

Caring Clowns International



The Gag

Every gag (or skit) has three distinct parts:...the beginning, the middle and the end.

The Beginning is the introduction. It is the explanation for the start of the gag. It is the “set up” which helps the audience understand the framework of the piece.

The Middle – This develops the premise, the set up of the gag. If the interaction is verbal, questioning the other clown, asking a funny question, feigning not understanding, etc. are all appropriate.

The End - called “The Blow Off” - This is the finale of the gag, closing it to some funny or absurd conclusion. It is the punch line of the gag, and ends with one or both of the clowns being made fools of.

Rhythm of the Gag – The gag has a rhythm. Normally do whatever it is three times. (Sort of like telling a joke, which usually involves three attempts before the punch line.)

Focus of the Gag – Gags can be occupational, situational or abstract, and should always emphasize the absurd. Examples might be:

- ♥ Occupational - two plumbers changing a baby’s diaper with wrenches and plumbing tools
- ♥ Situational – the flight attendant giving instructions at the beginning of the flight (use of the seat belt, aisle way lights, etc)
- ♥ Abstract – the clown having a conflict and physical altercation with a prop, like a chair or ladders or step stool.

Engaging the Audience (There is no “Fourth Wall” in Clowning)

In many other theatrical settings, there is purposely maintained what is called “the Fourth Wall.” This is the actor maintaining a distance from (and in a sense ignoring the presence of) the audience.

The fourth wall is the imaginary "wall" at the front of the stage in a traditional three-walled theatre through which the audience sees the action in the world of a play. The fourth wall creates the imaginary boundary between any fictional work and its audience.

Speaking directly to or otherwise acknowledging the audience through the camera in a film or television program, or through this imaginary wall in a play, is referred to as "breaking the fourth wall" and deconstructs the boundaries normally set up by works of fiction.

Not so with a clown!

The clown should periodically "check-in" with the audience, interacting and achieving likeability with the audience.

It is always funny and keeps things interesting for one clown to "take the audience into his confidence - let them in on the secret" as if the other clown doesn't see it: such as, stepping off to the side from the gag in progress, looking at the other clown, then to the audience, holding up his hand to "hide" his face from the other clown, turning to the audience and saying "watch this! He'll (the other clown) never get it!" (and snickering to the audience).

Emphasizing the Absurd - If it is routine, it is dull and boring. Creating and maintaining interest means that what the clown does should be absurd, and over- the- top.

Sometimes the audience should be allowed to anticipate this (and the fun is when they see they are right), and sometimes it should be a total surprise. In either case, what makes it funny is how nutty it is.

Development of the Gag - Gags can mimic real life, but have a twist of the absurdly funny. Think about some personal experiences and develop gags from them. Experiment with difference ideas.

In performing gags, other than creating safety issues, there are no mistakes. Sometimes, blowing the rhythm or expected performance of a gag can itself be spontaneously funny.

Creating the Informal Stage – you can literally create a stage for your gags anywhere. If you are performing on the street, or at an informal event where there are people roaming, it is easy to just start performing.

If you just begin the gag, people will quickly notice you – that you are different, and that you are doing something unusual. They will think, and may say out loud to others "Who is this? What is he/she/they doing?" "Look how they are dressed?" "What will they do next?" And, before you know it, you will have a crowd around you, enjoying your antics.