puppetry basics

PUPPET DEFINITION: anything you can pick up and bring to life
PUPPET MANTRA: it is a character, it is not a prop!

warm up your voice, body and your mind before every rehearsal and performance
- pay ATTENTION, don’t add TENSION

transfer of energy: it's about your puppet, not YOU! There’s NO ROOM FOR EGO in good puppetry

floor: KEEP A LEVEL ONE!
- establish a level floor based on comfortable elbow height
- make sure you can maintain this through various walks/modes of movement
- feel the weight and gravity as you settle, move, stand

focus: ALWAYS BE CONCERNED WITH WHERE THE PUPPET AND PUPPETEER ARE LOOKING!

note: a puppeteer’s focus should always be on the puppet unless specifically directed otherwise as an overall artistic choice for the show – this is often called OVERT puppetry – see “transfer of energy” above as a related tip
- tendency is to let eyes drift HIGH – practice pointing fingers down at audience so the puppet’s point of focus can be seen
- look, then speak/move: be clean and specific
- eye contact is as important in puppetry as in non-puppet acting!

ambient movement: YOUR PUPPET IS ALIVE EVEN WHEN NOT TALKING
- BREATH is the key to life in puppetry
- acting is REacting! Be present, listen, nod, be aware.
- you can communicate through silence. Puppetry is, first and foremost, a VISUAL artform.
- control your puppet so it doesn’t control you: relax, slow down the tempo when in neutral

lip sync: DON’T FLIP YOUR LID! (for hand-in-mouth puppets)
- try to move just your thumb so it’s your chin that’s doing the moving
- for glove, object, shadow, rod (non-moving-mouth puppets), use small head (or body) movements to accent important words. don’t move too much it’s about MEANINGFUL movement – we don’t move our heads with every sound/syllable, and neither should your puppet!

voice: BE CONSISTENT!
- don’t fall into a “puppet voice” trap: make it real! (it’s not about a “funny voice,” it’s about a believable one)
- practice catch phrase (first line) to get you into it
- clarity is the first concern!