

the
skill
of humor
playbook

How to Unlock Your **Humor Persona**
to Create Stronger Connections,
Increase Productivity & Relieve Stress

by (AN)DREW TARVIN

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ISBN: 979-8-9882267-0-3 (paperback)
ISBN: 979-8-9882267-1-0 (hardcover)
ISBN: 979-8-9882267-2-7 (e-book)

Cover Design by Bianca Damoc

Humor That Works
www.humorthatworks.com

what to expect

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welcome

Welcome future humorist! You're about to unlock a more productive, less stressed, and happier **you** by tapping into your natural sense of humor.

I know firsthand how transformative learning the skill of humor can be. Growing up, I was the nerdy introverted kid who understood computers better than I understood people. I always wanted to make friends and be social, but it was hard work, draining, and often awkward.

Things changed when I went to university and got pushed into improv and stand-up comedy. While I wasn't very good to start, I had a blast learning the principles of thinking and reacting on my feet. **I also found a surprising comfort in the structured nature of the art.**

As I discovered, refined, and employed my sense of humor, I started noticing other changes too: I was more comfortable presenting in meetings, I was quicker to speak up, and I had confidence when talking with strangers.

I realized what I learned could benefit other people who aspired to **be more confident, more effective, and more awesome**. So, I started *Humor That Works*.

Since then, I've helped over 100,000 people in 100+ countries learn how to create a happier, healthier, and more productive life by building their skill of humor.

And the #1 question I get after “why humor?” is “how do I get started?” Well, you’re in luck. That is exactly what this playbook is for.

(AN)DREW TARVIN
Founder of **Humor That Works**

a quick disclaimer

Since you've picked up this book, chances are you already know that humor has the power to transform your work, your relationships, and your life.

So rather than dive into the 30+ research-backed benefits of using humor, or spend time on interesting case studies, or even regale you with funny stories from past clients, we're simply going to focus on HOW to start using humor.

No fluff. No tangents. Simply what you need to know to get started. Plus, exercises to practice key skills along with space in the book to actually do them.

This ain't a "sit back and read" type of experience, this is a pick up a pen (or keyboard) and do resource.

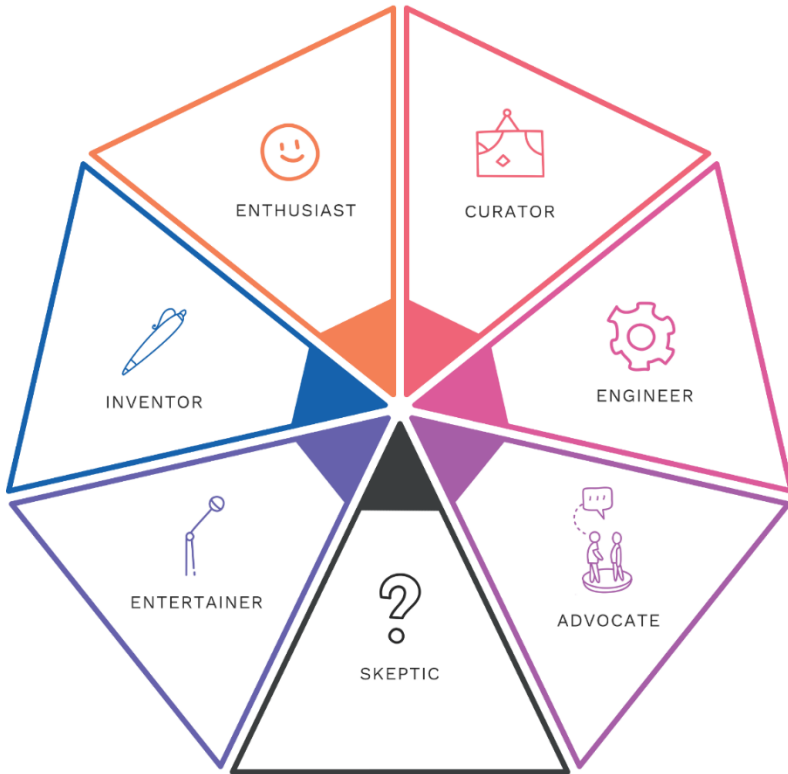
That's why we call it a playbook—it contains strategies and techniques as opposed to *just* knowledge (book book) or *just* exercises (workbook). Plus, it's all about bringing a bit more play to your life.

LINK: If you want fluff, tangents, stories, case studies, and 30+ research-backed benefits, pick up our book book Humor That Works. Learn more at humor.me/book

Here's a preview of what's to come:

- A deep dive into your 7 humor personas
- 40 activities to build your skill of humor
- 35 ways to strengthen the humor competencies
- 20 prompts to get you thinking more positively
- 20 places to find funny or uplifting content
- 25 prompts to spark creativity
- 10 exercises you can do to improve delivery
- 20 examples of how to easily use humor at work
- 10 ways to promote a humor environment
- 12 dangers to avoid when using humor
- The key steps to developing a lifelong humor habit

Let's get started!



getting started

SETTING THE STAGE FOR
YOUR HUMOR JOURNEY

There are 7 competencies you must learn before you can master the skill of humor. Once you do, you'll be able to use the right humor in the right moment in the right way.

Over the course of this playbook, you'll discover (and practice) exactly what you need in order to become a happier, more productive you.

'Life is far too important to take seriously.'

OSCAR WILDE

a tiny bit of background

Anyone can learn to be funny. Or, at least, funny'er.

I know it's true because I had to learn how to humor. And I've had some comedic successes since...

Warning: obligatory self-involved comedy resume incoming

- I've done over 1,800 shows as a stand-up comedian, improviser, storyteller, and speaker.
- I've spoken or performed in all 50 states, 30+ countries, and 1 Planet (Earth).
- I've opened for Pauly Shore, performed with Rachel Dratch, and helped host a show where Ray Romano dropped in (everybody loved him).
- I've performed in theaters, world-famous comedy clubs, and at least 20 different bars in NYC.
- I've been a guest on over 100 podcasts, have appeared on The List, VH1, and the Wall Street Journal TV, and once got featured in an article about humor in a German newspaper.
- My TEDx talk on the skill of humor has more than 10 million views (only half of which are from my mom).

Obligatory self-involved comedy resume complete

As a result, people often assume I am a “naturally funny” person. Anyone who knew me in high school can assure you that I am not.

I was never the life of the party or the class clown. I'm an introverted computer geek who was on my high school bowling team and was voted teacher's pet.

Luckily, humor isn't some sort of genetic gift that's bestowed only to the chosen few. Everything we do at *Humor That Works*—including this playbook—is possible because of one fundamental truth...

the skill of humor

Humor is a skill, which means it can be learned.

So, the question isn't "are you funny?"

The question is, "what kind of funny do you want to be?"

If we reverse-engineer the skill of humor, it consists of three basic building blocks:

Sense of Humor: what you find funny

Ability to Humor: how you make funny

Agency with Humor: why you use funny

Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses within each one of these building blocks, which leads to...

the humor personas

Based on your individual strengths, there are 7 primary ways you'll tend to express your humor, as an:

Enthusiast, Curator, Inventor, Entertainer, Engineer, Advocate, or Skeptic.

We call these your Humor Personas.

They are NOT personality types.

Assigning set "personalities" puts people into a box and they start to believe they have to behave a certain way because that's what their personality is "supposed" to do.

That's why we focus on personas instead. Personas are different styles or viewpoints you can adopt depending on your goals, how you feel, or whether or not you've had your coffee yet.

We'll be diving deeper into each persona further, but here's a quick overview for who you can become:

enthusiast

APPRECIATES THE HUMOR OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Enthusiasts enjoy the humor of everyday life, whether that's a funny TV show, someone trying to make them smile, or the absurdities of human existence.

curator

AMUSES OTHERS BY SHARING WHAT AMUSES THEM

Curators like to collect and share the things that make them laugh, whether that's a funny meme, an interesting quote, or stories they've picked up along the way.

inventor

CRAFTS CURIOSITY INTO COMEDY

Inventors find satisfaction in creating humor from the things that happen to them, whether that's playing through scenarios in their head, building stories from life events, or writing jokes because it's a pun thing to do.

entertainer

URNS COMMUNICATION INTO PERFORMANCE

Entertainers know how to speak in such a way that other people listen, whether it's a message they planned, an idea they had in-the-moment, or simply a facial expression that says it all without saying a single word.

engineer

SOLVES HUMAN CHALLENGES WITH HUMOR SOLUTIONS

Engineers make strategic use of humor to solve the problems around them, whether that's making their work more fun, getting past a sticking point, or better managing the hardest resource there is to manage: humans.

advocate

CREATES SPACE FOR OTHERS TO SHINE WITH HUMOR

Advocates encourage more joy and positivity in the world, whether that's by talking about the benefits of humor, creating opportunities for people to share their humor, or encouraging individuals to embrace their sense of humor.

skeptic

CONSIDERS THE PROS AND CONS OF HUMOR

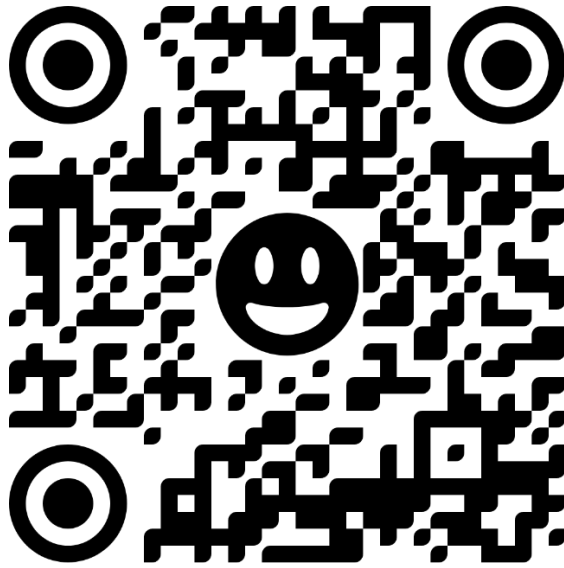
Skeptics recognize that not all humor is appropriate and just because something is a "joke," it doesn't mean that it's harmless.

humor competencies

Each of these personas is defined by an ability that they are particularly good at, what we call competencies.

- Enthusiasts are strong at *appreciation*.
- Curators have mastered *curation* (naturally).
- Inventors excel at *creation*.
- Entertainers know *performance*.
- Engineers are really good at *application*.
- Advocates make use of *promotion*.
- Skeptics apply *consideration*.

While there is likely one competency you're best at (what we call your primary persona), the goal of this playbook is to make you a complete humorist, to help you strengthen each of the competencies of humor so that you're able to bring levity to (nearly) any situation.



your primary persona

DISCOVERING YOUR HUMOR STRENGTHS

The beginning of any effective journey starts with taking stock of where you are right now. Regardless of your own perceptions, you already can (and do) use humor to some extent, the question is how.

Understanding your natural style can help you identify where you excel and where to focus to improve.

'If you could choose one characteristic that would get you through life, choose a sense of humor.'

JENNIFER JONES

the persona quiz

Over the course of this playbook, you'll learn about each of the 7 personas: their strengths, weaknesses, benefits, and impact they have on the world around them.

However, understanding how you currently use humor can give you a good idea of what you already do naturally, which can help you on your humor journey.

So, we've put together a free ~129 second quiz which will reveal your primary humor persona.

(Hint: Scan the QR code on the previous page or enter the URL on the next page to take the quiz.)

The good news is that you CAN learn to be funny.

The less good news is that it does take a bit of effort.

The good-er news is that once you discover your humor persona, learning how to be funny becomes easy'er.

putting the play in playbook

Whenever you're learning a new skill, you can read all the books you want, watch tutorials on YouTube, even pick up a certain playbook by a nerdishly handsome humor engineer... but unless you actually put your learning into action, your skill will be theoretical at best.

That's why each section includes one or more exercises that will help you strengthen your skill of humor and start to put it into practice. If you're serious about having more fun, these exercises will dramatically accelerate your ability to do so. **You have to decide, are you committed to becoming funnier?** If so, it starts on the next page.

PRACTICE: Take the Persona Quiz

Go to the following URL (or scan the QR code at the beginning of this chapter) and complete the humor persona quiz.

[HUMOR.ME/PLAYBOOKQUIZ](https://humor.me/playbookquiz)

What is your primary persona?

Do you agree with the results? Why or why not?



enthusiast

ENJOYS HUMOR THROUGH
THE APPRECIATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The first competency in your skill of humor is *appreciation*—the ability to enjoy not just the comedy of others, but also the levity in life. When you focus on the appreciation of humor, you are an **Enthusiast**.

*'Most people are about as happy as
they make up their minds to be.'*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

what is an enthusiast

A Humor Enthusiast is someone who enjoys the humor of everyday life, whether that's a funny TV show, a playful interaction, or the absurdities of human existence.

What's not to laugh about being a conscious, bipedal organism on a rock hurtling through an ever-expanding universe of uncertain origin?

Enthusiasts are the ones who are constantly laughing or smiling, having fun no matter the circumstances. Whereas other personas focus on using humor for a bigger purpose, **the Enthusiast's primary goal is joy.**

And honestly, isn't that enough?

Imagine humor didn't have other any benefits; it didn't burn calories, build rapport, or capture attention. If all it did was make you happy, wouldn't it still be worth it?

Enthusiasts also don't need a well-constructed punchline to laugh. Life is absurd enough; it doesn't have to be perfectly crafted to be funny.

As a result, **they may not understand why other people aren't laughing with them**, why others are so serious all the time, or why people are trying so hard to be funny.

famous humor enthusiasts

Paula Abdul (*American Idol*)

Andy Richter (*Conan*)

Budai (*Laughing Buddha*)

Garth (*Wayne's World*)

Buddy (*Elf*)

benefits of the enthusiast

There are benefits to being a Humor Enthusiast:

for yourself

When you take time to **appreciate the joy** in big and small things alike, you know that humor doesn't have to come from a punchline, it can also come from a new perspective.

As a result, you build **resilience** against the stress of everyday life, you maintain optimism through various trials and tribulations, and you tend to have a lot of fun.

While you recognize that not everything is awesome, appreciation is all about knowing that **when you can laugh through life**, everything seems to be a little bit better.

for others

Other people also benefit greatly when you're an Enthusiast. You're a **pleasure to have around** as you are quick to laugh or smile, and your mere presence can boost the mood of the people around you.

You may notice that friends, family, and coworkers **come to you to vent** about their frustrations because you're able to find humor in even the toughest of situations.

connotations

POSITIVE

upbeat
positive
fun

NEGATIVE

pollyanna
annoying
naive

enthusiast watchouts

While finding the joy in life is generally a good thing, there are a few things to watch out for as an Enthusiast:

Using humor to deflect.

Be cautious not to laugh at inappropriate times, either because the moment is somber or other people are trying to be serious. While you might think you're breaking the tension, you could be undermining the situation or giving off the perception that what everyone else is going through is trivial.

Laughing at inappropriate times.

If you always laugh, even when something isn't meant to be funny, **people can perceive this as being sarcastic** or that you're unable to have a serious moment. Not everything is a joke and not everything can be solved with a smile. By laughing at the wrong time, you might create more distance between you and other people.

Being too enthusiastic.

To some, constant positivity can come across as annoying or fake, especially if the humor isn't grounded in the reality of the moment. This could happen because you laugh way more than what other people think is deserved or—if you laugh while everyone else is serious—you **come off as insensitive or immature**.

enthusiasts at work

The Enthusiast is a great persona to use at work, especially as a way of uplifting other people. Being present and engaged when others are presenting, talking, or simply working on a task helps them feel supported and valued.

As a leader, smiling and nodding along in a meeting (or while on video when connecting virtually) can be a **confidence boost** to the person who is presenting.

When it comes to other people using humor, no feedback is negative feedback. If someone attempts to use humor and no one reacts, it's discouraging. When you appreciate what others do, it encourages them to continue.

watchouts at work

Laughter can be a sign of endorsement. If you laugh or smile (even awkwardly) at something that is offensive or prejudiced, it implies that you're okay with it.

In order to create a more equitable and inclusive workplace, there are times when laughing is inappropriate and counterproductive and, as an Enthusiast, it's important to understand when those times are.

the enthusiast in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be an Enthusiast at work:

1. Turn on your camera and **look engaged** when someone is presenting virtually.
2. Ask people about their day and be **genuinely interested** in the response.
3. **Smile when you make eye contact** with people.
4. **Intentionally seek out funny** when you start to feel anxious or overwhelmed.
5. Listen to a comedy podcast on your way home from work to **strategically disengage from the day** and show up more present for your family.

bottom line

Laughing or smiling costs you nothing. But it can be a very easy way to encourage more humor in the workplace and more levity on your team. Just be sure that whatever you laugh or smile about is inclusive for everyone in the workplace.

how to broaden your appreciation

1. Take a "humor break" at least once a day to watch or read something that lifts your mood.
2. Follow funny or positive people on social media.
3. Carry a humor notebook. Write down observations, thoughts, and the things that make you laugh.
4. When things get stressful, answer the question, "What's not wrong with my life?"
5. Try to smile a bit more, even if for no reason.

when to be an enthusiast

When you want to support other people, or you just need to relieve some stress, be the **Enthusiast**. Stay engaged and celebrate the levity that other people provide.

'Humor is not something just fun and frivolous. It is necessary and should be encouraged. Laughter is too good a thing to leave to chance. Laugh and pass it along.'

VERA ROBINSON

tips for enthusiasts

Appreciation is the foundation for every other competency of humor because it defines your “sense of humor.” What makes you laugh? What makes you smile? What makes you go, “Hmm, that’s interesting?”

This becomes the basis of your humor because it influences the content you share, the material you write, your style of performance, etc etc.

It also defines just how much funny you see in the world around you. The more things that make you laugh, the more often you'll end up laughing.

Tactical tips for being an Enthusiast:

1. **Make curiosity your default.** Try to make curiosity your first reaction to new situations. Find what’s interesting, amusing, or downright ridiculous.
2. **Plan levity before you need it.** It can be hard to think clearly when you’re stressed out. If you plan a humor break before you need it, it’ll keep things from reaching a tipping point.
3. **Find an excuse to laugh.** If you’re feeling burned out, find any excuse to laugh. Yes, even if it means forcing a fake laugh (it’ll often become genuine).
4. **Show appreciation virtually.** Virtual experiences also benefit from public appreciation, so freely use like buttons, sharing options, and comments.
5. **Seek out new sources of humor.** It can be tempting to stick to the creators, comedians, and sites that you know, but branching out helps to expand your range of appreciation and build your sense of humor.

To practice your skill in appreciation, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Think About the Positives

Being an Enthusiast is about recognizing that, even with everything going wrong in the world, there are positive things worth appreciating.

Sometimes answering a simple question can help to remind you of the good things going on in your life. Come back to this list any time you need a little more positivity in your day.

1. What's NOT wrong with your life?
2. What's one thing that made you smile today?
3. What's the coolest thing about your job?
4. What's the most interesting thing you can see from where you are right now?
5. What brings you copious amounts of joy?
6. What sound do you love?
7. Who is someone who makes you smile?
8. Who is your favorite comedian? Why?
9. Who is a musical artist you love rocking out to?
10. Who would you like to spend more time with?
11. What's been your proudest moment of the last year?
12. What compliments have you received lately?
13. When was the last time you laughed so hard you had tears in your eyes? What happened?
14. When was the last time someone did something nice for you?
15. When were you last pleasantly surprised?
16. When do you most feel like yourself?
17. What are you good at?
18. What's something you are looking forward to?
19. What seemingly negative moment turned out to be a blessing in disguise?
20. What is the best part of waking up?

TIP: Follow wherever your writing takes you, even if it's away from the original prompt.

PRACTICE: Boost Your Mood with Laughter

Laughter is a physical embodiment of joy and can have a drastic effect on how you feel.

To boost your mood with laughter, first take stock of how you feel right now:

Current Feeling: _____

Now, think of your favorite comedian.

Favorite Comedian: _____

Next, search for some of their clips online and watch them for at least five minutes.

How do you feel now, after having laughed for a bit? What changes do you notice?

PRACTICE: Cut Out the Negative

In today's world, it's easy to get inundated with negativity, particularly from the news or on social media. By taking control of your feed, you can encourage more mirth.

To build a happier algorithm, clean up the websites you visit, newsletters you subscribe to, and people you follow on social media, so you see more things that inspire and delight you.

Who should you stop following?

Who should you start following?

LINK: To see recommendations of artists, comedians, and creators that brighten our day, visit humor.me/happysocial

PRACTICE: Like, Comment, Subscribe

Appreciation isn't just valuable for you; it can also be a simple of way encouraging other people by acknowledging what they've created.

To show some online appreciation, think of a person or brand on social media that you enjoy.

Person or Brand: _____

Go to their profile, channel, or website and engage in some way: heart one of their posts, write a comment on their page, subscribe to their channel or newsletter.

Believe it or not, these small interactions help creators stay motivated and inspired to do what they do.

How did it feel to engage? Did it cost you anything? Did you or the creator gain anything?

PRACTICE: Send a Thank You

Gratitude is the outward expression of appreciation and has the dual benefit of feeling good when you receive it AND when you give it.

To grow as an enthusiast, think of a person who has made a positive impact in your life.

Person: _____

What was the impact they had?

Positive Impact: _____

Now, send that person a thank you email, message, or comment sharing the impact they had. Even if they're a "big name" person, they still appreciate hearing it.

How was the experience? Did they respond?



curator

SHARES HUMOR THROUGH
THE CURATION OF WHAT AMUSES THEM

The second competency in your skill of humor is *curation*. It's the ability to identify, categorize, and share the humor of others with others. People who are strong in curation represent the **Curator** persona (an apt name, I know).

'Sharing laughter is a way of casting delight to the wind so it blows everywhere and to everyone.'

PAUL PEARSALL

what is a curator

A Humor Curator collects and shares the things that make them laugh or smile, whether it's a funny meme, poignant quote, or stories they've picked up along the way.

As Buddha said, "Happiness never decreases by being shared," neither does the hilarity of the perfect gif in a group chat. They realize that **you don't have to create humor to curate moments of levity.**

Curators are often seen as someone who has a great sense of what's funny and tend to stay up-to-date with movies, pop culture, memes, or all of the above.

Whereas some of the other personas put a premium on being the "source" of humor, Curators recognize there's tremendous value in **simply sharing what's already funny.**

No one considers museums to be unworthy or unoriginal, and they're primarily curating the works of others. That's what Curators do with the humor they share with friends, family, and colleagues.

As a result, they don't understand why some people fail their way through trying to create something when there's a perfectly good meme, cartoon, image, joke, or story that already makes the point.

famous humor curators

America's Funniest Home Videos (*TV Show*)

DadSaysJokes (*Instagram Account*)

The Hustle (*Newsletter*)

Jimmy Fallon (*Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*)

Abed (*Community*)

benefits of the curator

These are the benefits to being a Humor Curator:

for yourself

When you share something you find amusing, you **bond with others** over that shared amusement.

This helps you feel connected with friends and coworkers, makes for an easy excuse to reach out, and elevates your status as someone who is “in the know.”

With so much negativity in the world, the funny things you promote **add a bit more levity to life.**

for others

Other people **appreciate the humor** you share with them when you act as a Curator.

Your messages give them an opportunity to smile and remind them of your relationship, especially when what you send relates to their interests or a shared memory you have with each other.

You may find that people ask for your recommendations on movies to watch, TV shows to binge, or social media handles to follow (*ahem* @humorthatworks), because **you know what's good** and what they'll like.

connotations

POSITIVE
encyclopedia
connoisseur
"in the know"

NEGATIVE
copycat
joke thief
spammer

curator watchouts

While sharing humor with others generally leads to laughs, there are a few things to watch out for as a Curator:

Referencing others too much.

If you reference others too much or too often, people will assume you aren't very original. And, if you try to pass on the humor as your own, or don't give proper credit to the author, people will see you as a joke thief or someone who is trying too hard to be liked.

Avoiding authentic connection.

If you only ever send memes and never actually check in with real conversation or heartfelt messages, people may eventually start ignoring what you send. Ideally reaching out with humor should help spark a conversation, not be the only thing you contribute.

Being too generic.

You don't have to send every funny thing you find to every person you know. The more curated the humor for that person or situation, **the more effective it will be** and the less your messages will remind people of those ridiculous "forwarded emails from grandma."

curators at work

The Curator is a great way to **introduce levity into your work**, especially if you are still new to using humor. Curation means you don't have to create something funny, but rather use what's already proven to be funny.

Most office communication is drab and dry—client presentations, staff meetings, and the endless sea of emails we face every single day. But when you add a bit of levity—such as a funny image in a presentation, an interesting quote in a meeting, or an on-topic gif in an email—people are more likely to pay attention, get involved, and respond. And that's true regardless of the original source of mirth.

Plus, when you share something that makes you smile, **people will often reciprocate with their own example** of something for you to enjoy.

watchouts at work

Adhering to copyright laws is particularly important in the workplace. Sharing an image you found online with a friend is rarely going to present a problem, but sharing a copyrighted picture in a presentation or on the company website can create a lot more issues.

Be sure to always give proper credit and adhere to copyright rules when using curated humor in a professional setting.

the curator in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be a Curator at work:

1. Use **funny or interesting images** in your slides instead of just a wall full of text.
2. Reference a joke or quotation at the **bottom of your weekly status emails**.
3. Include a **gif as a response** to a more casual conversation in Slack or Teams chat.
4. Re-engage a client or prospect by sending them a **clip of something you think they would enjoy**.
5. Hire a comedian to **add humor to your presentations** (or hire a humor engineer that can teach you how to do it yourself).

bottom line

You can gain the benefits of using humor without being the one to create it. When you curate the right humor in the right way, you **build connections, capture attention, and decrease stress**, all while having a bit more fun.

how to expand your curation

1. Whenever you find something that amuses you, **save it somewhere** so you can find it again later.
2. If a piece of content makes you laugh out loud, try to **send it to at least one person** who you think will enjoy it.
3. Insert a **related gif into a text message** or group chat with friends.
4. Retweet or **share a piece of social media content** that you enjoyed.
5. **Bookmark places where you can find funny content**, so you know where to go when you're ready to share a laugh.

when to be a curator

The Curator is perfect for maintaining connections and sprucing up your own content. Leverage what other people have already created to quickly add humor to your world.

*'Sharing an idea you care about is
a generous way to change your
world for the better.'*

SETH GODIN

tips for curators

To effectively curate humor, you need two things: funny content to share and someone to share it with.

Finding funny content can be as easy as following funny accounts on social media, subscribing to interesting subreddits, searching for comedic videos online, or simply googling “funny memes on [insert topic here].”

As for who to share your new-found humor with, simply think of someone else who might also enjoy it. Alternatively, think of someone you want to re-connect with and deliberately search for humor that they would find amusing.

Tactical tips for being a Curator:

1. **Give credit.** Passing off the content of other people is not only wrong, it also reduces your credibility.
2. **Let the algorithm help.** Regardless of how you feel about social media algorithms, they do a good job of helping you find other content you may enjoy.
3. **Popular is popular for a reason.** If a piece of content has lots of views and/or likes, it’s likely other people will enjoy it, even if you don’t fully understand it.
4. **The source impacts perception.** The reputation of the creator affects how the humor is received (e.g. don’t quote the Emperor from *Star Wars*).
5. **Simple is okay.** Not every example you share has to be elaborate. Something as simple as emojis and gifs can liven up an email, chat, or text message thread.

To practice your skill in curation, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Identify Humor Sources

The problem in today's world isn't that there's a lack of humor content available, it's that there's so much of it that it's hard to know where to begin.

Creating a list of some of your favorite humor sources makes it easier for you to know where to go when you're in need of some levity.

Here are some my favorites:

Websites:

1. boredpanda.com
2. unsplash.com
3. newyorker.com/humor
4. mcsweeneys.net
5. rd.com/funny

Subreddits (reddit.com)

6. [/r/wholesomememes](http://r/wholesomememes)
7. [/r/ShowerThoughts](http://r/ShowerThoughts)
8. [/r/ContagiousLaughter](http://r/ContagiousLaughter)
9. [/r/IRLEasterEggs](http://r/IRLEasterEggs)
10. [/r/mildlyinteresting](http://r/mildlyinteresting)

YouTube Channels (youtube.com)

11. [/netflixisajoke](http://netflixisajoke)
12. @TEDx
13. [/CGPGrey](http://CGPGrey)
14. [/WILTYNope](http://WILTYNope)
15. [/CalebCity](http://CalebCity)

Instagram Accounts (Instagram.com)

16. [/officialworkmemes](http://officialworkmemes)
17. [/garygulman](http://garygulman)
18. [/sarahandersencomics](http://sarahandersencomics)
19. [/tesstreg](http://tesstreg)
20. [/stage_door_johnny](http://stage_door_johnny)

LINK: If you want to find these and more, check out humor.me/humorsources

PRACTICE: Identify Humor Sources (cont)

Curating content requires finding content you enjoy.

Create your own list of sources where you can find humor that amuses you, such as websites, social media accounts, or even IRL people that you know.

If you need inspiration, visit some of the sites recommended on the previous page.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

And you can always follow me on:

The web: www.humorthatworks.com
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/drewtarvin](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drewtarvin)
[YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com), and [@TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com): @humorthatworks

PRACTICE: Share a Laugh

Throughout the course of a normal day, we often experience some levity (either on purpose or accident). An easy way to be a Curator is to simply start sharing those things that already make you laugh.

To practice curation, think of the last piece of content that made you laugh or smile (such as a meme, social media post, video, or TV show).

Laughter Source: _____

Next, think of someone you know who you think would also appreciate that humor.

Curation Target: _____

Now, send the humor to that person.

What was their reaction? Did it spark a conversation?

PRACTICE: Find a Meme

Being an effective Curator means being able to find humorous content on specific topics.

Build your curation by selecting a subject for humor (e.g. the topic of an email you have to send, a concept you have to discuss in a presentation, or a way to explain what you do for a living).

Topic: _____

Next, pick the type of humor you want to use:

meme | image | cartoon | quote | video | audio

Now, find at least three pieces of content that match the topic you selected (and that make you smile).

TIP: Google is your friend. For example, just search, “funny memes about [topic].”

What was the content of the humor you found? How did you use it once you found it?

PRACTICE: Extract the Highlights

In a world that is inundated with content, curation is a valuable skill for weeding through the fray-stack and finding the proverbial humor needle.

Practice your curation by choosing a book, video, or other piece of content to summarize (if you're not sure what to choose, why not the book you are currently holding?).

Content: _____

Next, identify what you feel are the three most important points or funniest sections of the work and consider sharing them with another person.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PRACTICE: Reconnect with Humor

One of the biggest benefits of curated humor is that it can help us strengthen relationships.

Take advantage of the connection that curation can create by choosing someone you want to reconnect with. It could be a friend, coworker, potential client, or me.

Curation Target: _____

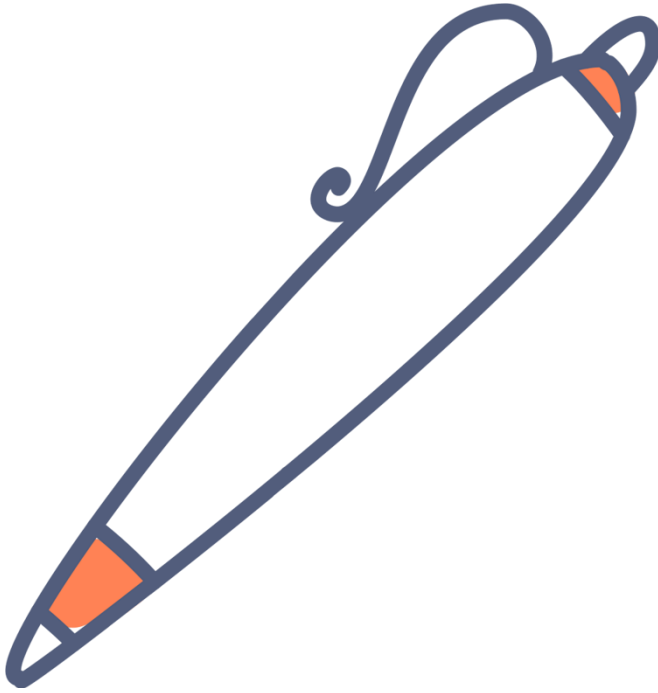
Next, think about the type of content they might like.

Content Idea: _____

Now Google for it (or go on reddit, unsplash, etc), find something humorous, and send it to them.

TIP: It usually doesn't matter how long it's been since you connected with that person, so long as the relationship didn't end on bad terms. If you broke someone's heart, it's probably not a good idea to send them a Minions meme.

What humor did you find? What was their reaction?



inventor

CRAFTS HUMOR THROUGH
THE CREATION OF COMEDY

The third competency in your skill of humor is *creation*. Whereas curation focuses on sharing humor that already exists, creation is about coming up with humor “from scratch.” People who are strong in this competency are called **Inventors**.

‘Wit has truth in it; wisecracking is simply calisthenics with words.’

DOROTHY PARKER

what is an inventor

A Humor Inventor finds joy in creating humor from the things that happen to them, whether that's playing through scenarios in their head, building stories from life events, or writing jokes because it's a pun thing to do.

They understand the **importance of structure and make use of comedic devices**, like the comic triple used in the previous sentence. While not all humor requires a punchline, they know how to set one up if they choose.

Inventors think funny. They **play with ideas in their head**, have witty thoughts based on what other people say, and can craft humor from seemingly any experience, circumstance, or mundane thought.

Whether they actually share that humor with other people is another story. Whereas other personas focus on sharing their humor outwardly, the Inventor **primarily spends time amusing themselves**.

As a result, they consider themselves to be a funny person, but other people may not realize it. There are also likely moments where they think, "does no one else see the absurdity or humor of this situation?"

famous humor inventors

Mark Twain (*Author*)
Mindy Kaling (*Writer*)
Oscar Wilde (*Poet*)
Mitch Hedberg (*Comedian*)
Dr. Watson (*Sherlock Holmes*)

benefits of the inventor

There are benefits to being a Humor Inventor:

for yourself

When you create humor from your experiences and craft it in such a way that other people can enjoy it with you, you become more **aware of the subtleties of life**.

You also start to realize that funny things don't happen to funny people, funny people just see the things that happen to them in a funny way.

This curiosity, combined with various comedy techniques, can make you a supremely **effective communicator**.

for others

Being an Inventor gets other people to **pay attention** when you share something new because they know it's going to be entertaining. They listen because you make them laugh, think, and see things from a new perspective.

Over time, you may find that, when something happens, people want to hear your take on things because of the way you process and disseminate information.

connotations

POSITIVE

witty
intelligent
sharp

NEGATIVE

awkward
out of touch
inappropriate

inventor watchouts

While crafting comedy can improve your communication, there are a few things to watch out for as an Inventor:

Missing the moment.

If you spend too long trying to perfect an idea before sharing it, you might choose to never release it, or the moment may have passed by the time you do. Not only does that mean the world missed out on some good humor, it also means you've spent time and **energy on something unfinished.**

Punching down.

Some forms of humor have a target: someone or something that is the "butt" of the joke. While humor can be used for good, it can also be used to suppress or insult other people (called "punching down.") It's important to distinguish between "playful banter" and just being mean.

Joking about something inappropriate.

If you put more importance on your ideas than your relationships, you'll push people away. Just because you are able to find the humor in certain topics, it doesn't mean everyone else is. It's important to identify what's appropriate for your audience and what's not.

inventors at work

The Inventor is vital for **communicating more effectively in the workplace**. Where there is laughter, there is listening, which means humor is a valuable skill for anyone who has to share important information. Just because something is important, it doesn't mean it's interesting; humor can drive attention to even the driest of topics.

Incorporating **comedic techniques into your communication** can help you capture attention and improve the understanding of nearly any message. When you regularly use humor in the way you share ideas, people will actively seek out what you say.

After all, there's no such thing as an attention span, only boring content.

watchouts at work

What you find funny might vary drastically from what your **audience finds funny**. To make sure your humor lands, it's important to first understand who will receive the message and what medium it will be received in.

Sarcasm may work in conversation with a friend but it's probably not the best for a proposal that goes to your boss' boss' boss.

inventors in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be an Inventor at work:

1. Use **incongruity humor** in an email subject line to get people to open it.
2. Start your **presentations with a story** that is connected to the topic of the meeting.
3. Create a **humorous metaphor** to explain a complex and/or boring topic.
4. Include a **comic triple** whenever you share a list of three or more items.
5. Pre-plan humor by writing out **potential humor responses to situations** you know are likely to happen during your day.

bottom line

If what you're communicating is important, boredom has very serious consequences. Well-crafted humor can not only **get people to listen**, it can **help them better understand—and take action on—what they hear**.

how to inspire your creation

1. Carry a **humor notebook**. Write down any funny thoughts or observations you have.
2. Complete at least one **creative writing exercise** every day.
3. **Read something funny** and reflect on what techniques were used to create humor.
4. **Review your own writing**, underlining where you think the punchlines are or where people might laugh or smile.
5. Challenge yourself to **incorporate a small piece of levity** in at least half of the messages you send.

when to be an inventor

If you are creating a presentation or writing an email, it's time for the Inventor. Tap into your own ability to humor by exploring what you find funny in an interesting way.

*"Humor is the ability to see
three sides of one coin."*

NED ROREM

tips for inventors

The key differentiator of Inventors is their ability to create on command. Some people believe in this “Myth of the Muse” that suggests creativity strikes on a whim and you have to be lucky to receive it.

While other people are waiting around for inspiration, a good inventor controls their humor destiny by dedicating time specifically for creation.

Inventors also know that creativity benefits from structure and constraints, and neither of these things make the person less creative, they just make the process easier.

Tactical tips for being an Inventor:

1. **If this is true, what else is true?** Once you have the inkling of an idea or premise, you can use the logic of “if this is true, what else is true” to further explore an idea and mine it for levity.
2. **Humor creation is more often re-creation.** Rarely will you be funny on the first try, instead, get your ideas out and then add humor over subsequent revisions.
3. **Structure is your friend.** The basic structure of humor is setup + punchline, where the punchline is a funny thought or twist at the end.
4. **The punchline goes at the end.** Speaking of structure, make sure the funny part is at the end of the sentence to help facilitate laughter.
5. **Brevity is the soul of wit.** ~~Cut everything that isn't needed.~~

To practice your skill in creation, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Answer a Writing Prompt

Creativity doesn't always happen on its own, sometimes it needs a spark.

Using writing prompts can be a great way to kickstart an idea, story, or new angle to explore. Come back to this list any time you need inspiration on what to write.

1. What is something that fascinates you?
2. What is something you just don't understand?
3. What are you obsessed with?
4. What is a guilty pleasure you have?
5. What would the title of your autobiography be?
6. What is one of your pet peeves? Why?
7. What is the story of your name?
8. What task do you absolutely hate doing?
9. What smell instantly triggers a memory?
10. What topic could you teach a class on?
11. What fictional character do you most identify with?
12. What do you want to be when you grow up?
13. What do you want to be remembered for?
14. What is on your bucket list?
15. What is on your "never-do-it-again" list?
16. What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
17. What has happened so far today?
18. What is the best gift you've ever received?
19. What is the worst gift you've ever given?
20. What do you miss most about being a kid?
21. What was the worst style choice you ever made?
22. What was the first thing you ever bought?
23. What was the last thing that made you nervous?
24. What was the last thing you learned about yourself?
25. What is the meaning of life?

TIP: The goal when you first explore an idea is NOT to be funny, it's to write the FIRST thing that comes to mind. And don't worry if you wander from the initial prompt. The goal is to see where it takes you. So set a timer and write!

LINK: For even more writing exercises, check out humor.me/creativewriting

PRACTICE: Answer a Writing Prompt (cont)

Pick one of the prompts on the previous page and write about it for at least five minutes.

PRACTICE: Create a Humornym

A humornym is one of the simplest ways to include humor in a sentence or idea by adding incongruity.

For example, the portmanteau of “humornym” is more surprising than just saying “Humorous Synonym.” It isn’t necessarily funny and, in fact, may be cheesy, but it is something different that grabs your attention.

To create your own humornym, pick a sentence you want to humorize, such as an email subject line, a Twitter bio, or an instruction you’d like to give someone.

Sentence: _____

Next, pick one word to change in the sentence and brainstorm three alternative ways to say it.

WORD: _____

Alt 1. _____

Alt 2. _____

Alt 3. _____

Now, replace one of the selected words with one of the alternative words to create a more interesting sentence.

New Sentence: _____

PRACTICE: Craft a Comic Triple

A comic triple is one of the easiest ways to create a joke. It's a list of three where the third item is unexpected.

For Example, the movie "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly."

To start, write down a list of something top-of-mind (e.g. things you have to do today, your LinkedIn headline, or your shopping list):

List: _____

Next, brainstorm some unexpected items that could still logically be in that list.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Finally, add the best option to the end of the original list:

1st Item: _____

2nd Item: _____

3rd Item: _____
(unexpected)

TIP: The list can be longer than three items, as long as the unexpected item is last.

TIP: The comic triple is an easy way to add more humor to your writing. Anytime you see a list, add something playful or unexpected to the end of it.

PRACTICE: Build an Association

An association is a powerful way to explain an idea, and if the connection is humorous, it's likely to be remembered.

To build your own association, pick a topic you want to explain to someone and write five attributes about it.

TOPIC: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Do the same for a subject that you are passionate about.

PASSION: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Explore any interesting connections you see by sharing
[TOPIC] is like [PASSION] because...

PRACTICE: Tell a Story

Stories are one of the most effective forms of communication, and a great way to create humor.

To tell your own story, fill out the CAR model:

Context.

Who are the characters? What were the circumstances?

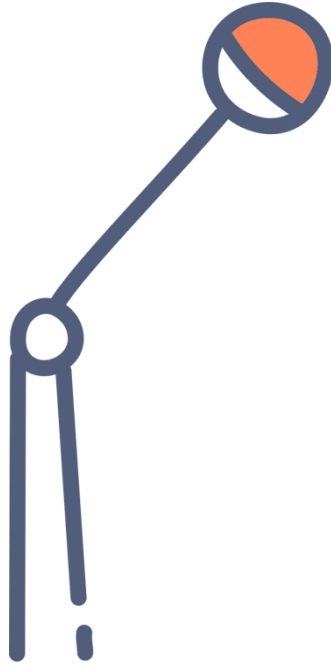
Action.

What was the stimulus for action? What happened?

Results.

What was the result of that action? What was learned?

Now combine your answers together in the format of a story, starting with the Context. Add additional detail to fill out the story and paint the picture of what happened.



entertainer

DELIVERS HUMOR THROUGH
THE PERFORMANCE OF IDEAS

The fourth competency in your skill of humor is *performance*. If creation is all about content, performance is all about delivery. People who are strong in performance represent the **Entertainer** persona.

'Confidence is 10% work and 90% delusion.'

TINA FEY

what is an entertainer

A Humor Entertainer speaks in such a way that **other people listen**, whether it's a message they planned, an idea they had in-the-moment, or simply a facial expression that says it all without saying a single word.

After all, giving a funny look is different than being funny looking. When people think of someone funny, Entertainers are who they have in mind.

That's because they know how to command attention and hold an audience. They may or may not be a "performer," but with the right group of people (or right amount of alcohol), they become the life of the party or central focal point in a group.

Whereas some other personas think funny, Entertainers embody humor as a part of how they express themselves. As a result, they may not understand why other people aren't laughing or having a good time, or why they're being so quiet and reserved.

Life is hard, shouldn't you be having fun?

famous humor entertainers

Leslie Nielsen (*Actor*)
Kristen Wiig (*Actress*)
Muhammad Ali (*Boxer*)
Ali Wong (*Comedian*)
Phoebe (*Friends*)

benefits of the entertainer

There are benefits to being a Humor Entertainer:

for yourself

When you focus on performance, you start to understand the **nuances of delivery and timing**. This means you're able to think on your feet, project confidence, and command attention, even when doing something seemingly bland.

While you may doubt yourself at times or even be unsure of why people laugh when you speak, you know from past experiences that, if you had to get up in front of others, you'd be able to.

for others

Other people like to be in your presence when you're an **Entertainer**. They **hang on your every word**, wondering what's going to come next, what punchline will be revealed, or what lesson will be shared.

You may notice that people gather 'round when you start talking, and close friends and coworkers may even make requests ("Tell everyone about that time you fended off a bear!"). It's because they know they'll be entertained.

connotations

POSITIVE
life of the party
confident
hilarious

NEGATIVE
class clown
jester
attention-seeker

entertainer watchouts

While performing is often linked to charisma and confidence, there are a few things to watch for as an Entertainer:

Avoiding conflict.

As an entertainer, you might use humor as a defense mechanism from having an authentic interaction, sharing how you really feel, or expressing vulnerability. It's okay to have a serious or even uncomfortable moment without making a joke. Plus, if you're always "on," people will tire of your antics and eventually start hoping you just leave.

One-upping other people.

Sometimes, in your excitement to be part of the group, you talk over people or interrupt them. Your intent may be to "add to the conversation," but it can come across as trying to one-up the other person with your own stories. **You don't always have to be the center of attention.**

Talking the talk, ignoring the walk.

It's important to make sure that you back up your talk with action. You may know how to say all of the right things in all of the right ways, but if you don't actually follow through on what you say you're going to do, people will realize you're full of empty promises, and you'll go from effective to sleazy.

entertainers at work

The Entertainer is a must-have persona for succeeding in the workplace. Just think of all the times where you need to be confident and articulate: in an interview, during a presentation, throughout various meetings, over the course of small talk, and when you're put on the spot in a Zoom meeting when you zoned out for a moment and have no idea what anyone is talking about.

No matter the circumstances, when you speak with confidence, you put others at ease and increase buy-in to what you're saying.

Performance is also **valuable for managing the mood and culture** of an organization. When you can bring levity to a tense situation, people feel like the situation is more manageable. They'll also see you as a more capable leader, regardless of title and whatever doubts may be floating around in your head.

watchouts at work

Just because people laughed, it doesn't mean what you said or did was effective. The laughter may have been out of politeness, awkwardness, or fear of being singled out.

Make sure you focus on **appropriate humor** when you're in entertaining mode.

entertainers in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be an Entertainer at work:

1. Add **vocal variety** when giving a presentation.
2. Get into the "**character**" of **confidence** when you share your ideas.
3. **Yes And small talk** into a more meaningful conversation.
4. **Mentally and physically warm-up** before entering into an important discussion.
5. Maintain an **external positive attitude** when faced with tense situations.

bottom line

If you don't have confidence when sharing your own ideas, no one's going to have confidence in them either. Effective communication is performance.

how to strengthen your performance

1. Find a **safe space to work on performing**, whether that's an open mic or with a close friend.
2. Watch professional entertainers (such as comedians, actors, and pro wrestlers) and **look for techniques you can use** in your own delivery.
3. Find the **script of a piece of content you like**. Perform it out loud to see how it sounds in your voice and with your style.
4. Try to say **“Yes And”** in your conversations to build on what other people say.
5. Whenever you experience “staircase wit,” (aka you think of something you should have said after an event has passed), **play through the scenario in your head** but with your comedic idea included.

when to be an entertainer

The Entertainer shines when in front of others. Deliver your ideas with confidence and react in the moment by building off what other people say.

‘There’s only one true superpower amongst human beings, and that is being funny. People treat you differently if you can make them laugh.’

JEFF GARLIN

tips for entertainers

If you want to fully unlock your skill of humor, there are times you have to be a performer. And if you want to be a performer, you have to, well... perform. That means sharing stories, jokes, and/or ideas with other humans.

Tactical tips for being an Entertainer:

1. **Practice confidence.** We perceive confidence from body language and paralanguage. Learn what it looks and sounds like so you can fake it when needed.
2. **Stop with the “apology face.”** Sometimes when we’re unsure of an idea, we discredit it before we even share it, either by apologizing for it verbally or giving the body language that suggests it’s not good. Stop it; present your ideas with confidence.
3. **Timing is everything.** Specifically, the time you leave between the setup and punchline (to create curiosity), and the time you leave after the punchline (to allow for laughter).
4. **Slow... down...** Most people start talking quickly when they get nervous. Force yourself to slow down by being more intentional about your breath.
5. **Focus on the moment.** The best performance—whether it’s rehearsed or off-the-cuff—comes from being present in the moment. Don’t dwell on the script you wrote before or the joke you wanted to say, focus on what’s happening at that instant.

To practice your skill in performance, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Play a (Solo) Improv Game

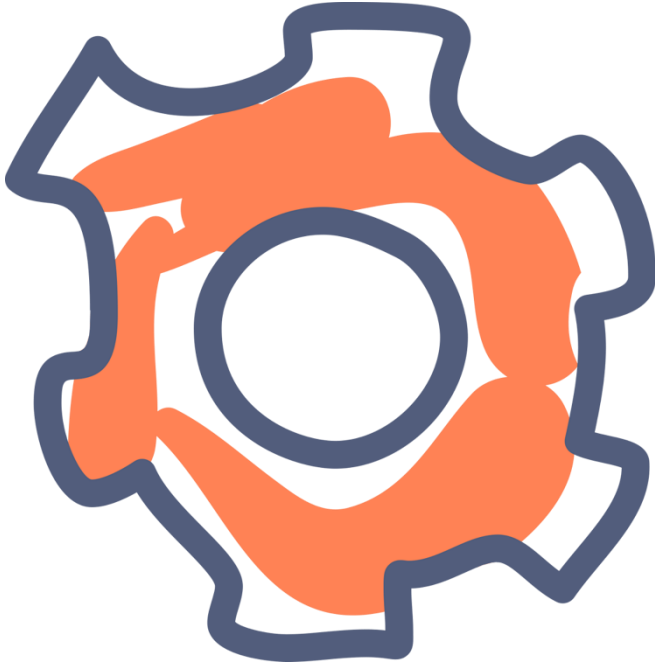
Improvisation is the art of performing without a script, and improv games and exercises are some of the best ways to improve your skill as an Entertainer.

While many improv games require another person to play, there are some improv games you can do on your own.

LINK: For a list of even more exercises and descriptions, visit humor.me/soloimprov

1. **Improvised Song.** Come up with a song based on what's happening around you. Try to make it rhyme and sing it out loud (to yourself).
2. **Monologue Rant.** Pick a topic, such as a pet peeve, and rant about it for at least three minutes, explaining what's so peevish about it.
3. **Dada Monologue.** List random words that have no connection or meaning. Any time you notice you've started a pattern, try to break it.
4. **PowerPoint Karaoke.** Get a slide deck from someone else (either online or a coworker). Present it out loud without looking at the slides beforehand.
5. **Pantomime Repeat.** Do an activity as normal. Then try repeating it, but only in pantomime.
6. **Act as a...** do a normal activity but do it as a character, such as Superman, a ballerina, or toddler.
7. **Slow Motion.** While doing an activity, randomly start doing it in super slow motion.
8. **Look Away / Something New.** Look straight in front of you, now look away, and look back. Try to find one detail that you didn't notice before. Repeat.
9. **Voiceover.** Watch a video on mute (or two strangers having a conversation) and dub what you imagine they might be saying.
10. **First Letter Last Letter.** When having a conversation with someone, challenge yourself to have the first letter of any new sentence you say start with the last letter of whatever they said.

TIP: The result isn't important, just practice and play.



engineer

IMPLEMENTS HUMOR THROUGH
THE APPLICATION OF FUN

The fifth competency in your skill of humor is *application*, where you start to focus on what you use all of this humor for. People who are strong in application represent the **Engineer** persona.

*'A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership,
of getting along with people, of getting things done.'*

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

what is an engineer

A Humor Engineer makes **strategic use of humor to solve problems**, whether that's making their work more fun, getting past a sticking point, or better managing the hardest resource there is to manage: humans.

Unlike computers, humans have "emotions" and do things out of "joy" and not simply because they were programmed to. Engineers (of the humor variety) know how to **tap into positive emotions to increase productivity**.

The application of humor can go way **beyond just making someone laugh**; it can capture attention, deflect criticism, build rapport, and 30+ other benefits.

Whereas other people just focus on fun, Engineers see **humor as a means to an end**, that it can be used for something more. As a result, they don't understand how people can assume that humor at work means you don't take your job seriously.

They also don't fully appreciate when people attempt humor that doesn't have a purpose when it could be so much more effective.

famous humor engineers

Andrew Tarvin (*Humor That Works*)

Barack Obama (*President, USA*)

Jacinda Ardern (*Prime Minister, New Zealand*)

Hannah Gadsby (*Comedian*)

John Oliver (*Last Week Tonight*)

benefits of the engineer

There are benefits to being a Humor Engineer:

for yourself

When you understand the mechanics of humor, you can start to apply them to **help you achieve a goal**.

As a result, you get results. You leverage humor to execute faster, think smarter, communicate better, connect closer, and lead further.

While others know that humor is fun, you learn that it can also be incredibly effective.

for others

Other people appreciate your ability to get work done in an enjoyable way when you're an Engineer. They take joy in witnessing and participating in the **clever ways you execute** your work.

You may notice that people come to you when they need help solving a problem. That's because they know you'll not only give them a solution, you'll also make the process of working on it **fun and enjoyable**.

connotations

POSITIVE
resourceful
problem solver
effective

NEGATIVE
formulaic
manipulative
robotic

engineer watchouts

While solving problems is usually received positively, there are a few things to watch out for as an Engineer.

Not connecting the dots for why.

If you're using humor to solve a problem, and other people don't see how the humor is connected, they may feel like it's a distraction. Be sure to make it clear how humor is helping the current situation, not detracting from it.

Failing to actually use humor.

You may share something that you think is humorous and perfectly fits the situation, but it might just not be very funny. If your humor is too laser-focused or lacks a twist or sense of play, it will fall flat. This is often better than completely boring content, but it does mean the humor can be improved.

Focusing solely on getting what you want.

If you use humor with no joy yourself, it **can come across as cold**, insincere, or manipulative instead of funny, effective, and valuable. Nothing takes the fun out of having fun quite like someone using it for nefarious purposes.

engineers at work

The Engineer is the most clearly defined persona for the workplace. It's all about getting better results by adding a bit more fun.

Humor can help solve many of the biggest challenges we face today: stress management, constant uncertainty, information overload, increasing distractions, and the disintegration of work/life balance.

Intention is a key part of **incorporating humor into the workplace**. When you start by focusing on the problem, it's easier to identify possible humor solutions. And when you do so, people don't see your humor as frivolous or distracting, they see it as an effective way of getting things done (while also getting things fun).

watchouts at work

Not everyone is in agreement with how great humor is as a solution. Some people were taught that work is supposed to feel like work. This mentality is often misguided or flat out wrong, but that doesn't make it easy to combat. While you may clearly see the link between the humor you used and the outcome you received, others may not.

Be sure that the **connection is clear** to everyone involved.

engineers in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be an Engineer at work:

1. Find a way to make a **mundane task more fun**, such as listening to music while doing data entry.
2. Follow the **Pomodoro Technique** to increase efficiency while preventing burnout.
3. Take on a new perspective (like that of a 5-year-old) to see **old challenges in a new way**.
4. **Diffuse tension** with a bit of levity to help everyone take a step back and recalibrate the mood.
5. Track your progress on a large initiative and **celebrate your next milestone** with a small reward.

bottom line

What gets fun, gets done. When you think of humor as a tool, you start to recognize the problems it can solve.

how to leverage your application

1. Think about work you need to do today. Try to **come up with at least one way to make it 1% more fun.**
2. Review examples of **creative problem solving** to get inspiration for your own work.
3. **Debrief recent activities you've enjoyed.** Identify what you liked about them and see what could be carried over to future tasks.
4. Try one of the **applications from the other personas** to solve a problem you are working on.
5. Create the **Humor MAP** for a challenge you're facing by identifying the medium, audience, and purpose.

when to be an engineer

When you need to get something done or solve a problem, bring out the Engineer. Look at any challenges from a humorous angle and identify ways to play your work.

*'People rarely succeed at anything
unless they have fun doing it.'*

DALE CARNEGIE

tips for engineers

To build your skill as an Engineer, you have to find ways to intentionally incorporate humor into what you do.

Yes, that often requires foresight and planning, and yes, that means it's less spontaneous. But having a strategy helps to ensure your humor is appropriate at work.

One way to be more intentional is to use the Humor MAP:

What is the Medium in which it will be executed?
Who is the Audience who will receive it?
What is the Purpose for using humor?

Tactical tips for being an Engineer:

1. **Effective is more important than funny.** While the primary goal of using humor in a comedy club is to get the biggest laugh, the primary goal at work is to be effective. Choose your humor accordingly.
2. **Images transcend language barriers.** If you are planning to use humor with people who don't all speak the same language at the same level, images work well because they don't require translation.
3. **Stories transcend cultures.** If you want to effectively engage people from different cultures, stories are one of the oldest forms of communication and tend to resonate with every audience.
4. **The reason I shared that is...** You can use nearly any (appropriate) humor so long as you are clear on why you are using it. To do that, just explain, "the reason I shared that is [justification]" after the humor.
5. **Do what's fun.** While it's important to consider how the humor will be received by others, make sure you also do what is fun for you.

To practice your skill in application, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Use Humor on a Task

The ways in which we can use humor in the workplace are seemingly endless. Here are 20 examples.

1. Read your emails in different accents in your head.
2. Create project-specific nicknames or call signs for members of your team.
3. See a problem in a new way by translating it into another language and then back to English.
4. Change your virtual background to a piece of art that really resonates with you.
5. Calculate interesting stats for your project, like # of emails sent, meetings held, or F-bombs dropped.
6. Send calendar invites as if they were to a cool party.
7. Create a TO DON'T List—a list of things you could do, but it's not effective or strategic to do them.
8. Change your desktop background to something personal or motivational.
9. Hold “dramatic readings” of things like corporate memos, the newspaper, or children’s books.
10. Play Hangman with a co-worker at the bottom of your email responses (underneath the signature).
11. Start a business (or fiction) book club at work.
12. If you have a disclaimer after your email signature, add a fun detail to it and see if anyone notices.
13. Hide some Easter eggs into a project you’re working on, such as your initials in the project name.
14. If you have a name that is hard to pronounce, include a pronunciation key in your email signature.
15. When setting up an Out of Office message, share a fun fact about where you’ll be heading to.
16. Start your presentation with an on-topic story.
17. Have a "Cutest Baby Contest" where everyone brings pictures of them as kids. Select the “cutest baby.”
18. Learn a few words in another language of one of your co-workers; use them in conversation.
19. Include sense of humor on your LinkedIn profile. Look for it on other people's when you're hiring.
20. Invent an office sport. Play it with co-workers.

LINK: Find even more work examples at humor.me/501

PRACTICE: Use Humor on a Task (cont)

Using the list on the previous page as inspiration, review your to-do list and pick one task to add humor to.

Task: _____

Decide how you want to add a little levity:

- The task itself
- The environment around the task
- The reward for completing the task

Now, brainstorm possible humor you could use. E.g.,

- Task: gamify the task or try the Pomodoro Technique
- Environment: do it in a fun environment or while listening to music.
- Reward: specify what snack you'll eat or video you'll watch as a self-thank you for finishing.

Humor Idea: _____

Add the humor to the task and get it done.

How was the process? Did it make you more productive?

PRACTICE: Use Humor in an Email

Email is one of the most ubiquitous forms of workplace communication and it's not particularly fun to go through, unless we're intentional about doing things differently.

Pick an email that you have to write today.

Email: _____

Decide where you want to a little levity.

- Subject line
- Email body
- Signature
- PS (postscript)

Now, brainstorm possible humor you could use. E.g.,

- Subject line: a comic triple or parody of song lyrics.
- Email body: an association or curated image/gif.
- Signature: a humornym.
- PS: a quotation, joke, or link to a funny video.

Humor Idea: _____

Add the humor idea and send out the email.

How was the process? Did it get a response?

PRACTICE: Use Humor in a Meeting

Meetings are (another) one of the most ubiquitous forms of workplace communication and also not particularly fun unless we're intentional about doing things differently.

Pick a meeting that you have to attend today.

Meeting: _____

Decide where you want to a little levity.

- Welcome
- Presentation
- Discussion
- As an Attendee

Now, brainstorm possible humor you could use. E.g.,

- Welcome: facilitate a get-to-know-you activity.
- Presentation: share a story or interesting slides.
- Discussion: practice saying, "Yes And."
- Attendee: take visual notes or curate key quotes.

Humor Idea: _____

Include the humor idea in the meeting.

How was the process? Did it make the meeting more fun?

PRACTICE: Fill Out the MAP

A true Engineer is able to apply humor in nearly any circumstance, in big ways or small. The **humor MAP** helps you clarify everything you need to know to do it well.

Think of a project or challenge you have at work or home.

Challenge: _____

Now, define the humor MAP for that challenge.

What is the **Medium** in which it will be executed?

Who is the **Audience** who will receive it?

What is your **Purpose** for using humor? How could it help you overcome the challenge?

Next, brainstorm humor ideas that match your MAP that could help you overcome the challenge.

PRACTICE: Implement Humor

It's one thing to brainstorm ideas for adding levity, it's another to implement them.

Create the MAP of another challenge (or use the one you mapped out on the previous page), brainstorm possible humor ideas, and then select one of them.

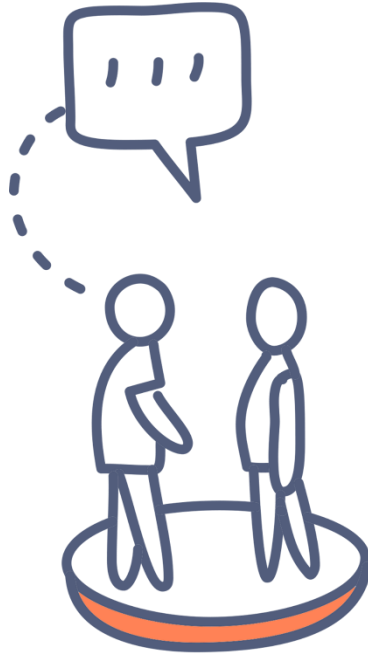
Select an Idea: _____

And confirm it's appropriate for your MAP:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Does it fit your Medium? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does it fit your Audience? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does it fit your Purpose? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does it make you smile? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Once it passes all of the criteria, let the humor loose!

Finally, debrief the experience. What worked? What didn't? What would you do differently next time?



advocate

ENCOURAGES HUMOR THROUGH
THE PROMOTION OF OTHERS

The sixth competency in your skill of humor is *promotion*. While the other competencies focus primarily on how you use humor, promotion focuses on creating the space for other people to shine. People who are strong in promotion are called **Advocates**.

'A smile is a curve that sets everything straight.'
PHYLLIS DILLER

what is an advocate

A Humor Advocate is someone who encourages more joy and positivity in the world, whether that's by talking about the benefits of humor, creating opportunities for people to share their humor, or encouraging individuals to embrace their sense of humor.

One would hope that you wouldn't need to tell people to have more fun, and yet here we are.

Advocates **provide the space for others to shine** because they understand how important it is for people to have a good time, to laugh, and to feel included.

They may not be the funny one in the group, but they **set the stage for the fun moments to happen**.

Whereas other personas think about themselves and their own enjoyment, Advocates think about others. As a result, they don't understand when people use exclusionary humor, when they punch down or insult others, or why some people feel the need to talk over or ignore the quieter people in the group.

Girls (and boys (and everyone) just want to have fun, and Advocates create the space for them to do so.

famous humor advocates

Sabrina Juran (*United Nations*)

Alan Alda (*Actor*)

Jennifer Aaker (*Professor*)

Mr. Rogers (*Mr. Rogers*)

Desmond Tutu (*Theologian*)

benefits of the advocate

There are benefits to being a Humor Advocate:

for yourself

When you create the space for humor, you discover that it can **transform individuals and groups**.

This means you often end up surrounded by people who wish you the best, people who want to do their best, and people who are the best.

While others may focus on being in the spotlight, you focus on making sure the **spotlight shines on others**.

for others

Other people enjoy being under your leadership when you're an Advocate. That's because they know that you'll take a **human-first approach** to whatever you're doing, and they're bound to have a fun time, no matter the circumstances.

You may notice that the groups you are a part of always seem to get bigger and more fun the more you're involved.

connotations

POSITIVE
planner
facilitator
leader

NEGATIVE
mandatory funner
control freak
cheesy

advocate watchouts

While most people appreciate that you create the space for humor, there are a few things to watch out for as an Advocate:

Forcing mandatory fun.

If people are forced to participate against their will or you don't consider different humor preferences, what you see as a fun activity can come across as "mandatory fun" or a cheesy experience that people would rather skip. Not everything has to become a game or a formal activity, **sometimes it's okay to just let things be.**

Getting too involved.

While stepping in and facilitating experiences may be your natural inclination, there are times when the best thing you can do is step out of the way completely. You don't want people asking, "who put this person in charge?"

Creating a distraction.

When people are busy or stressed, they can feel like taking time for humor is a distraction or too time-consuming for the moment. In these situations, it's important to confirm whether it's the right moment for levity, and if it is, be clear on how it will ultimately help in the long run.

advocates at work

The Advocate is one of the most impactful personas you can have in the workplace. Whereas others see humor as a nice-to-have, **it's important for people to know humor is a must-have in today's work environment.**

The promotion competency means you use levity as a means to build a stronger, more positive workplace culture, which pays dividends for you, your coworkers, and your organization.

By creating the space for humor at work, you also create a more positive workplace environment where people actually look forward to interacting with their coworkers. While you may not turn colleagues into “besties,” you do help prevent “colleaguenemies.”

watchouts at work

Not everyone cares about making work fun and not everyone wants to be in the spotlight. Some people see their jobs solely as a paycheck and to have to do anything more is annoying, not helpful. Others may be particularly quiet or reserved and would rather stay on the sidelines.

Focus more on **making things so fun people want to opt-in** rather than making them mandatory.

advocates in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be an Advocate at work:

1. **Create a channel** (such as on Slack or the company intranet) where people can share work appropriate memes, cartoons, and images for when people need a laughter break.
2. Kick off a meeting with a simple but interesting “**get to know you**” question.
3. **Solicit ideas from people** on what to do for a team-building event and have the team vote to decide which one wins.
4. Add a spot in the **internal newsletter** for shout outs and celebrations.
5. Encourage your team members to **find out their humor persona** so that they too can build their skill of humor.

bottom line

If you tell someone a joke, they laugh for a moment. If you teach someone how to joke, they laugh for a lifetime. Humor can transform lives and you can be the guide.

how to support your promotion

1. Research the **benefits of humor** and share your findings with others.
2. Facilitate an exercise or game to **bring some levity** to your friends, family, or team.
3. **Thank someone for their humor** contribution when they do something that makes you laugh or smile.
4. **Teach a friend**, family member, or colleague something you've learned about humor.
5. Create an **opportunity for another person** to leverage their humor persona.

when to be an advocate

The Advocate is ideal for building a more positive environment and getting the most out of your team. **Create the space for inclusive levity** and encourage other people to bring out their humor persona.

'Humor has a way of bringing people together. It unites people. In fact, I'm rather serious when I suggest that someone should plant a few whoopee cushions in the United Nations.'

RON DENTINGER

tips for advocates

Promotion is a critical competency for creating more humor in the world. Using humor for yourself is great, helping others feel comfortable doing so is even better.

Not only does this mean that they enjoy their work more, it also means you have more fun because you get to experience whatever exciting idea they come up with.

Tactical tips for being an Advocate:

1. **Establish a safe space.** Set ground rules and limit risk to create a space where people excel. And if you notice someone is being excluded for whatever reason, invite them to join.
2. **Assume participation.** When facilitating an experience, don't build it up to be a big deal. Act and give instruction assuming everyone will jump in.
3. **Opting out is okay.** While you should assume people will participate, don't make it a big deal if they decide not to. Rather than force something, make it so appealing they want to be included.
4. **Specific is genuine.** When giving praise, be specific about what stood out. Saying "good job," feels unearned; saying "thank you for how you led that meeting, I really enjoyed how you started with a story," feels genuine (and is actionable).
5. **Adapt to the person.** Learn people's preferences so you can celebrate them in a way they appreciate. Some people like being in the spotlight, others prefer their recognition more privately.

To practice your skill in promotion, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Use “Yes And” 10 Times Today

In improv, “**Yes And**” is shorthand for the collaborative creative process. It’s how two people who have never performed together can still create a cohesive scene.

The “**yes**” says, “I hear you and accept what you’ve said.” It doesn’t mean you agree with it or that you’ll blindly follow along, it just means that you’ve heard them.

The “**and**” says, “Here’s what I’m going to bring to the table (or board room (or stage)).”

This mindset can be used for more than creativity, it can also help in countless other scenarios, such as:

1. YES AND small talk to never run out of things to say in a conversation.
2. YES AND ideas while brainstorming to stay in a creative mindset (and not a critical one).
3. YES AND the suggestions of another person to help them feel like they are contributing.
4. YES AND people in a meeting to create psychological safety within the group.
5. YES AND the feelings of a loved one so they feel heard and supported.
6. YES AND kids to build a sense of play and encourage their imagination.
7. YES AND your own ideas rather than immediately discounting them for not being good enough.
8. YES AND your own work by accepting that you have to do it but you are choosing to make it more fun.
9. YES AND yourself by giving yourself a pat on the back for a success you’ve had recently.
10. YES AND this playbook by doing this exercise :).

TIP: You don’t have to say the phrase, “Yes And,” focus on building up moments rather than shutting them down.

PRACTICE: Use “Yes And” 10 Times Today (cont)

To practice promotion, try to find at least 10 moments in the day where you can adopt a “yes and” mindset.

Reflect on your experience. How did it feel? Are there any interactions that stand out?

PRACTICE: Give a Shout Out

Appreciation means letting someone know you enjoy what they do; promotion means letting the world know.

Think of someone who you admire, either because of what they've done for you personally or because of the content of their work.

Person: _____

What is it that you admire about them?

Reason for Admiration: _____

Now, give that person a public shout out, such as thanking them in a meeting (if you work with them) or sharing what you've learned from them on social media.

What was their reaction? How do you feel after giving the shout out?

PRACTICE: Create a Venue for Humor

Being an advocate means establishing an outlet where people can express their humor.

To build a routine for levity, decide on an outlet for it. This could be at a specific time (e.g. the first five minutes of a meeting, the kickoff of every presentation, or Thursdays at 4:05pm) or location (the breakroom bulletin board, a specific Slack channel, or section of a newsletter).

Venue: _____

Decide on the ground rules for sharing humor, such as making sure the humor stays positive, is appropriate for the environment, and that it doesn't distract others.

Ground Rules: _____

Now, share with your group the goal of the humor venue and kick things off by sharing examples of humor that fit the intent of the space.

How was it received? What can you do to encourage people to continue to use the outlet for humor?

PRACTICE: Facilitate Fun

Promoting humor means creating positive experiences. One way to do that is through facilitating an activity.

To give it a try, think of a group of people you'll be interacting with today.

Group: _____

Now, brainstorm an idea for an activity you could do with them (such as answering a get-to-know-you question, playing an improv game, or swapping memes).

LINK: Need a suggestion? Go to humor.me/activities

Exercise: _____

Now, facilitate the exercise for the group. Be sure to assume participation, allow people to opt out, give clear instructions, and let the group shape the experience.

How did it go? What was the reaction of the participants?

PRACTICE: Cater to Another Persona

Encouraging another person to use more humor starts with understanding where their humor strengths are.

Pick a person who you interact with on a regular basis (either personally or professionally).

Person: _____

Try to determine their humor persona (based on their behavior or by asking them to take the persona quiz).

Persona: _____

Now, brainstorm ways you could better enable that persona in that person and implement one of your ideas.



skeptic

BALANCES HUMOR THROUGH
THE CONSIDERATION OF CONSEQUENCES

The seventh, and final, competency in your skill of humor is *consideration*. Unlike the other personas which focus on the positives of humor, the consideration competency recognizes that there are some dangers of using humor, particularly in the workplace. People who are strong in consideration represent the **Skeptic** persona.

‘Humor isn’t for everyone. It’s only for people who want to have fun, enjoy life, and feel alive.’

ANNE WILSON SCHAEF

what is a skeptic

A Humor Skeptic acknowledges that not all humor is appropriate and just because something is a “joke,” it doesn’t mean it’s harmless. They know the advantages of using humor but are aware that it’s not without its risks.

While there are dangers to using humor, there are also dangers to not using it at all. Skeptics balance the use of humor through the consideration of possible consequences.

That doesn’t mean they **hate joy**, they may just not seek it out or find it appropriate in certain circumstances. Afterall, we’ve all seen times where humor has gone wrong.

Whereas other personas **find ways to use humor appropriately**, Skeptics may avoid it to be on the safe side, or because they’ve tried it in the past and it didn't go well.

As a result, they don't understand how people can be so cavalier with what they say or do, or why not everyone takes their jobs as seriously as they do.

famous humor skeptics

Steve Jobs (*Entrepreneur*)
Richard Nixon (*President, USA*)
Isaac Newton (*Inventor*)
Oliver Cromwell (*General, UK*)
Debbie Downer (*Saturday Night Live*)

benefits of the skeptic

There are benefits to being a Humor Skeptic:

for yourself

Not everything in life will be pleasant, so when you're able to achieve desired outcomes, even when the task isn't fun, it helps you survive in any workplace.

If you can **always focus on the task at hand** and have the discipline to do the things you have to do (instead of what you want to do), you become surrounded by other no-nonsense people.

While others spend time on enjoyment, you work to master efficiency.

for others

Other people can appreciate that you are serious about what you do. They know that **interactions with you will likely be to the point**, and respectful.

You also help to discourage the negative forms of humor. Your barometer of what's appropriate and what's not can help to create a more equitable environment.

You may notice that other people don't tend to laugh or smile around you because they've either learned or have the impression that it's not something you appreciate.

connotations

POSITIVE

focused
no nonsense
straight shooter

NEGATIVE

curmudgeon
cynic
debbie downer

skeptic watchouts

While being cautious in wanting to create a safe space and not offend anyone is absolutely necessary, there are a few things to watch out for as a Skeptic:

Coming off as a curmudgeon.

If you never laugh or smile, people will see you as grumpy, inauthentic, or stubbornly misguided. You may not actually be in a bad mood, but if your body language suggests that you are, people won't know the difference.

Being a loner.

Like it or not, how you get along with people can have a big impact on how a team performs. If you're constantly on the outside, not participating or engaging in other people's use of humor, you'll be seen as separate from the team and people will wonder if they can trust you.

Shutting down other people's joy.

If people don't feel psychologically safe enough to use humor, they'll avoid it completely. While very few organizations actively ban humor, if it's not intentionally promoted, many people don't feel like they're able to use it at all. If you're always stone-faced, people will second-guess if humor is okay. Make it clear that appropriate humor is not only welcomed but encouraged.

skeptics at work

The Skeptic is perhaps the most commonly perceived persona at work, particularly at older companies, in older industries, and with older generations.

If you never outwardly express any of the other personas, it's very likely people will see you as the Skeptic, regardless of what you think about yourself.

Whether discouraging humor is intentional or not, the impact may be a short-term bump in efficiency but at the **expense of long-term effectiveness**. Eventually, the organization will experience lower company output, higher stress, increased absenteeism, more turnover, and less engagement.

watchouts at work

Just as levity brings more levity, **skepticism brings more skepticism**. Company culture is often defined by the behaviors of the most visible people in the organization, so be mindful of those behaviors.

The #1 reason people don't use more humor at work is because they don't think their boss or coworkers would approve. That means if people aren't laughing or smiling in your presence, you're probably part of the reason why.

skeptics in action at work

Here are some simple ways to be a Skeptic at work:

1. **Give people some grace** when they attempt to add a little levity, even if it doesn't make you laugh.
2. If you don't feel like participating in something, try to **exit it quietly without making a fuss**.
3. When someone makes an **inappropriate joke** at work, let them know work is not the place for it.
4. Provide **constructive feedback** when something isn't having the positive effect that was intended.
5. If other people are having fun and it's not hurting anyone, react positively (or at least neutrally) **instead of negatively**.

bottom line

Some people think that in order to be taken seriously at work, their work has to be done in a serious way. But serious doesn't have to mean somber. And if you're truly passionate about getting results, you'll use every tool at your disposal to do so, humor being one of the most effective tools you have.

how to balance your consideration

1. **Research the benefits and dangers of humor** to make sure you fully understand the pros and cons.
2. If someone uses **humor that doesn't work**, reflect on what changes would have made it successful.
3. Try not to let **other people's negative or pessimistic mood** prevent you from using humor that's right for you and your situation.
4. Consider how the humor (or lack thereof) **will be perceived by others**.
5. Try adopting the mindset of one of the other personas just to see how it changes your day.

when to be a skeptic

If someone is using humor in an inappropriate way, it's a good time to be the Skeptic. Share **why the humor didn't work** or why it's inappropriate (if you feel comfortable doing so). This can help create a safe space for everyone in the organization.

'You must not think me necessarily foolish because I am facetious, nor will I consider you necessarily wise because you are grave.'

SYDNEY SMITH

tips for skeptics

Humor is not the be all, end all (or is it end all, be all?) to solve everything that ails you. For all the incredible benefits to using humor, there are some risks to consider. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't use humor at all, it just means you have to be mindful when you do.

Tactical tips for being a Skeptic:

1. **Double-check yourself.** Before sharing humor, double-check that it's not divisive, disparaging, or distracting in that moment.
2. **Humor (and offense) is personal.** You don't get to decide what's funny (or offensive) to other people. If you do accidentally offend someone, apologize.
3. **Feign ignorance.** If someone uses offensive humor, one strategy is to pretend you don't understand why it's funny. This forces the person to either explain their prejudice or let it go.
4. **Give a counterpoint.** Alternatively, when someone shares something based on a stereotype, share how that hasn't been your experience.
5. **Accept nuance.** Don't fall into the trap of an "all or nothing" relationship with humor. Recognize that humor can both help and harm, and that different circumstances require different approaches.

To practice your skill in consideration, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: The Dangers of Humor

Humor is a double-edged sword; it can empower or impale, unite or divide, make laugh or make cry.

While it's true there are 30+ benefits to using humor, there are some dangers:

1. Humor can offend people when used in poor taste.
2. Humor can be used to bully someone when used aggressively towards a specific person or group.
3. Humor can create confusion when it's attempted but doesn't make sense to the audience.
4. Humor can reduce credibility when someone tries to use it and fails.
5. Humor can reinforce narrow-minded attitudes when it relies on negative stereotypes.
6. Humor can be received more positively when used by men than by women.
7. Humor can lower people's perception of the importance of a situation when used frivolously.
8. Humor can increase bad behavior when it's aggressive and gives the perception that that's okay.
9. Humor can create in and out groups when used selectively with people.
10. Humor can trivialize how someone feels when it mocks or makes light of their situation.
11. Humor only improves job satisfaction if employees already have a good relationship with the user.
12. Technically, you could die from laughter (like Chrysippus, the Greek philosopher who died from laughing so hard at his own joke).

You'll notice that these dangers arise not from the concept of humor itself, but rather how it's used. Like any tool, there are good and bad ways to use it.

LINK: If you want to read more about the dangers of humor and how to mitigate them, visit humor.me/dangers

PRACTICE: The Dangers of Humor (cont)

With these risks in mind, and based on your own experiences, what are the dangers of using humor?

That said, it doesn't mean humor shouldn't be used at all. Consider the alternative, what are the dangers of NOT using humor?

PRACTICE: Check for Distracting Humor

Humor can be a great way to escape from the challenges of everyday life, so long it's for short, regenerative reasons.

Consider the humor you've used recently (as part of this challenge or during your usual day-to-day).

Are there any stories you are telling, humor you are using, or shows you are watching in order to deflect or avoid responsibility or ownership in your life?

If so, what can you do to take responsibility?

PRACTICE: Check for Divisive Humor

Positive, inclusive humor brings people together; insular humor accentuates differences.

Think about your own experiences with divisive humor.

When have you seen humor be used to create in and out groups? What was the cause of the division?

When have you been the creator of divisive humor? What could you do differently now?

PRACTICE: Check for Disparaging Humor

Disparaging humor comes when the humor has an inappropriate target coming from an inappropriate source.

Have you ever been the target of a joke? What was it about and how did it make you feel?

Have you ever aggressively targeted others in a joke? Would you do anything differently now based on what you've learned?

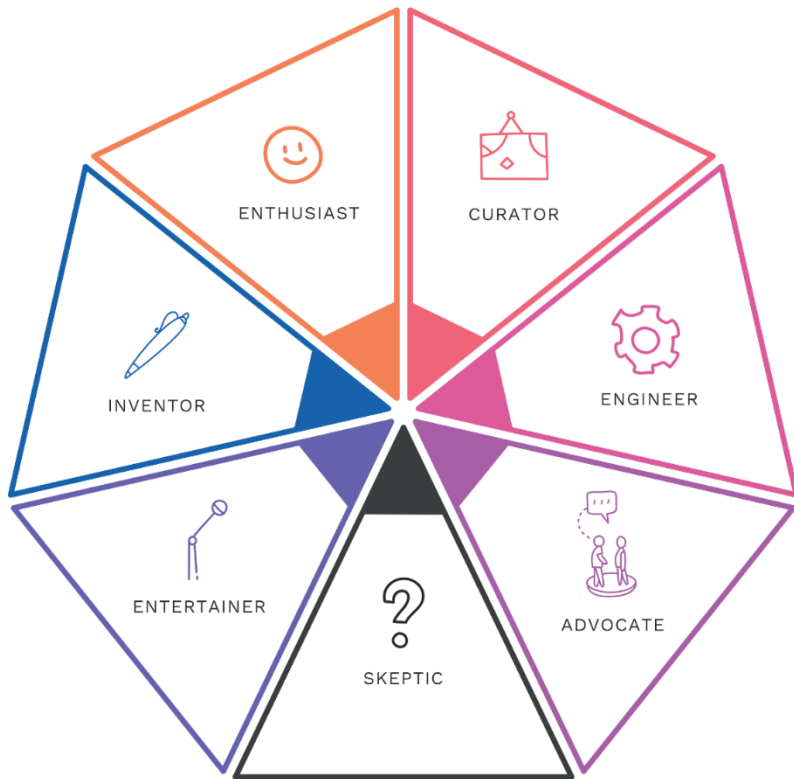
PRACTICE: Remove Roadblocks

Sometimes your skepticism isn't about other people, it's about your perception of yourself.

Now that you've covered nearly all that you need to know to get started using humor, consider the roadblocks that could prevent you from unlocking your skill of humor.

What might hold you back from intentionally adding more humor into your daily life? What doubts still linger?

What can you do to remove those roadblocks?



complete humorist

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you know each of the humor competencies, there's one last skill to master: the ability to switch between each one depending on the situation.

That's because the real magic in the humor personas is that you aren't limited to only one. If you're looking to create a truly enjoyable work experience, there are incredible benefits to learning how to adopt each of the personas based on the circumstances.

'The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.'

MARK TWAIN

a recap of each persona

ENTHUSIAST:

enjoys humor through the *appreciation* of everyday life.

CURATOR:

shares humor through the *curation* of what amuses them.

INVENTOR:

crafts humor through the *creation* of comedy.

ENTERTAINER:

delivers humor through the *performance* of ideas.

ENGINEER:

implements humor through the *application* of fun.

ADVOCATE:

encourages humor through the *promotion* of others.

SKEPTIC:

balances humor through the *consideration* of consequences.

when to use each persona

When you need a laugh or could stand to relieve some stress, be the **Enthusiast**. Stay engaged and celebrate the levity of life, whether that's the humor of other people or simply the ridiculousness of your current situation. Over time, you may find that you're happier because of it.

The **Curator** is perfect for maintaining connections and sprucing up your own content. Leverage what other people have already created to quickly add humor to your world. When you do, you'll have stronger relationships with the people with whom you share (and you'll likely increase the number of funny cat videos in your life).

If you have to plan a presentation or write an email, it's time for the **Inventor**. Tap into your own ability to humor by exploring what you find funny in an interesting way. As you improve in creation, you improve as a communicator.

The **Entertainer** shines when in front of others or it's time to perform. Deliver your ideas with confidence and react in the moment by building off what other people say. Improved performance leads to increased confidence which leads to improved performance.

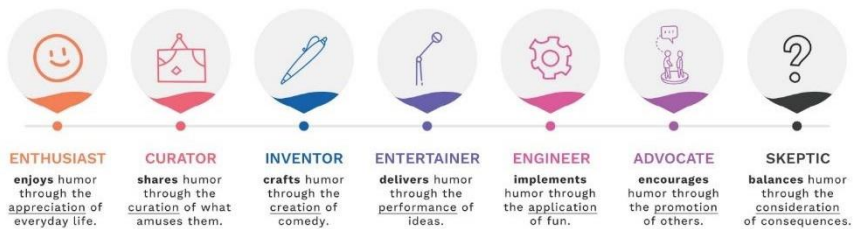
When you need to solve a problem or get something done, bring out the **Engineer**. Look at any challenges from a humorous angle and identify ways to play your work. Applying humor can drastically improve your results.

The **Advocate** is ideal for building a positive work culture and getting the most out of the people you work with. Create the space for levity and encourage other people to bring out their humor persona. A stronger org awaits.

Finally, if someone uses humor in an inappropriate way, it's okay to be the **Skeptic**. Share why the humor didn't work or what's inappropriate about it (if you feel comfortable doing so). You'll be doing your part to create a more inclusive environment.

the complete humorist at work

To truly master the use of humor, you have to know when and how to leverage each persona, because it will change throughout the day. You may even adopt each of the personas in a short period of time.



Imagine you're in a meeting with your colleagues...

You start the meeting out as an **Enthusiast**, appreciating each presenter by listening, nodding, and laughing as appropriate.

Later, you become an **Advocate** as you promote the work of a team member, so people know about the great job they've done.

When it's your turn to speak, you become an **Entertainer**, performing the talking points you created as an **Inventor**, all with the application you had in mind as an **Engineer**.

After the meeting, you follow-up as a **Curator** by recapping key highlights from the meeting and sharing a related meme, which you confirm is appropriate because you practice consideration as a **Skeptic**.

That's the skill of humor at work, deftly switching between each persona as needed.

connecting with others

Once you've refined your own humor persona, you'll be able to spot qualities from the other personas in the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues, even that guy at work you only ever give a polite wave or head nod to.

By knowing the personas of the people you interact with, **you'll have a strong advantage in connecting with them** and they won't even know it.

Imagine being able to set them up for success (and fun) by putting them in position to leverage their strengths. This leads to high performing teams that actually like each other and aren't on the verge of burning out.

to humor is to human

If we're asking people to bring their whole selves to work, humor must be part of the equation. It may not be the most ruthlessly efficient way to do something, but it helps us thrive because **humor is self-care**.

One way to promote humor is to encourage the people you work with to go through this playbook and take the quiz. Another is to simply share more levity with them.

Whether you decide to do a team or organizational assessment (or not), getting your team to reflect on how they choose to let their personality and sense of humor show at work is an incredibly valuable exercise.

Humor is always time well spent. No one ever said on their deathbed, "I wished I had laughed less."

enabling the humor of others

Once you know how the people around you use humor, empower them.

Take note of **Enthusiasts** so you can dedicate time to appreciate the way they appreciate others while also sharing humor with them so they can have a laugh.

Seek out **Curators** so you can ask for stories, pictures, or examples whenever you want to share something funny.

Identify **Inventors** so they can help you create effective communication using their ability to craft compelling copy.

Spotlight **Entertainers** so you can tap into them to serve as meeting leaders or event emcees.

Find **Engineers** so you can go to them when you need help solving a problem.

Leverage **Advocates** to create a more positive workplace environment for everyone.

Use **Skeptics** to double-check your humor is appropriate (but also encourage them to explore other personas so they can also benefit from humor in their work).

how to build your skill of humor

ENTHUSIAST:

Start with *appreciation*. Explore what you find amusing by taking mental (or physical) note of the things that make you laugh or smile.

CURATOR:

Share what you find funny with others to build *curation*. Use proven content to practice the skill of identifying what other people find entertaining.

INVENTOR:

After you have a sense of what you and others enjoy, craft your own humor through *creation*. Practice the hidden structure in comedy to learn how to think funny.

ENTERTAINER:

Take the ideas you develop and deliver them with *performance*. Focus on delivering material so that people listen (and laugh (when they're supposed to)).

ENGINEER:

Once you're adept at thinking and talking funny, it's time to put that skill to use through *application*. Intentionally use humor to solve problems by adding fun.

ADVOCATE:

After you've started solving your own problems using humor, help unlock that potential in others through *promotion*. Put them in positions to succeed (and smile).

SKEPTIC:

Throughout it all, take *consideration* and have a healthy sense of skepticism to make sure you're using humor appropriately and in a way that others can enjoy.

tips for the complete humorist

When you're able to seamlessly switch between each of the personas, when you can adjust on the fly to what the moment requires, that's when you become the (*drumroll*) complete humorist.

Some tips on improving as a Complete Humorist:

1. **Have fun.** None of this will be worth it if you don't have fun doing it.
2. **Make humor a habit.** If you want to truly benefit from the skill of humor, it has to become a daily (or even hourly) part of your life.
3. **Try new things.** If you only stick to the competency that you're good at, you'll never unlock the true power and confidence that comes from being able to use humor in nearly any situation.
4. **Revisit as needed.** This playbook is specifically designed so that you can return to it again and again to try new prompts, resources, and exercises to further develop your humor skill.
5. **Find your tribe.** Unlike many other skills, humor develops best in the presence of others. Find a safe space where you can practice and get feedback.

LINK: We've built the Humor That Works Community for exactly this purpose of helping people become more humorous. Learn more at humor.me/community

To practice your complete skill of humor, complete the following exercises.

PRACTICE: Decide on a Keystone Habit

When humor becomes a regular part of your life, it no longer takes much effort to bring levity to your day.

If a humor habit is your goal, it's important to understand how habits work, something that's explained very well in the book **The Power of Habit** by Charles Duhigg.

A few highlights:

- A habit is a formula our brain automatically follows:
 - When I see a CUE,
 - I will do a ROUTINE
 - in order to get a REWARD.
- There are four steps to creating a new habit:
 - Identify the routine you'd like to establish.
 - Experiment with rewards.
 - Identify and isolate the cue.
 - Have a plan for how to implement the routine.
- Creating a REWARD is critical: only when your brain expects the reward will the habit become automatic.
- Isolating the right cue can be challenging because we're constantly bombarded by too much information. Almost all habitual cues fit into one of five categories:
 - Location, Time, Emotional state, Other people, Immediately preceding action.”
- Sometimes a single (keystone) habit leads to other changes: “that, over time, transform everything.”

There are three keystone humor habits that have served me well:

1. **Practice Yes And.** The more I say Yes And, the more fun I seem to have.
2. **Keep a Humor Notebook.** When I take time to write, I tend to see more humor in my everyday life.
3. **Drive one smile per hour.** Having the intention to do something humorous every hour helps me constantly find new ways to enjoy my day.

PRACTICE: Decide on a Keystone Habit (cont)

Pick one habit that you want to develop (or reinforce) from the playbook. It could be an action related to your strongest humor competency, one of the habits I shared, or something you'd like to get better at.

Desired Habit: _____

Next, explicitly define the routine you'd like to establish.

Routine: _____

Now, brainstorm possible rewards for when you complete the routine. Since the routine is likely related to humor, sometimes the laughter or joy it brings is enough.

Reward: _____

Identify and isolate a cue that will be your trigger for your routine. For example, the top of the hour is my cue for the one smile per hour habit.

Cue: _____

Finally, detail a plan for how you will implement the routine AND what you'll do when you lapse (aka go an extended period without doing the habit).

PRACTICE: Use All 7 Personas

Find a way to use each competency today.

Track each instance of humor throughout the day and reflect on the experience.

What highlights do you have from the day?
How did today compare to your average day?
What if all days were like this?

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

The following pages are for you to start your first humor notebook. Use them to capture any additional ideas you have while reading through the playbook or after you've completed each of the exercises.

Anytime you have a funny thought, write it down. When you make someone laugh, write it down. When you think, "hmm, that's interesting," write it down.

When you take note of humor, you start noticing it more.

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

Lined writing area consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

PRACTICE: Keep a Humor Notebook

congratulations

Congrats! You've made it to the end of the playbook.

We've covered quite a bit:

We introduced the framework of the skill of humor, identified your primary personas, did a deep dive into the pros and cons of each one, and helped you become **happier, healthier, and more productive.**

You also completed exercises along the way, reflected with great wisdom in this playbook, and started bringing humor into the world (you did do the exercises, right?).

You deserve a round of applause and I **suggest you treat yo'self today** as a present for your hard work. I know I'll be getting a milkshake soon.

But as the Carpenters sang, "we've only just begun." This may be the end of the book but it's only the beginning of the next stage of your humor journey.

It's now up to you to put it into practice, to develop the humor habit you want and need, and to create a version of your work and life you truly enjoy.

Humor is a lifelong skill, one that can help you survive the growing pains of adolescence, the challenges of early adulthood, the balancing act of middle age, and the uncertainty of your golden years.

It's time you go out and share humor in your own way. I'll be doing the same (hint, it'll involve puns).

(AN)DREW

what's next

Well, that's it. It's time for you to go forth and humor. You have the information you need; I hope you use it.

If you want a safe place to practice your humor, a place that's free from the negativity so prevalent everywhere else, join us in the Humor That Works Community.

visit humor.me/community

let's connect

If you have questions or want to learn about some of our other programs, including our keynotes, workshops, and coaching, let's connect!

Find me on LinkedIn [@drewtarvin](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drewtarvin) or you can reach me directly at andrew@humorthatworks.com.

<https://www.humorthatworks.com/>