

Laugh Lovers Toastmasters
Humor Skills Presentation

Using Your Timing to Make the Humor Connect with the Audience

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Nothing ruins good comedy more than miffing the punchline or ruining the timing. The antidote is practice, practice, and more practice.

Humor as a Stress Reliever¹

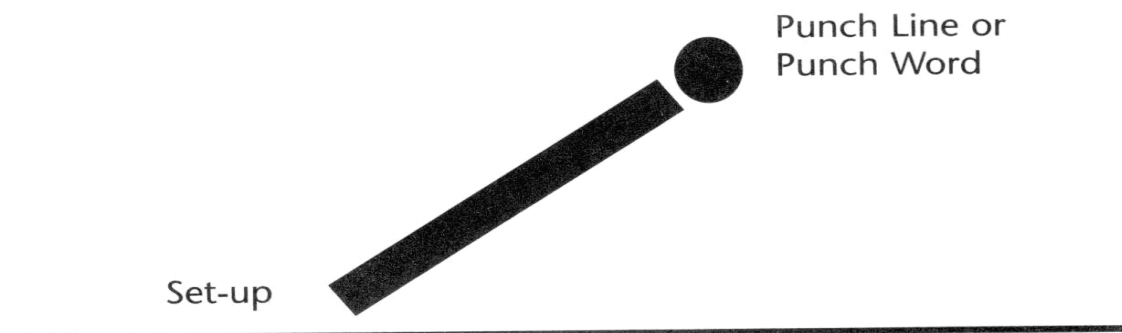
Humor is one of the most effective tools for connecting with an audience. It builds bonds and refreshes the mind. And although the right words can make people laugh, humor is more than just words.

As speakers, we learn that the impact of humor is heightened by how you say it, what you do when you say it, and how you use silence...the pause. The pause adds punch to the punchline!

One of the reasons the pause strengthens your laugh lines is that it builds tension. There is a relationship between tension and laughter. It's easier to use comic timing when you understand that relationship.

Laughter is a **natural stress reliever** because when we laugh, muscle tension melts away. It's an involuntary reflex. When we laugh our muscles automatically relax. It's clear that there is a definite relationship between tension, laughter and release of tension

The Shape of Humor²



If you could draw the shape of humor, it would look like this. An exclamation mark turned upside down. The body or set-up is short leading to a pause. Then comes the explosive power of the punch line.

"Take my wife.....PLEASE!"

Active Pauses.

If you're deliberately building tension, which will climax in laughter, a pause will heighten the tension and make the laughter more intense.

An example is the "Carnack" technique made famous by Steve Allen and Johnny Carson. The entertainer holds an envelope to his head, gives the answer, and then opens the envelope to read the "question."

"The answer is "Oscar Meyer, Ball Park, and a fighter pilot."

The Pause: Open the envelope while leering at the audience.

"And the answer is...name three hot dogs!"

This uses the "magic pause." The audience knows that the joke is coming but you hold them off just a moment to build the tension.

Giving you audience time to Laugh. ³

Your best humorous techniques and delivery will fall flat if you don't allow your audience time to enjoy your humor.

It takes the audience about two to three breaths to catch on, catch up, and laugh. Then, you need to let them laugh.

The worst fear of a comedian is that they will lose the momentum. But think of yourself. When you hear a good joke, how long do you laugh? When you watch an audience, how long do they laugh?

Watch "Comedy Central" performance and you will see. Comedians will stand there as the audience laughs and nod their head, shake their head, drink from the water bottle, and generally act indifferent. That is part of the act to give the audience time to laugh.

Then, the next joke comes along with the another punchline. But, now the audience knows your timing. This builds trust. The audience now will trust you to let the laugh subside in preparation for the next joke.

If you jump into the next joke too early and they are still laughing, they will no longer trust you. They will expect that you will step on the next joke. They will hold back their laughter. You will lose momentum.

The secret is to take your time. You practiced. You prepared. You are in control. Relax and have fun, too.

Exercises:⁴ What are coming are one-liners. The pause point is separated. Remember, give the audience time to laugh. So, let's get started.

A Guy goes into a bar....

- ✚ A leprechaun walks into a bar. The bartender serves him and says, "That'll be \$2.50." The leprechaun puts two dollar bills on the bar and starts walking away. The barkeep shouts, "You're a little short!"
- ✚ A mushroom walks into a bar and the bartender says "We don't serve your kind here." and the mushroom says - "Why not? I'm a fungi."
- ✚ A skeleton walks into a bar and says, "Gimme a beer, and a mop."
- ✚ A man walked into a bar holding an alligator. He asked the bartender, "Do you serve lawyers here?" The bartender said, "Yes, we do!" "Good," replied the man. "Give me a beer, and I'll have a lawyer for my alligator."
- ✚ A little guy walks into a bar and slips on some vomit. Minutes later a tough guy walks into the bar and slips on the same vomit. The little guy says, "I just did that." The big guy then beats the little guy up.
- ✚ An amnesiac comes into a bar. He asks, "Do I come here often?"
- ✚ A brain walks into a bar and orders a pint of beer. The barman says, "I'm not serving you, you're out of your skull!"
- ✚ John Kerry walks into a bar. The bartender says, "Why the long face?"
- ✚ A guy walks into a bar with jumper cables. The bartender says, "You can come in, but don't start anything!"
- ✚ A man walks into a bar with a slab of asphalt under his arm and says, "A beer please, and one for the road."
- ✚ A crow walks into a bar wearing a pearl necklace. He orders a drink. "I've never seen a crow wearing a pearl necklace before", says the barkeep. Says the crow, "What else will go with basic black?"
- ✚ A dog with his leg wrapped in bandages hobbles into a saloon. He sidles up to the bar and announces: "I'm lookin' fer the man that shot my paw."
- ✚ A professor walks into a bar and orders a double martinis. The bartender says, "You mean a double martini?" The professor says, "If I want more than one I'll ask for it."
- ✚ A horse walks into a bar. The bartender says, "So, why the long face?"
- ✚ A baby seal walks into a bar. "What can I get you?" asks the bartender. The seal replies "Anything, but a Canadian Club."
- ✚ A bear walked into a bar and says, "I'll have a beer-----and some of those peanuts." The bartender says, "Why the big pause?"

- ✚ A man walks into a bar and sits down next to a lady and a dog. The man asks, "Does your dog bite?" The lady answers, "Never!" The man reaches out to pet the dog and the dog bites him. The man says, "I thought you said your dog doesn't bite!" The woman replies, "He doesn't. This isn't my dog."
- ✚ Celine Dion walks into a bar. The bartender says, "So, why the long face?"
- ✚ A goldfish walks into a bar and looks at the bartender. The bartender asks, "What can I get you?" The goldfish says, "Water."
- ✚ A termite walks into a bar and asks, "Is the bartender here?"
- ✚ A guy walks into a bar and there is a horse behind the bar serving drinks. The guy is just staring at the horse, when the horse says, "What are you staring at? Haven't you ever seen a horse serving drinks before?" The guy says, "No, I thought the parrot would never sell the place."
- ✚ A cowboy walks into a bar. Upon leaving, he realizes that someone has painted his horse. The cowboy yells, "Which one of you painted my horse?" A seven foot tall hulk of a man says, menacingly, "I did." The cowboy realizes he is in trouble and replies, "Why, thank you - the first coat's dry!"

¹ Adapted from "The Use of Timing to Make Your Humor Connect," copyrighted material by John Kinde, who is a humor specialist in the training and speaking business for over 30 years specializing in teambuilding, customer service and stress management. Free Special Reports: Show Me The Funny -- Tips for Adding Humor to Your Presentations and When They Don't Laugh -- What To Do When the Laughter Doesn't Come. Humor Power Tips newsletter, articles and blog are available at www.humorpower.com.

² Taken from "Using Stories and Humor. Grab Your Audience." Joanna Slan, The Essence of public Speaking Series, Toastmasters International.

³ Adapted from : "Be-Funny-Without-Telling-Jokes," Linda Gorham Website: <http://www.storyteller.net/tellers/lgorham>

⁴ "AGuy Goes Inot A Bar..." Fray Pascual and Mitch Hedberg, <http://www.funny2.com/bar.htm>