

“TELL US A JOKE” CHALLENGE

Record a video of you telling three different kinds of jokes, focusing on delivery

1. Check out the “Anatomy of a Joke” and “Types of Jokes” information (below). This video does a great job explaining why there are many kinds of humor and what you can do to improve your joke-telling:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmrC6W5IgCU>

2. Write or find at least three jokes. Try to choose jokes that each fall into a different type of joke category so that you get practice with more than one kind of humor. Write your jokes on the page provided (below). If you’re interested in writing your own jokes, check out this video of Jerry Seinfeld:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itWxXyCfW5s>

3. Check out the “Tips on Delivery” information (below). Here’s a great video on that:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jun/19/how-tell-jokes-like-pro-leah-green>

4. Practice them out loud! First practice saying your joke out loud to yourself. When you feel comfortable, try delivering it to a family member or a recording device. Do a little self-analysis and see if there are delivery improvements to be made.
5. When you’re ready, record yourself. Keep in mind that it can be difficult to tell a joke to a camera without an audience reaction. You may want to film yourself telling a joke to a family member. If you do this, make sure you’re telling them the joke for the first time when you capture it on video. Remember to upload your video by Thursday at 3pm!
Happy Laughing!

ANATOMY OF A JOKE

What is a joke?

A joke is a brief story, observation, or thought that has a setup and a punchline that triggers a physiological response—laughter. Jokes present a humorous take on a subject. They are a form of entertainment. They can be spoken, like during a stand-up routine, or written down in comedy writing, poetry, and even song lyrics.

Who Writes Jokes?

Comedians are professional joke writers and performers. They gather ideas that have the potential to be funny, look at them from a different angle to find the humor, and build the idea around a joke structure.

What Does It Take to Be a Comedian?

There are many comedians who have made it to the top of the comedy world, but they each spent years performing stand-up comedy in small clubs before they became famous. Each one performed their own unique brand of comedy and told different types of jokes.

- A sense of humor is important, but making jokes funny is a craft that takes practice, patience, and a lot of writing.
- Comedians also know how important it is to know how to structure a joke so that it creates the biggest impact possible, and at the right time.
- Use a versatile slate of jokes to talk about personal things and current events.

Is There a Basis for Every Joke?

Why do we tell jokes? Jokes are a form of entertainment. But they also serve a higher purpose. Comedy unifies people through laughter and the ability to identify with the premise of a joke. It is like a universal language.

All good jokes are based on two important things:

- **A good joke is part storytelling and part social commentary.** It gives people a way to process and reflect on the world around them through humor.
- **Every good joke disrupts expectations.** If someone's mental momentum is going one way, a good punchline changes that direction. The element of surprise is the foundation for any good joke.

TYPES OF JOKES

These are a few of the many types of jokes. If you want to share a joke that doesn't fall into one of these categories, that's fine!

Exaggeration: this is an easier form of joke telling because almost everyone can get it. You take an observation and you exaggerate it way out of proportion (the more absurd the comparison, the funnier it is). Example: "I literally grew this beard waiting for you."

Misdirection: another easier form of humor. This is when you make a connection that nobody expects. The conversation is going one way and you twist it around in a way that nobody expects. Example: "Do you ever get that feeling where you meet someone and everything is perfect and you're just hitting it off? Yeah, me neither."

Storytelling: this more complex way of telling a joke a great way to get a laugh and share something about yourself. Sometimes the more personal the story, the funnier it can be, because the audience can relate. Storytelling is also great because it can allow you to hold the punchline of the joke until the end and the audience may never see it coming because they're so wrapped up in the story. Example from Judd Apatow: one of his daughters has gone to college. His remaining daughter is unhappy that she is the only one left in the house with Judd and his wife, because four people is a family, but three people is a child observing a weird couple.

Puns: Words that sound alike but have different meanings. Example: I used to be really annoyed by the wall around my house, but then I got over it.*

*This joke is also a one-liner (see below)

Role Playing/Character: When you pretend to be someone or something else. The key with role playing is to never break character. Keep at it with perseverance and people will get it eventually! Example: Stephen Colbert played a fictional version of himself, even while interviewing guests.

Observational: an examination of everyday things or situations through a comedic lens. Observational comedy covers topics familiar to almost everyone, even the most trivial aspects of life. Example: "Have you ever noticed that there are no rules at Grandma's house? It's Granarchy!"

One-Liner: One-liners squeeze a setup and punchline into one succinct thought. Example from Robin Williams: "Why do they call it rush hour when nothing moves?"

Slapstick: Slapstick jokes are also known as physical comedy. Comedy Legend Steve Martin credits Laurel and Hardy, two of the earliest slapstick performers, as an influence on his career. The Three Stooges are another famous slapstick group, getting into absurd situations where they would repeatedly get hit, slapped, or bonked by someone or something in a comedy of errors.

TIPS ON DELIVERY

1. Don't be the first one to laugh at your own joke. You can smile, you can smirk, but don't laugh! This is because telling a joke is all about catching your audience off guard. When you laugh first you ruin the surprise.
2. Practice the rhythm of your joke: A joke's rhythm is all about its wording and timing. A good joke should be short but not too short. In other words, you want to get the audience's attention and get them invested, but you don't want to carry on so long that you lose them.
3. Be prepared and confident: Just as you'd never step on stage to perform a full-length play without proper preparation, you must prepare and practice your jokes.
4. Be calm and cool in your body language. Sometimes folks try too hard or care so much about being funny that they accidentally adopt nervous body language, which makes everyone around you tense. You want to feel relaxed so that everyone around you can tell that the vibe is calm and cool. Slow down your speech, don't fidget, and open up your body.
5. Adjust your humor to your audience. Not every joke you tell is going to "land." Practice several types of jokes so you can try something new if the first joke doesn't make them laugh. Remember to maintain your composure if you need to try again!

MY JOKES

The Joke	Type of Joke	Notes on Delivery

