Making Puppets Come Alive

Until the appropriate gestures and voices are added, a puppet is just a wiggling lump of cloth. The way you hold and move your puppet is very important.

Hint #1: Puppet Anatomy
Your arm has four puppet duties. They are the movement of your fingers, wrist, elbow and shoulder.

Your fingers form the puppet's upper jaw. If you pull them back your puppet scrunches its face. If you open and close them, your puppet talks. If you combine the movements of your fingers and wrist, the puppet can cock his head, answer yes or no, or do neck exercises. Add your elbow and shoulders movements and your puppet is ready to do almost anything. It can walk, run, fall, laugh, cry, do double takes, sleep or sneeze.

Hint #2: Lip Sync
Every time your mouth moves, your puppet's mouth moves too. Sounds easy, but lip and hand coordination isn't as natural as one might think. To practice, have your puppet say the ABCs, recite Jack and Jill, sing your favorite song. Practice in front of a mirror. Watch your puppet carefully. Are you convinced it is really talking?

Hint #3: Puppet Posture
When using a stage, watch your puppet's height.

Hint #4: Natural Position
Find your puppet's "natural position." In other words, how does the puppet need to stand so it is looking straight ahead?

Try these exercises: have your puppet look out the window, at the floor, out the door. Have it read a book, take a second look.

Hint #5: Don't Sleep On the Job
Keep your puppet awake at all times. If another puppet is talking, make sure your puppet responds with slight gestures.

If you let your arm go limp it will look as if your puppet has died on stage. On the other hand, don't go overboard and upstage.

http://www.puppetuniverse.com/plays/alive.cfm

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