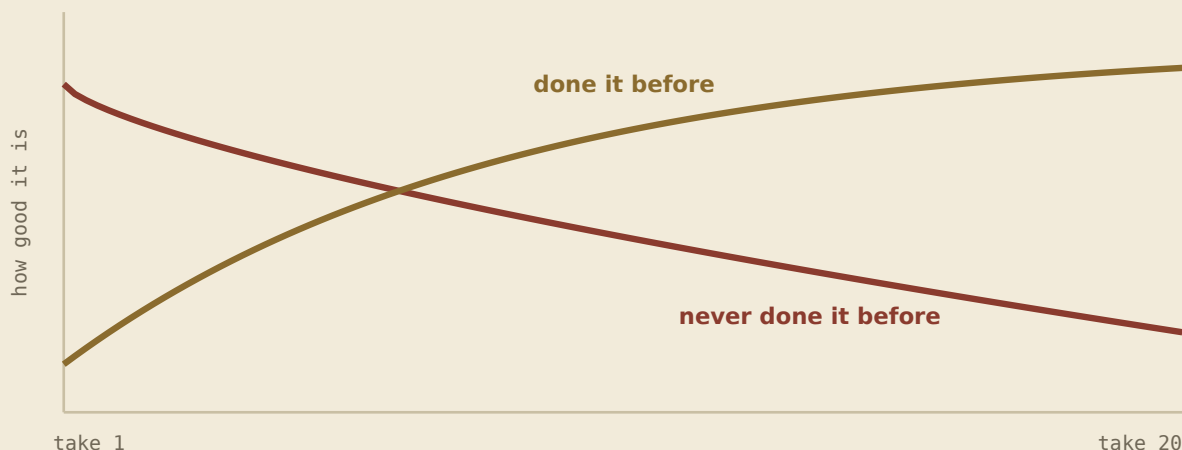
Do not be good on the first take

Here is the difference between someone who has done this before and someone who has not.

Someone who has not done it before gives everything on take one. It is the best thing they do all day. Take two is a little worse. By take ten they are tired and defending their first attempt. After an hour they want to stop.

Someone who has done it before is worst on take one. They are not performing yet, they are looking for it. Take four is better. Take ten is better again. They are still improving after two hours, because they were never trying to be good.

So do not try to be good on the first three takes. Be wrong on purpose. Look for it. The take we use will not be one of the first three.



Five things, in this order

0 DO NOTHING

When you hear action, do nothing at all. Not a dramatic pause. Nothing. Wait for the urge to perform to arrive and go past you. Then begin. The camera is already running and it costs nothing.

1 WHAT JUST HAPPENED

One second before this shot, what happened? Not the scene, the second. Every page tells you. If you begin in the middle of something, you cannot recite.

2 THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

One private thought you hold and never speak. Nobody can hear it and everybody can see it. Every page gives you one.

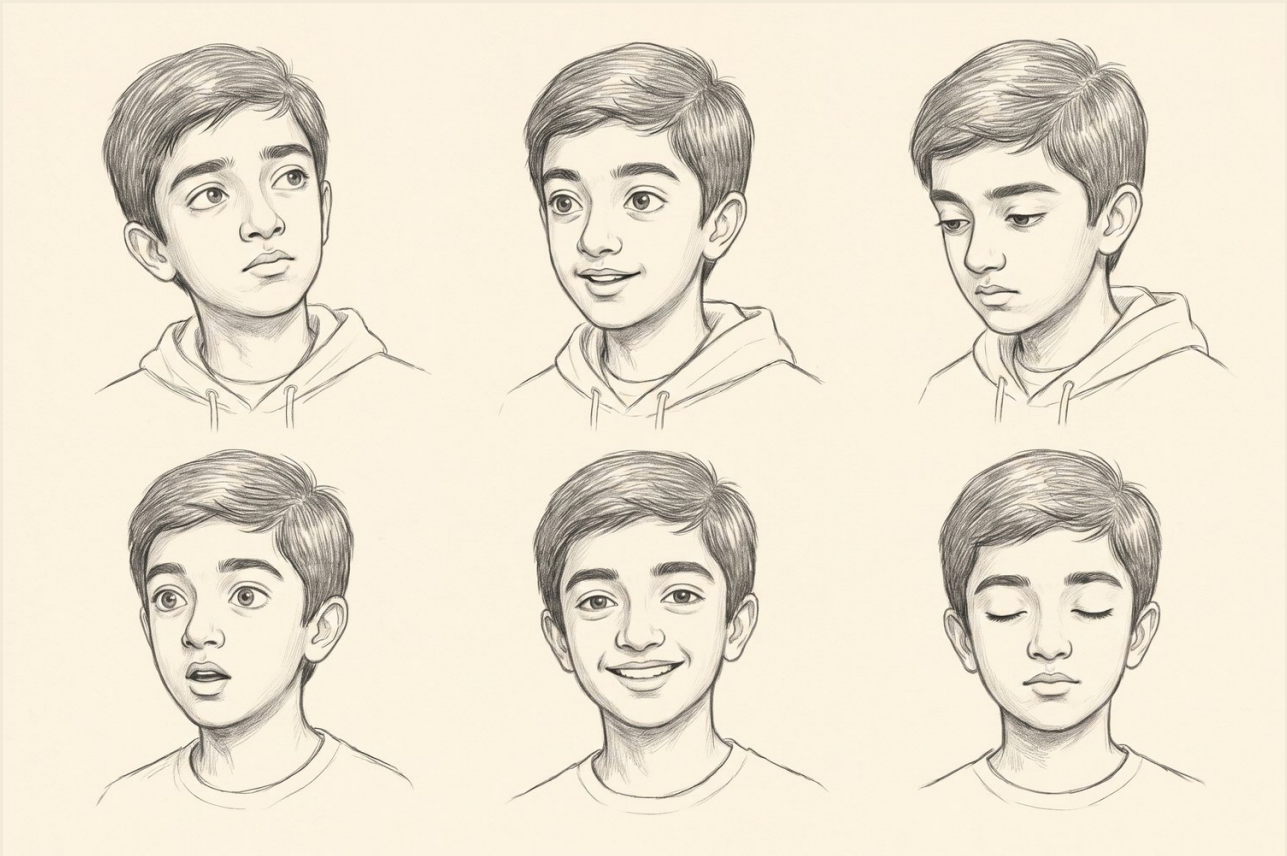
3 LOOK AT SOMETHING REAL

You will never be asked to feel something. You will be asked to look at something and want something from it. The feeling turns up by itself.

4 BREATHE

Out longer than in, before you start. When nothing is working, this is the thing that works.

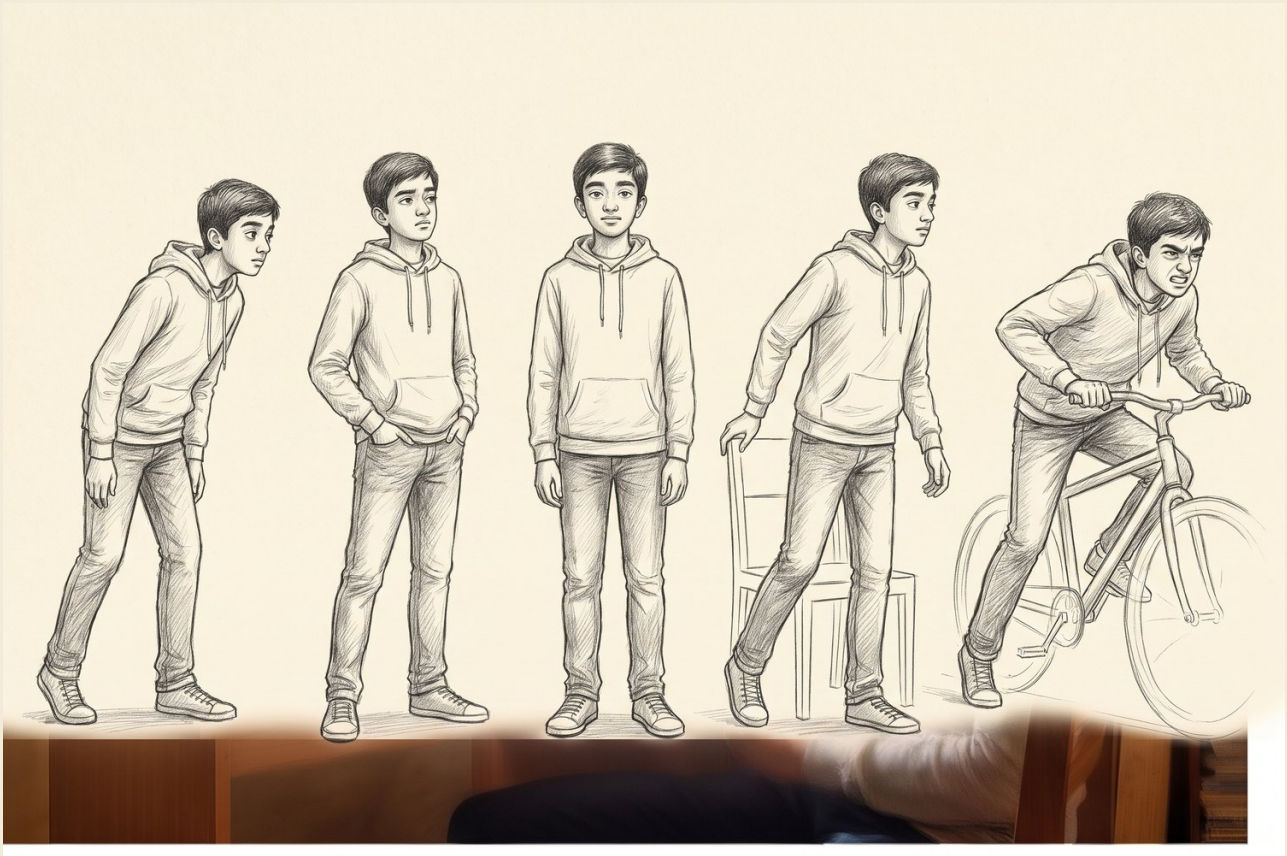
Your face



These are not faces to make. If you make them, they are masks and everyone sees it.

They are here so that when the right thought gives you the right face, you recognise what it felt like and can find it again. Noticing. Curious and amused. Thinking. Arriving. Delighted. And the last one, completely at rest, which is not a face at all.

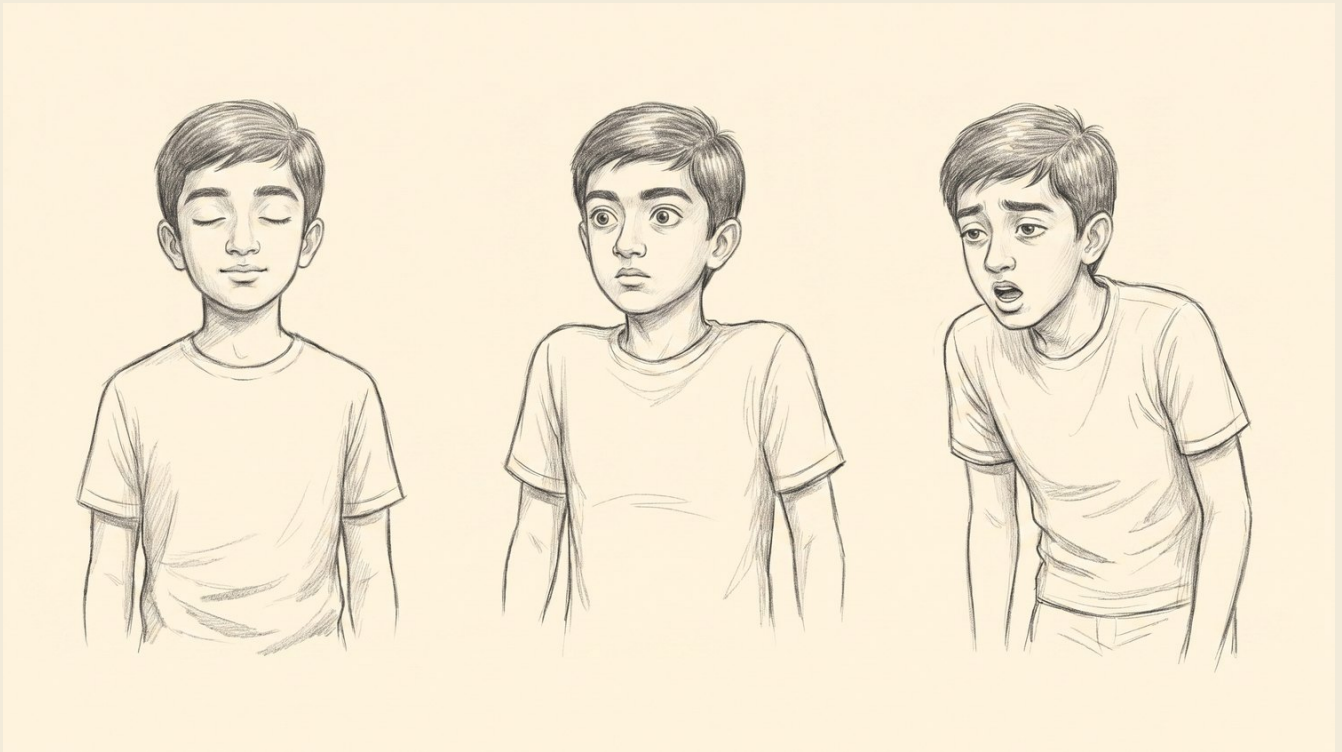
Your body



Where your weight sits tells the audience what you are thinking before you speak. Forward means interested. Back means considering. Even and still is the hardest and you need it at the end.

Your hands need a job or a rest, never a hover. In this film they always have one: the magnifying glass, the chalk, the phone, the handlebars, the ball, the key. That was decided for you on purpose.

Your breath



Low and slow, out longer than in. Calm, thinking, arriving.

Held, caught at the top for a beat. Surprise, noticing.

Recovering, uneven, mouth open. After effort.

Every page tells you which one. When you cannot find a line, start with the breath and the rest usually follows.

When you are nervous



Nobody can be told not to be nervous. But nerves do the same thing to every body and once you can see it you can undo it.

On the left, the shoulders come up toward the ears, the neck shortens, the head pulls back.

On the right, the same boy released. Do not push your shoulders down, that is just more holding. Let them be wide. Let your neck be free. Breathe out longer than you breathe in.

Three seconds, and it is gone.

For a hundred years we blamed the muscles.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

The film has not started yet. You are telling somebody how the story begins.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You already know the answer and you are not going to give it yet.

LOOK AT

the page in your hands

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	the weight even on both feet
who	the person you are telling this to
want	you want them to lean in
thought	for a hundred years, everyone was wrong
silence	a small pause before you blame the muscles

REMEMBER

When you hear action, do nothing. Then think. Then let it come.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Hold on. He had nothing left. So where did THAT come from?



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just walked through a world that stopped, and looked at a man through a glass.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

Nobody else has noticed this. You are the only one who saw.

LOOK AT

the lens, one person behind it

BREATH

held

THE FIVE

body	weight forward, still walking a moment ago
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to be as puzzled as you are
thought	that is not possible, and it happened
silence	a real stop after Hold on

REMEMBER

Say it at the volume of this room. Never louder because a camera is there.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

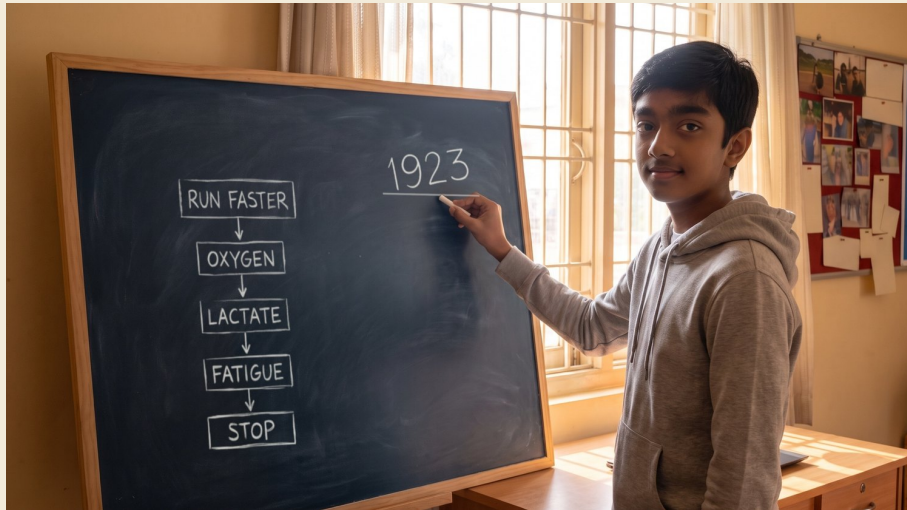
3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

A. V. Hill. Nineteen twenty three.



ONE SECOND BEFORE
You are opening an old book.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY
You like this man. He was not wrong, he was early.

LOOK AT
the page

BREATH
low and slow

THE FIVE

body	still, settled
who	a teacher you respect
want	you want it to sound like a fact, not a verdict
thought	a photograph on a wall, a long time ago
silence	let the year land on its own

REMEMBER

Look at something real. Never at nothing.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Except it doesn't explain this.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

The whole hundred years just closed with a stamp.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

And you are about to break it open.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

held

THE FIVE

body	very slight lean in
who	the person listening
want	you want the door reopened
thought	except
silence	a beat before except

REMEMBER

The pause before you speak belongs to you. Nobody is waiting.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

At the back, a door nobody opens.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You are standing outside a building nobody goes into.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You are about to open it.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	weight even, quiet
who	the person listening
want	you want them to come with you
thought	there is a door here
silence	quiet, almost a secret

REMEMBER

Do not decide how the sentence ends before you start it.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Tested the moment they gave up, the muscles could still do far more.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

This is the fact that changes everything.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This is the most surprising sentence in the whole film.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	still
who	the person listening
want	you want them to hear the size of it
thought	they could still do far more
silence	slow down on could still do far more

REMEMBER

Give your hands a job or a rest. Never a hover.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

It was never empty. Somebody closed that door.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

A door just opened and warm light came out over you.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

And I think a door might be closed on me too.

LOOK AT

the lens

BREATH

held then released

THE FIVE

body	weight forward, you have just stepped in
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want to share what you found
thought	it was full, all of it, the whole time
silence	delighted, never shocked

REMEMBER

Breathe out longer than you breathe in, before the take.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

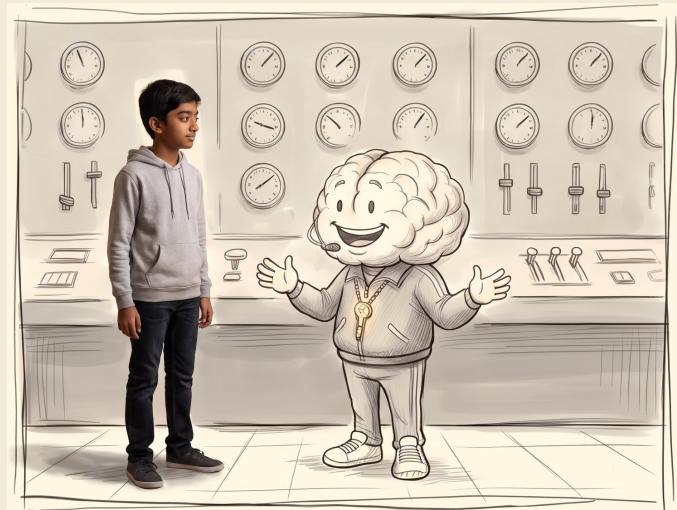
3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

You closed that door.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just found the person responsible.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You are not angry. You are impressed.

LOOK AT

the tennis ball at seated height

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	level, standing easy
who	the small character in front of you
want	you want him to admit it
thought	so it was you
silence	not an accusation, a discovery

REMEMBER

Let your shoulders be wide. Do not push them down.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Like a phone at twenty percent. Not broken. Protecting itself.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

Something ordinary just explained something enormous.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You have seen this on your own phone a hundred times.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	relaxed
who	the person listening
want	you want them to recognise it
thought	my phone does this at twenty percent
silence	ordinary, like mentioning the weather

REMEMBER

Talk to one person. Choose them now and keep them all week.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

So the limit isn't my body. It's your judgement. They call it the Central Governor Theory.

ONE SECOND BEFORE

He has just told you fatigue is him slowing you down before real danger.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

So it can be changed, and now I know what it is called.

LOOK AT

the tennis ball

BREATH

held

THE FIVE

body	in profile, hand at your chin, then you look up
who	the small character
want	you want to check you have understood
thought	then it is not my body at all
silence	the name arrives last, like remembering a street name

REMEMBER

Have the thought first. The words come out shaped by it on their own.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

They let him race his own best ride.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You are telling somebody about an experiment you read.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You are enjoying how sneaky it was.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	settled
who	the person listening
want	you want them curious
thought	they set him against himself
silence	light, a little amused

REMEMBER

Do not act the emotion. Do the thing, and let the feeling arrive.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

He beat it. So it was never his maximum.



ONE SECOND BEFORE
He just went past his own best.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY
Which means yours is not your best either.

LOOK AT
the page

BREATH
low and slow

THE FIVE
body still
who the person listening
want you want the conclusion to land
thought so the number was never real
silence let a beat sit before so it was never

REMEMBER

The end of a statement goes down, not up.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

So I tried it.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just got up out of your chair because you could not sit still.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You wanted to know if it was true for you.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

recovering slightly

THE FIVE

body	as if you have just come in
who	the person listening
want	you want them to know you had to
thought	I had to find out myself
silence	dry, a little amused at yourself

REMEMBER

Let your neck be free. Do not hold your head in place.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Nothing about my legs changed.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just closed your eyes on a bike at your limit and your legs found more.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You did not know that was in you.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

recovering

THE FIVE

body	still out of breath
who	the person listening
want	you want to be honest about what happened
thought	my legs were exactly the same legs
silence	quiet, slightly amazed, not triumphant

REMEMBER

If a take feels wrong, watch it before you decide it was wrong.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Only what I believed they had left.

ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just said nothing about your legs changed.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

So it was in my head, and my head is mine.

LOOK AT

the lens

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	settled, still warm from the effort
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to feel the size of it
thought	only what I believed
silence	the most important pause in the film sits before only

REMEMBER

One sentence per take on the hard ones. Never string them.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Still not all of them.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

Fibres are lighting one after another inside a leg.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

There is still more left, even now.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	still
who	the person listening
want	you want them to notice what was withheld
thought	even now, not all of it
silence	small, almost thrown away

REMEMBER

Be wrong on purpose for the first three takes. You are looking, not performing.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

It didn't make new energy. It gave permission.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

Bodies are flying across the screen doing impossible things.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

It was all already there.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	still
who	the person listening
want	you want the whole film to arrive in one sentence
thought	nothing was added, something was allowed
silence	the pause between the two sentences carries the film

REMEMBER

Think what you want from the person in front of you, not how you look.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

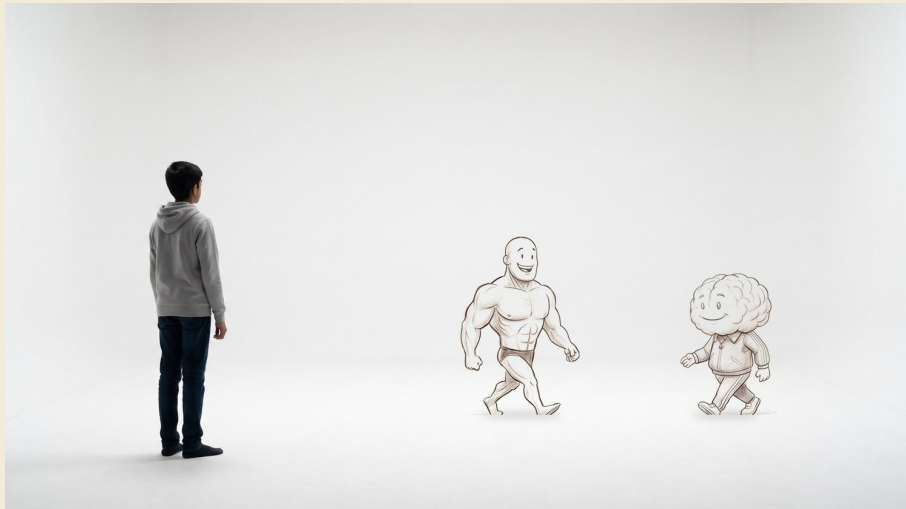
3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

Great ideas aren't accepted because they sound convincing. They're accepted because people keep testing them.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

Two dated cards are lying in white space.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This is what I actually admire about science.

LOOK AT

the lens

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	settled, calm
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to trust you
thought	being right is not enough, you have to keep checking
silence	unhurried, this is the most credible thing you say

REMEMBER

Small is bigger on camera than it feels in your body.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

The wall is real. But somebody set it.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

A small gold key has just been put into your open hand.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This was handed to me and now it is mine.

LOOK AT

the key in your palm, then the lens

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	receiving, weight even
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to take it too
thought	somebody set this, so it can be moved
silence	certain, never triumphant

REMEMBER

Do not fill the silence. The silence is part of the line.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

So next time somebody finds one last burst of speed, ask what their brain believed was safe.

ONE SECOND BEFORE

The film is ending. This is the last thing anybody hears.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

I want you to look at people differently now.

LOOK AT

the lens

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	completely still
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to carry it out of the room
thought	next time you see it, you will know
silence	let the last take be the tired one, it will be the best

REMEMBER

Never watch yourself while you are doing it. Only afterwards.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

The limit is a setting, not a wall.



ONE SECOND BEFORE

The film is over. This is the very last thing anybody hears.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

I want you to leave believing this.

LOOK AT

the page in your hands, in the booth

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	standing still at the microphone
who	the person listening
want	you want them to take it with them
thought	a setting can be changed, a wall cannot
silence	the biggest pause in the film sits between setting and not. do not rush the second half

REMEMBER

Nothing about you needs to change. Only what you believe you already have.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

On the day

- Eat something before you come. Nerves and an empty stomach feel exactly the same and you will mistake one for the other.
- Warm your voice up by talking, not by exercises. Ten minutes of ordinary conversation with anyone.
- Choose the person you are talking to and keep them all day.
- The first take is a rehearsal that happens to be recorded. Expect nothing from it.
- If a take is wrong, the direction was wrong, not you. We go again and nobody comments.
- Do not watch yourself between takes. That is for the evening.
- After six takes on anything, stand up and walk about before you continue.
- The silence before you speak belongs to you. Nobody is waiting.
- When you do not know what to do: breathe out longer than in, and look at the thing.

A silhouette of a person in a recording studio, standing in front of a microphone and a music stand, with soundproofing panels visible in the background.

*The limit
is a setting,
not a wall.*

This is the last thing anyone sees.

**Nothing about you needs to change.
Only what you believe you already have.**