The Art of Using Humor in Public Speaking

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Part 1. Introduction

The Art of Using Humor in Public Speaking is just that. It is an art, not to be taken lightly, but to be applied with great care. Your audience will judge your presentation, regardless of your use of humor. If you can entertain while teaching, then all the better. If you use humor poorly however, you can do irreparable damage to your cause. In other words, poorly handled humor in a presentation can damage or destroy your credibility.

Using humor in public speaking can be very beneficial, both for the audience and the presenter. Heaven knows how deeply rooted cynicism is today in our culture. We are bombarded by negatives at every turn. A speaker who can effectively use humor to engage and entertain their audience possesses a valuable gift. You will be appreciated for providing heartfelt laughter; laughter that has therapeutic effects on listeners. And you will be remembered, talked about; your reputation as a truly great speaker will be enhanced and spread about.

This article is dedicated to Dr. Charles Jarvis, a man who spent a good part of his life entertaining people with good clean quality humor; humor with a message. Dr. Jarvis is retired now. Over his lifetime as a humorist he studied humor and its nuances. If you have not heard of Dr. Jarvis, then you have missed much when it comes to using humor to educate and entertain. His four talks are classics. After a successful career as dentist, he left the dental office behind and headed for the podium in 1965 as a professional humorous speaker, entertaining audiences for over 30 years.

Never one to do anything half-way, he studied humor intently and applied his skills nationwide. This dedication to making people laugh brought him membership in the International Speaker's Hall of Fame, Toastmasters International's Golden Gavel Award and the prestigious International Platform Association's Mark Twain Award for Humor. The Silver Bowl he was presented for the Mark Twain Award for Humor is engraved, "To Charles W. Jarvis, Mark Twain's Successor As America's Most Delightful Depictor of the Virtues and Weaknesses of Humanity with Humor's Paintbrush". His colleagues in the speaking profession include Dr. Kenneth McFarland, Bill Gove and Cavett Robert; they recognized his skills and excellence in the field. I'll refer to Dr. Jarvis' ideas regularly; any serious student of humor should own his entire collection of speeches and workshops cassettes.

One important point: Dr. Jarvis is a humorist, a speaker who uses humor to illustrate a message. He is not a comedian. The skills that Dr. Jarvis demonstrates in his talks and discusses in his workshops are those of a humorous speaker on the circuit. They still however, apply equally well to speakers who want to use humor in public speaking.

Who is THE ART OF USING HUMOR IN PUBLIC SPEAKING for?

For any person who must speak in public or private, to business or pleasure groups, humor is an invaluable and indispensable tool for getting your message across. Why Use Humor? There are several reasons. As already mentioned, people will enjoy what you have to say if it is presented with humor. But more importantly, if you are in a situation where important and perhaps controversial ideas must be presented to less than open minds, humor allows those ideas to be presented in a non-threatening manner. Abraham Lincoln was famous for his ability to relate humorous stories to make a point. Humor used carefully throughout a presentation will keep listener's interest high.

This short monograph is not meant to be a primer for budding stand-up comedians whose goal is 100% entertainment. While they may find valuable information and insights here, stand-up comedy is only one way humor can be used. I would like to see individuals learn to use humor to bolster arguments, support interesting presentations and most of all, entertain in a positive and uplifting way.

The use of off-color, risqué or blue humor, humor which derives its "effectiveness" from shock value, sexual content, or relation to bodily functions has no place in the repertoire of the professional speaker.
While popular culture may well embrace questionable humor, it has no place in presentations that are designed to educate and uplift audiences. If your goal is to become a professional stand-up comedian, then you may well be able to use some of the reference materials presented here to expand your skills and sources of humor. To that end I welcome your participation in this study of humor. Hopefully, you will come to appreciate that the art is in entertaining an audience with good clean humor.

**What exactly is humor?**

Humor is defined as "the mental faculty of discovering, expressing or appreciating the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous". Ludicrous is an adjective meaning amusing or laughable through obvious absurdity, incongruity, exaggeration or eccentricity. What is incongruous? It is something lacking congruity, inconsistent within itself. Well, now that you know what humor is, let's just say simply that humor is a form of expression intended to arouse amusement. Wit is defined as, "the power to evoke laughter by remarks showing verbal felicity or ingenuity and swift perception, especially of the incongruous". Synonymous with wit are, humor, irony, sarcasm, satire and repartee, which are all modes of expression intended to arouse amusement. But there is another element to wit which Dr. Jarvis explains by saying, "Wit punctures, humor pictures." A person with wit delivers witticisms which are defined as cleverly witty and often biting or ironic remarks with the ability to relate seemingly disparate things so as to illuminate or amuse. Think twice about wielding your rapier wit.

**Who should use humor?**

Anyone whose job it is to communicate to groups of individuals, to share information or to motivate, could use humor to invigorate their message and improve the reception of their audience. But on an individual basis, who should use humor? That depends on several things. Does the situation lend itself to a humorous approach? Would humor detract from your credibility with the audience? Perhaps most importantly, can you use humor effectively? I am sure you have met people who could not tell a joke if their lives depended on it. It takes great skill and not a little natural talent to really apply humor effectively. While you can learn to use humor and do a fairly good job at it, the use of humor is not for everyone.

Great damage can be done if you try to use humor in an important situation and fail. Again, your credibility as an expert in whatever field you may be in, may be questioned if you deliver a really dumb joke to an intelligent audience. They may not suffer fools gladly. So, take this material seriously. Practice religiously, over learn your material and be absolutely sure that your humor is relevant to your subject and appropriate for your audience.

I believe that everyone can use humor effectively, once they find the type of humor which fits their speaking style. Remember, we are not necessarily looking for future stand-up comedians here, but for individuals who are willing to study and learn to apply humor in their public speaking.

The person who will do well with humor will most likely be a person who sees things in a humorous light. Some people may use props to get a laugh, but the ability to see the humor in life is one of the most important assets you may have as a professional speaker.

In the following pages I am going to introduce you to the basics. You may get a few laughs out of it, but that is not the purpose. Humor is too serious to be taken lightly, that is why I have put together this primer. You will learn about the psychology of humor, the types of humor, how to apply them and where to find materials. Throughout I will give you the titles of different books so that you can expand your study to encompass the knowledge of true scholars and experts in the field. I'll cover a lot of ground fairly quickly, giving you basics and enough reference information for years of future study. It will provide a foundation for you as you develop the skills necessary to become an outstanding humorous speaker.
Part 2. Psychology of Humor

Because humor is such a powerful emotion, it is a good idea to understand (if that is possible), the psychological basis of humor. More specifically, what makes laughter and the humorous situation "work". Your assignment, from now on is, when you hear people laugh, to ask yourself, "Why did they laugh"? This attention will sharpen your skills at recognizing possible material for your own use and help you get a feeling for what makes humor work.

The response of laughter is based on two general situations. Humor either plays a trick on the mind or it paints a picture which is ludicrous or incongruous. Jokes are the first type; they play a pleasant trick on your mind. When something is ludicrous, you visualize a situation in which the elements are in some way incongruous. A word of warning here. The minute you try to dissect a joke, or explain it, it ceases to be funny. You can study humor down to the most tenuous theories, reading what scientists have discovered about it through the years to the point where it may ruin your enjoyment of laughter. I recommend that you do read several books on the subject. The first should be "The Enjoyment of Laughter" by Max Eastman. He spends a fair amount of time on the psychology of humor, but leaves it up to the reader to delve further into the subject.....at their own risk. "The Enjoyment of Laughter" is a practical book as well as a serious study of humor and serves well as a starting point for your studies; a definite must for your new library. While it is out of print, you can find copies at used bookstores or on the Internet.

Dr. Jarvis shares two definitions of humor with us. The 1st is "a painful thing told playfully". The second is "tragedy separated by time and space". Note that both definitions treat humor as a serious thought viewed in a light manner. Ever heard someone say, "I laughed so hard I nearly cried"? Humor deals with serious subjects and is close to pathos: an emotion of sympathetic pity. Think about the old gag of someone slipping on a banana peel. Such an accident usually elicits a laugh. We might giggle or snicker when someone else takes a flyer. Perhaps though not when we ourselves are the victim. The laugh would be stopped mid-snort though if the person was hurt in the fall. Why? Because the playful element has been lost.

Buster Keaton does a pratfall. Down he goes, but he must get up. Eastman talks about this at length, referring to the absolute necessity for the participants to be "in fun". Charlie talks at length about the feeling of being "in fun" so I've included Eastman's four laws of humor at this point. Understanding this concept and being able to perceive if an audience is "in fun" has a direct bearing on when and how you will use of humor.

Max Eastman presents four laws of humor, all related to the concept of being "in fun". My observations and questions for you to consider are in italics.

1. The first law is that things can be funny only when we are "in fun". There may be a serious thought or motive lurking underneath our humor. We may be only "half in fun" and still perceive things as funny. Ask yourself, "Is this audience "in fun"; do I dare use humor; can they be moved into "in fun"?" When an audience is "in fun", they will take your humor and words in a playful way and enjoy them as well. When however, they are "dead earnest" it is humor that is dead. Faced with an audience in such a mood, humor may require an extremely delicate and practiced application. Better to not try to get a laugh than have one flop in such a situation. You must be able to read your audience accurately and then decide if using humor is advisable.

2. The second law is that when we are "in fun", a peculiar shift of values takes place. Pleasant things are still pleasant, but disagreeable things, so long as they are not disagreeable enough to "spoil the fun", tend to acquire a pleasant emotional flavor and provoke a laugh. Someone who can think funny has the natural ability to see the humor in the painful lessons of life and can help us see them as well.

3. The third law is that being "in fun" is a condition most natural to childhood, and that children at play reveal the humorous laugh in its simplest and most omnivorous form. To them every untoward, unprepared for, unmanageable, inauspicious, ugly, disgusting, puzzling, startling, deceiving, shaking, blinding, jolting, deafening, banging, bumping, or otherwise shocking and disturbing thing, unless it be calamitous enough to force them out of the mood of play, is enjoyable as funny. Can something be said carelessly by a speaker that can move an audience out of "in fun"? A speaker must be aware of the mood of the audience at all times.

4. The fourth law is that grown-up people retain in varying degrees this aptitude for being in fun and thus...
enjoying unpleasant things as funny. But those not richly endowed with humor manage to feel a very comic feeling only when within, or behind or beyond, or suggested by, the playfully unpleasant thing, there is a pleasant one. Only then do they laugh uproariously like playing children. And they call this complicated thing or combination of things at which they laugh, a joke. Audiences made up of individuals who have retained in varying degrees the aptitude for being "in fun" provide the humorous speaker with a great challenge; that of reaching all present. Like Charlie says, some members of the audience are thinking, "OK Buster, lets see if you can make me laugh.......

In regards to being "in fun", never were more illuminating words spoken about humor than those spoken by the hero of the Virginian. He said, "Smile when you say that!" In that case the difference between being "in fun" and not being "in fun" might have been a well-placed bullet. Eastman relates the feeling to the experience of wrestling around with a dog. You are rough-housing, wrestling, playing and all the while the dog's tail is wagging wildly; you know the dog is "in fun". Compare that to the demeanor of a strange dog guarding a stranger's yard. That dog is not "in fun".

But, back to the psychology of humor. Considering that humor is a painful thing told playfully, we see that discomfort is a key element in the makeup of a joke. Often the discomfort of others. We may feel superior due to a momentary instance where others are placed in an embarrassing situation. For the speaker, that simple fact has important ramifications. You certainly do not want to make your audience or any particular member of the group feel inferior.

In breaking the ice and becoming a welcome speaker, there is no better way than to make yourself the butt of the joke. Self-effacing humor is always safe in that you appear human to your audience and you do not risk offending them in any way. At least you must start with self-effacing humor so they can laugh at you, then they may allow you to make fun of and laugh at them later on. So an excellent rule of thumb to follow is:

**Play it safe, use self effacing humor.**

**Part 3. Types of Humor & Definitions A-Z**

The type of humor you will use depends on your speaking style and the situation. What is your style? Are you more comfortable with a quiet understated type of humor, subtle wit or are you more likely to deliver jokes for belly-laughs or long humorous stories to entertain? Depending on how you plan to use humor, either occasionally to make a point or open your talk, or often as the foundation for a motivational talk (Charlie uses 85% humor and 15% message), certain types will fit better than others.

Let's take a quick look at a number of types of humor, define them and consider their examples. Remember, you are looking for humor with which you will feel comfortable, humor that fits your presentational style, your delivery style and can be used effectively in your talk. You will notice that many types relate and overlap; it is your job to become familiar with them and to choose those which best suit your needs.

Before we get into the definitions, I would like to recommend another book for your library. One of the best books to explain the types and techniques of humor is "The Humor of Humor" by Evan Esar. Evan Esar wrote and published several books on humor including Esar's Comic Dictionary and The Dictionary of Humorous Quotations which he edited. A great source for these and other books on humor are used book sales put on by libraries. Watch for such sales and check out the humor sections in used book stores. Many of the types and definitions of humor that follow were found in "The Humor of Humor".

**Adviser**

The comic adviser is a type of epigram that originated with the most famous witticism in the history of
Anecdotes

One of the most powerful tools the humorous speaker has in their arsenal is the anecdote. An anecdote can be defined as, "any interesting incident or striking event, published or not". It is usually more intricate or complex than jokes. There are two types of anecdotes, celebrity centered and those that have an illustrative point or moral meaning. A biographical anecdote is an amusing narrative or a detached incident about a famous person. Often anecdotes are merely a joke tagged onto a celebrity. A humorous definition would be "a brief account of an incident that has never happened in the life of some famous person". An illustrative anecdote illustrates a lesson or moral point through an amusing situation. They are the stock in trade of public speakers who need to make a point in an amusing way. One of the best sources for this type of humor comes is author James C. Humes who wrote Podium Humor and More Podium Humor. Humes has gathered many excellent anecdotes, arranging them by subject and suggesting ways to work them into the speech topic.

Antonymism

An antonymism is humor which derives its effect from contrasting two words or phrases of opposite meaning. The girl with a future avoids a man with a past. The more we think of some people the less we think of them. Antonyms can be found in comic definitions. For example: Installment buying consists of easy payments and difficult collections. Antonyms can be found in the sayings of many well known humorists. Mark Twain said, "There is no end to the laws and no beginning to the execution of them". Oscar Wilde said, "A woman begins by resisting a man's advances and ends by blocking his retreat".

Aside

An aside is a thought that is seemingly thrown in by the speaker as if something they were saying reminded them of it. It can be a humorous point or story. It also offers humor potential in that the speaker can act as if they have forgotten where they were going prior to this thought, then jump back into the original train of thinking.

Banter

Banter could be defined as a good-natured give & take, exchange of teasing or witty remarks between friends. It is synonymous with raillery and persiflage. Bob, you're going to have to save that suit, I hear they're coming back......

Biogram

The biogram is a witticism about a famous person usually expressed in the form of a definition. Some historic characters lend themselves more easily than others to biogrammatic wit. Adam was the happiest man in the world because he had no mother-in-law. Caesar was a general who was hated by the Romans because he had too much Gaul. Literature too is a productive source of these comic biographies-in-one-sentence. Oscar Wilde, the world's greatest wit, was the supreme master of the biogram. His thumbnail lives include: Bernard Shaw: an excellent man who hasn't an enemy in the world, and none of his friends like him. Venus is a woman whose statue shows us the danger of biting our finger nails. A biogram, at its best, telescopes into a few words an unforgettable caricature,

Blendword
The blendword is based on a device common in the coinage of new words. The term is derived from blending two or three words into one. Examples include: *smog* for *smoke and fog*, *scurry* for *scatter and hurry*. Blendwords can be the basis for jokes: *A Hollywood actor visited his old father and inquired about his health. "I feel pretty good," said the old man, "except for a flukky." "What's a flukky?" "I don't know, but that's what the doctor called it and I'm a little worried." The son called the doctor and asked, "What's wrong with my father?" "Nothing", reassured the doctor, "he's all right." "Then what's this flukky he says he's got?" "A flukky?" Repeated the doctor. "Oh, I see. He had a bad cold last month and I told him he got off lucky."

**Blue Humor**

Not really a specific form of humor, but a descriptive term for humor that is based subjects such as sex, body parts, bodily functions or other subjects that may be offensive to some listeners. Such humor has no place in the repertoire of any public speaker, other than for their own personal enjoyment, in private. While you may make an audience laugh using blue humor, it will be a forced laughter that they may not appreciate. If you are planning to speak to professional audiences or any audience for that matter, best avoid such humor. You may end up ruining your own reputation and will certainly not receive referrals for future engagements. Synonymous with scatological humor; an interest in or treatment of obscene matters.

**Blunder**

The blunder is wit based on a person who makes a mistake which in turn makes them look foolish. There are a number of types of blunders. Some are based on mistaken identities of people and derive their punch from the failure to observe distinctions between people due to surrounding circumstances. *A man rushed into a tavern and asked the bartender, who was removing the dew from the bar, if he knew anything that would stop hiccups. His answer was a slap across the face with a wet towel. Surprised and furious, the stranger demanded the reason for such action. With a placating grin the bartender replied: "Well, you haven't any hiccups now, have you?" "I never did have," was the indignant answer. "I wanted something for my wife. She's out in the car." A double blunder makes things worse. One fellow turned to his neighbor at a large party and said, "I made a terrible mistake just now. I told one of the men here that the host must be a cheap tightwad, and he turned out to be the host". His neighbor replied, "Oh, you mean my husband". Typographical errors often result in puns due to the different meaning that a slight change creates. *Dr. Jones returned from Europe yesterday and will take up his cuties at the hospital.* The more drastic the change in meaning, the funnier the results. Unlike puns which are witticisms and intentional, typographical errors are slips and unintentional. *The park district plans to purchase new wenches for our parks as the present ones are in a dilapidated condition.*

Some blunders are based on situations where an individual rescues themselves with wit after doing something stupid. *At a social gathering a musician was conversing with an aging dowager who had been assisting him financially. Without thinking he asked his backer how old she was. "Why do you wish to know?" she countered. "My dear", the musician answered without a moments hesitation, "I merely wanted to know at what age a woman is most fascinating." Or, the blunder adds to their embarrassment and makes them even look worse. Like the agitated young man who frantically ran down the ferry slip, leaped across a strip of water, and landed with a crash on the deck of the boat. "Well," he gasped, as he picked himself up, "I made it!" "What's your hurry?" asked a deck hand. "The boat is coming in." Another form of blunder is the bonehead.

**Blunting**

Blunting is an ancient device that was commonly employed in the classic dramas of Greece, where, under the name of *amblysia*, its histrionic effects were studied and exploited. As a technique in modern humor it pretends to dull the edge of dire news while really sharpening it. *Little Bobbie asked his mother to put some iodine on his bleeding knee. "How did you cut yourself?" she asked. "Oh, it was nothing," he said. "I was climbing on the kitchen ladder and I fell down." "Kitchen ladder? What were you doing on the kitchen ladder?" "I was trying to get the glue." "Glue? What did you want the glue for?" "So I could fix the vase in the living room." "The vase? Did you break the vase?" "No, the ball broke it." "The ball?" "Yes. After it broke the
mirror, it bounced off and hit the vase." "Were you playing ball in the living room?" "Oh, No. We were playing in the yard and the ball broke through the big bay window. Now, Mother, will you please hurry and put some iodine on my knee. The boys are waiting for me." The humorous derision of soft-pedaling may also cover the problem of how to break good news instead of bad or may be ridiculed by reversing the process.

Bonehead
The bonehead is a headline boner of any amusing kind. There are a variety of boneheads, from grammatical misconstructions to humorological absurdities. The essential comic element in newspaper headlines springs from their telescoped brevity. The story or account must be condensed into a few words, and since brevity is the soul of ambiguity as well as wit, the largest number of boneheads is of the double entendre type. EGG-LAYING CONTEST WON BY LOCAL, MANY ANTIQUES AT D.A.R. MEETING, JUNE BABIES FLOOD OTTAWA HOSPITAL, GIRL DISAPPEARS IN BATHING SUIT, GRILL SUSPECT OVER BIG BLAZE, THREE MEN HELD IN CIGARETTE CASE, NEW ORLEANS POLICE WARM STRIP TEASERS, MAN FOUND DEAD WITH BULLET IN HIS CHRYSLER, MAN REFUSES TO GIVE UP BITING DOG, BEAUTY UNVEILS BUST AT CEREMONY, POPULATION OF U.S. BROKEN DOWN BY SEX AND AGE

Boners
The boner is a humorous device and a category of the slip. Boners are short and pointed mistakes that have an amusing effect. They are the replies made by school children or college students to an oral or written question. The future of "I give" is "I take". One by-product of raising cattle is calves. The word trousers is an uncommon noun because it is singular at the top and plural at the bottom. Types of humor often fall into numerous categories. For example, another type of slip is the malapropism. Malapropisms are also boners, for example: The king wore a robe trimmed with vermin. (see malapropisms)

Bon Mot
A Bon Mot is another word for a clever remark or witticism. Bon Mots are like epigrams, short pithy sayings. They may or may not be humorous in nature. Some politicians repair their fences by hedging. The best way to keep a husband is in doubt. Don’t marry for money; you can borrow it cheaper.

Bull
The bull, like the boner, falls under the category of the slip. It is a term for humorous statement based on some absurd contradiction, the humor arising from some special nature of the contradiction. The term is believed to have been used by Chaucer, denoting a ludicrous mistake in language. Such ludicrous verbal contradictions were originally English, but became Irish as epithets based on the Irish immigrants due to their poor knowledge of the language. Thus arose the Irishism or Irish Bull. Examples include, "A good stone coffin should last a man a lifetime". "The happiest man on earth is one who has never been born". "I've a great fancy to see my own funeral before I die". Jonathan Swift, quipped, "May you live all the days of your life". The title of one of Dr. Jarvis' talks is, "Things are more like they are now than they have ever been".

Burlesque
Burlesque falls under the category of satire. It is one of the oldest forms of satiric imitation. Burlesque ridicules any general style of speech or writing whereas parody mocks specific writings. Burlesque distorts technical jargon like legalese & medicalese. It also is the satiric imitation of literary forms and story patterns. An example of speech related burlesque is, "A garage owner cut his hand and the next day it became infected. The doctor who examined it explained the trouble in high-falutin medical terminology, quickly treated the wound and charged him ten dollars. A week later the man's assistant said: "Your doctors out here with a flat tire." "Diagnose it as an absence of flatulence of the perimeter," said the garage owner, "and tell him it's cause by penetration of a foreign object resulting in the dissipation of the compressed atmospheric contents, and see that you charge him accordingly." An example of literary burlesque is the jocular fairy tale: Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess. Playing on the green of her lovely castle, she was tossing a
golden ball into the air and catching it. She missed it once, and the ball started rolling into the nearby brook. A frog, noticing it, grabbed it before it hit the water and returned it to the princess. So delighted was the princess that she said to the frog: "Thank you froggy. I want to reward you". "No," answered the creature, "you have repaid me enough by allowing me to be in your presence." But the princess insisted. "But, froggy, I must reward you for saving my golden ball. What do you wish?" "Since you insist," the frog replied, "then for my reward I should like to sleep in your golden bed." "Granted," agreed the royal maiden. "Hop along with me." The two jumped into bed and went to sleep. The next morning, when the Princess awoke, she noticed alongside her a handsome Prince. And would you believe it? To this day her mother doesn't believe a word of this story.

Caricature
Exaggeration by means of often ludicrous distortion of parts or characteristics. The caricaturism is a caricature in wisecrack form. The caricaturism exaggerates the traits of a person by means of a ridiculous example. The person is described and a ludicrous example of the quality is presented to support the opening statement. For example, "He is so tall he has to stand on a chair to brush his teeth". Caricature can reflect mental, physical and personality traits.

The Catch Tale
The Catch tale is a funny story whose name derives from its essential catch nature, the deception of the reader constituting the basis of its humor. The descriptive catch tale usually misleads the reader by implying something dreadful ending with a sudden trivial denouement. She laid the still white form beside those that had gone before. No groan, no sob forced its way from her heart. Then suddenly she let forth a cry that pierced the stillness of the place, making the air vibrate with a thousand echoes. It seemed to come from her very soul. Twice the cry was repeated, then all was quiet again. She would lay another egg tomorrow.

The following represents the dialogue variety of catch tale: "You're a liar!" shouted the little man. "What!" roared the big man, clenching a huge fist. "Do you dare call me that, you pint-sized, hammered-down sawed-off runt? "I do," came back the defiant reply. "If you insult me again, you big hunk of beef, you'd better watch out, or I'll cut you short!" "Cut me short, you abbreviated piece of nothing!" cried the enraged giant. "Yes, and here goes!" snapped the little man sharply. And quick as lightning, before the big fellow could utter a word, he hung up on him.

Chain
The chain is based on a series of things linked or joined together. It may be of any type: chronological, linguistic, geographical, etc. It may also be based on alternative choices. It includes a variety of types like blunting, cumulative and pendulum stories. For example, here is a chain relating to British socialized medicine: A National Health Service patient went to see his doctor. He walked through the front door and found himself facing two more doors marked "Male" and "Female". He walked through the door for males and saw another corridor with two doors, one marked "Over 21" and the other "Under 21". He passed through the former and again found himself facing two doors marked "Married" and "Single". Through the "Married" door he was confronted with another choice: "Socialist" or "Conservative". He walked through the door marked "Conservative" -- and found himself in the street!

Confucian Saying
One of the most influential moral teachers of all time was K'ung Fu-tzu, or Confucius as we know him. It is ironic that in our own day a low form of humor arose which parodied the precepts of Confucius. These sayings that swept America in 1938-40 burlesqued his wisdom, employing a sententious form of his aphorisms and copying his style in pidgin English. Confucius say: Angel girl sometimes raise devil with man. Confucius say: Ostrich that keep head in sand too long during hot part of day get burned in the end. Confucius say: Salesman who cover chair instead territory always on bottom. Confucius say: Man who make love to girl on hillside, not on level. The passing of these witticisms was also due to the excessive transformation of well-know epigrams into this pattern. Confucius say: Girl with future
beware of man with past. Confucius say: Easy for girl to live on love if he rich.

Conundrum
A conundrum is like a riddle in that it is a word puzzle, the only problem being that while you may be able to solve a riddle, the answer to a conundrum is impossible to solve. The answer to a conundrum is a pun. For example, "Why does a cow wear a bell? Its horns don't work".

Cumulative
Cumulative humor is often written in a chain-story pattern. It is found in ancient folklore and can be illustrated by classics such as the English story, "For want of a nail." "For want of a nail, the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe, the horse was lost. For want of a horse, the rider was lost. For want of a rider, the battle was lost. For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost. And all for the want of a horseshoe nail."

Double Blunder
The double blunder is a type of absurdity which has been popular for centuries. Its basic nature is to portray a person who makes a mistake and, in the attempt to correct or explain it, makes another which is usually worse. There is a story about a man who was making a campaign speech: "My candidate is as honest a man as money can buy." The sudden laughter which greeted this remark made the speaker realize he had slipped, so he hastened to add: "He never stole a dollar in his life-- and all he asks is a chance." A man at a party turns to another and asks: "Who is that awful-looking lady in the corner?" "Why, that's my wife," says the second man. "Oh, I don't mean her," is the quick evasion. "I mean the lady next to her." "That," cries the man indignantly, "is my daughter."

Epigram
An epigram is an overall term for a prose witticism. A short & clever saying referring to a general group of persons or things. Through the devise of switching, an epigram may be changed into a wisecrack. Epigrams are mostly satire and deal with evils and follies of mankind. There are two basic types of epigrams, wordplay and thought play. All epigrams contain both, but generally one or the other dominates. For example, "The world should make peace first and then make it last". Here the verbal contrast is clearly more productive than the idea, where as in, "The best argument for everlasting peace is that it would enable us to finish paying for past wars." where the idea is wittier than the form of expression.

Epigrams are effective because of both what and how they are said. Take for example, "Most optimism is due to a lack of observation and so is pessimism." If you retain the idea and change the expression to, "Most optimism and pessimism are due to lack of observation", the epigram falls apart. There are two principle types of wordplay. Phonetic and non-phonetic. In phonetic, wit is based on sound effects, in non-phonetic, wit is derived from the relationship of words, not their sounds, For example, "Always do your best, but not your best friend" versus "We don't get ulcers from what we eat, but what is eating us."

Another form of epigram is the antonymism in which wordplay arises out of words of opposite meaning: "When you are right, no one remembers; when you are wrong, no one forgets." Similarly meaning or sounding words also create non-phonetic epigrams. "The U.S. is the land of the free, but some Americans take too many liberties."

Exaggerism
This type of comic saying amusingly overstates the special features, defects or peculiarities of a person or thing. The caricaturism is a form of exaggerism. Exaggerisms can deal with all types of subjects, from people to animals to impersonal things. The nature of exaggerism is hyperbolic witticisms. It is a comic saying employing condensed humor and hyperbole, an expanded kind of truth. Some examples are: "The kitchen was so small the mice had to walk on their hind legs." "She is so industrious, when she has nothing to do she sits and knits her brows." "A tree once grew so rapidly that it actually pulled itself up by its roots." In the early 1800's, this type of comic saying was referred to as a "Yankeeism" or "Jonathonism." They involved only a few words, but were funny because they were so ridiculous.
Extended Proverb

Of all twisted proverbs the most extensive class is the extended proverb. This is the proverb to which a clever tag is added, thereby changing a serious saying into an amusing one. An apple a day keeps the doctor away is a complete didactic proverb which becomes an extended twisticism by a simple addition: but an onion a day keeps everyone away. There's no fool like an old fool -- because he's had more experience. Money talks, but it has few intimates. Figures don't lie, except political figures. Talk is cheap, until it gets into love letters. Talk is cheap, except when you hire a lawyer. He who hesitates is probably torn between vice and versa. Some proverbs are of the sandwich species where additional words or phrases are put at both the beginning and end of a saying. No man knows if honesty is the best policy unless she has tried both. It's a good thing love is blind; otherwise it would see too much. Or the added phrase or word is put somewhere in the middle: A fool and his father's money are soon parted.

Fool's Query

A fool's query is a special kind of foolish question among the many found in comic literature. A question which is obviously foolish is answered in the spirit it deserves - more in civil mockery than in sneering. The reply is a form of irony which rhetoricians call *asteism*. Stories of this type in which the retort ironic is more courteous than bitter are often centered around persons whose work makes them the inevitable target of silly questions: A lecturer arrived at the meeting hall of a small town where he had been scheduled to give a talk. Noticing that there was no pitcher of water and a glass at the speaker's table, he called the chairman's attention to it. "Do you want it for drinking?" asked the chairman. "No," said the lecturer, "I do a high diving act." Then there was the guide who was explaining matters to a group of tourists. "And these rock formations were piled up by the glaciers," he said. "But where are the glaciers?" asked an elderly woman. "They've gone back, madam, to get some more rocks," was the reply.

Freudian Slip

The Freudian slip is a humorous statement which seems accidental, but supposedly comes from some deep psychological disturbance. An example of this is: "A woman who refused to attend a party with her husband because she loathed the hostess finally consented because it involved his business. She promised her husband she would act pleasant and agreeable. True to her word, she behaved charmingly to her hostess all evening. When they left, she shook hands with her hostess and said warmly, "It was so nice for us to come." Freud often discovered from the accidental slips of his patients, their subsurface thought processes and in this way was able to remove their neurotic symptoms. Slips include malaprops, boners, bulls and Goldwynisms.

Gag

The gag in popular parlance is any kind of joke, clever remark, or funny trick - a vague term for any intentional attempt to procure laughter. In its strict humorological sense, however, it is limited to a definite form of comic dialogue. It differs from the wisecrack because it is conversation rather than monologue, and from the joke because it involves no situation. The typical gag may involve a question and answer: "Did you get up with a grouch today?" "No, she got up before me." The absence of the situation permits easy adaptation of the gag into expanded forms, like comedy routines, and into a variety of switches, like comic sayings of all sorts. The earliest gags were nothing but conundrums and for decades the terms were interchangeable. Characteristic of early gags were question and answer dialogue: "What hens lay the longest?" "Dead ones."

Goldwynism

Goldwynisms are another form of a slip. Samuel Goldwyn, the movie man, was famous for mixing words. For example, "Tell them to put more life in their dying." "For your information, just answer me one question." "I'll give it to you in two words, UM POSSIBLE." "That movie. Terrible! Don't fail to miss it if you can." As with all slips, the Goldwynism is based on verbal errors.
The Hecklerism
The history of public speaking is no longer than the history of heckling. The noisy drunk interrupting the emcee or the smart alec showing how clever he was are typical situations calling for the emcee to have at his command a barrage of hecklerisms which would crush the annoyer while making the audience laugh. But since few people can rely on their ability to adlib, they memorized many such witticisms. *You're a day late. Yesterday was Amateur night. Why don't you find yourself a home in a wastebasket?* The hecklerism may be defined as any witty insult by a public entertainer directed against a person who annoys him with bothersome questions or remarks. Hecklerisms are often addressed to the audience: *This is the first time I've seen a pair of shoes with three heels.*

Hyperbole
Hyperbole is defined as extravagant exaggeration.

Irony
Irony is one of the leading elements in humor. It is the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning. The most common form of irony is the expression by which a person says the opposite of what they mean and the listener believes the opposite of what is said. Irony may be civil mockery, ingenious derision or a verbal sneer. It can be employed through contrast, understatement or imitation. It can be mockery masked in politeness. Irony can also be the subtle differences between appearance and reality; curious discrepancies between cause and effect, the relation between aim and achievement or between accident and design.

For example: Other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning: Tiny for a big person. Slim for a fat person. Contrast: *Upon finding out that his friend had won the lottery, he asked him, "are you excited?" *Me, excited?, I'm as calm as a man with his pants on fire.* Mockery masked in politeness: The tired store clerk had pulled down blanket after blanket until only one was left on the shelf. Then the customer remarked, "I don't really want to buy today, I am only looking for a friend." "Well, Madam," said the clerk, "I'll take down the last one if you think he's in it." Relation between aim and achievement: The two fishermen who had such a great haul of cod that day that their boat sank. Curious difference between cause and effect: When Lincoln was once told that a northern politician had expressed a strong dislike for him, he stroked his chin in perplexity. "That's odd," he said, "I can't understand why he dislikes me. I never did him any favors." Between aim and achievement: There was a young man who left town, went to a big city and made quite a name for himself. After 5 years absence he arrived at the train station in his old home town. Despite his expectations, there was no one at the platform he knew. Discouraged, he sought out the station master, his friend since childhood. To him at least he would be welcome, and he was about to extend a hearty greeting, when the other spoke first. "Hello, George," he said. "Going away?"

Joke
A joke is a brief oral narrative with a humorous climactic twist. This definition is especially important and will be discussed in the section on delivery.

The Little Willie
Originally published in a volume of comic verse called *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes*, written by Harry Graham in 1899, these rhymes were mostly quatrains. The imitations took the form of simpler couplet rhymes and were given the name little Willie: *Willie saw some dynamite, Couldn't understand it quite; Curiosity never pays: It rained Willie seven days.* It was the element of sadism, turned toward a juvenile direction in the imitative quatrains, that led to the popular expression, *"to give one the willies*", meaning to make one highly nervous. *Little Willie shot his sister, She was dead before we missed her. Willie's always up to tricks. Ain't he cute? He's only six.*

Malapropism
The French term mal-a-propos means inappropriate or out of place. It is the misuse of vernacular or using one word for another due to ignorance. Mixing up words such as electrocution for elocution, irritation for irrigation, etc. When Mrs. Malaprop, a character in a play by Sheridan, is accused of using words she does not understand, she replies, "If I apprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs."

Marshallism

Thomas Marshall was Vice President of the United States under Woodrow Wilson. A famous quip made his name a byword outside of Washington years ago and upon which his fame today chiefly rests. **What this country needs is a good 5 cents cigar.** Like many other brands of twist-witticisms it had remained nameless until Marshall's example rang the bell. The verbal opening of the Marshallism inclines it to satire and this has saved it from the quick obsolescence of most twisted sayings. **What this country needs is a good five-cent nickel.** **What this country needs is a good five-cent psychiatrist.** **What this country needs is the spirit of '76 and the prices of '36.** The satiric Marshallism is conducive to verbal effects with equal excellence -- wordplay, anonymisms, parody, etc.: **What this country needs is less judges and more judgment.** **What this country needs is the spirit of '76 and the prices of '36.**

Mistaken Identity

Mistaken identity is the standard term for the comic confusion of one person with another, or one thing with another, due to similarities, common characteristics, or suggestive circumstances. Similar to a Fool's story, it usually portrays an ignorant person or simpleton, who, seeing or hearing something for the first time, mistook it for something else. **Then there was the young wife who had found it impossible to manage her refractory husband.** So she planned on a change of tactics. Instead of berating him, when he came home drunk, she decided to be affectionate and forgiving. The next time he returned intoxicated, she addressed him tenderly: "Sit down, honey. I'll get your slippers and then you can sit on my lap." The husband looked at her in bewilderment, his mind befuddled, and then said: "Oh, I might as well. I'll get hell anyway when I get home."

Nonsensism

The nonsensism is any species of comic nonsense in the form of a saying. It includes virtually every kind of absurdity from mock logic to fantastic common sense, and a variety of fallacies without rhyme or reason. The two principal classes of this sort of saying are the epigram and the wisecrack. The epigram makes a general observation of absurd reference: **The only opportunity a fish has to take a shower bath is to jump when it rains.** Another good way to keep your hair from falling out is to knot it on the inside. The wisecrack always makes some ridiculous reference to a specific person or thing: **She has more money than she can afford.** **If there is anything I dislike, it's one thing more than another.** Like other types of nonsense, this saying is essentially a ludicrous combination of wit and blunder. **My father and mother are first cousins -- that's why I look so much alike.** **If a monkey wore shoes on his hind feet, would they be gloves?**

Parkerism

The English language contains numerous words which have originated with the names of real or imaginary persons. We laugh at Freudian slips, we raise Cain, etc. Sometimes these eponyms stem from fictional figures like the malapropism from Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop and Wellerisms from Dickens' Sam Weller. They come too from real people like Spoonerisms from William Spooner, Marshallisms from Thomas Marshall and Goldwynisms from Samuel Goldwyn. Since most specimens of eponymous humor represent illustrative sayings or twisted witticisms, the suffix -ism is usually added to the person's name. The Parkerism takes its name from a rhyming epigram, originally a couplet, by Dorothy Parker, the short story writer and legendary wit of Broadway. **Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses.** This was imitated by many wits: **Men always make passes at girls who quaff glasses.** The sophisticated nature of the Parkerism promoted its popularity. It dealt with women, sex appeal or the relations between sex. **Men seldom win**
sweeties with tearful entreaties.

Parody

Esar defines parody as the comic imitation of any well-known writing. There are two general classes of parody, one where satire is dominant and the other where wordplay is more important. Nursery rhymes are the sources of most parodies in jocular literature; most parodies are verse imitations because form is more important in verse than in prose. An example of a parody: Don't worry if your job is small, And your rewards are few; Remember that the mighty oak was once a nut like you.

Pendulum

Another form of comic chain is the pendulum where the back and forth motion between one opinion or expression to another is evident. The form, found in a sentence is its simplest form. "A dog is an animal that may or may not be kept as a pet, that either can or cannot be used for hunting, and that serves or doesn't serve for guarding property". You may remember the conversations that go back and forth, alternating between the opinion that something is good news and bad news.

The Personifier

The personifier is a comic saying based on a celebrity's most typical trait. Personifiers can also be wisecracks because they deal with famous characters who personify universal traits. Since the wit always overstates the peculiarity or defect associated with a famous person, it is in a sense a thumbnail caricature. Thus the personifier is related to the caricaturism as well as the biogram. Calvin Coolidge was the symbol of silence. A personifier of Calvin Coolidge was: Cal was so silent, he was always worth listening to. Exaggeration makes up the personifiers about Izaak Walton who wrote "The Compleat Angler", a classic on fishing. He was typed as a fisherman in comic sayings: Izaak Walton once fished in a lake where the bass were so ferocious, he had to hide behind a tree to bait his hook. Another basic element in this type of wisecrack is overstatement. The special train which characterizes the famous figure is always exaggerated. Samson's strength, for example, is not illustrated in the personifer but caricatured. "Samson was so strong, he could lift himself by his hair three feet off the ground."

The Practical Joke

The term derives from the fact that it is a joke put into action or practice, as opposed to a verbal joke. In other words, the point of a spoken joke you hear, the point of a printed joke you see, the point of a practical joke you feel. America's contribution to the art is the gadget; the gadget prank being the most unoriginal of all such jokes. In essence, the practical joke is a rough or discomforting trick played on another person, the humor arising out of what is done rather than what is said. An excellent book on the subject is "The Compleat Practical Joke" by H. Allen Smith which presents the practical jokes of famous masters of the art such as Douglas Fairbanks, Alexander Woollcott, Darryl Zanuck and Anatole France.

Pun

You have likely heard the expression, that puns are the lowest form of humor. And also likely, when someone comes up with a pun, the result is usually a groan. Puns are wordplay, either inadvertent or intended linguistic reversals. Puns are a many flavored style of humor. They include tangletalk, marrowskys and commonly, Spoonerisms. Puns involve the play of words with similar sounds and meanings. Often they are the unintentional reversal of words and their parts, often resulting in humorous new concoctions of meaning and sound. These are in many cases, forms of malapropism. While puns, spoonerisms, malaprops can be humorous, they should be chosen with care. Earlier I mentioned that they are often received with a groan from the audience. Why might that be? In humorous speech, you want to entertain and uplift your audience. Your object is to make them feel better by having them recognize and appreciate humor. Puns though, while very clever and creative, tend to suggest the cleverness of the creator. Puns, while funny, do not have the salutary effect of other forms of humor. They are clever and, when used properly, can
effectively illustrate a point.

Recovery
The comic recovery is a combination of blunder and wit. A person commits a faux pas but rescues himself by a quick correction or explanation. A honeymoon couple were at a railroad station at the beginning of their great adventure, and the bridegroom through habit asked for a single ticket. His bride who was standing beside him at the window said: "But, John, you're buying only one ticket." The young man made a quick recovery. "How stupid of me, darling. I'd completely forgotten about myself." No less quick thinking was the employee who was found asleep by his foreman. "Good heavens!" he cried upon being awakened. "Can't a man close his eyes for a few minutes of prayer?" At another large dinner party a financier was placed next to a lady whose name he didn't catch. During the first course he noticed at the left of the host a man who had bested him in a business transaction. "Do you see that man?" he muttered to his dinner partner. "If there's a man on earth I hate, he's it." The lady straightened up. "Why," she exclaimed, "that's my husband." "Yes, I know," answered the financier with rapid gallantry. "That's why I hate him." Then there's the story about the grocery shopper who was making a scene because he wanted to buy a half head of lettuce. The cashier, frustrated, ran back to the manager, not knowing that the customer was right behind. "Some idiot wants to buy this half head of lettuce" he said, then noticing the customer. "And this gentleman wants to buy the other half."

The Relapse
The comic relapse is the counterpart of the comic recovery. A person does something cunning or says something clever but discovers that it is really a blunder. The conclusion jumper, a funny story named after the misjudgment which results from jumping at conclusions, is one of the leading types of comic relapse. Like the agitated young man who ran frantically down the ferry slip, leaped across a strip of water, and landed with a crash on the deck of the boat. "Well," he gasped, as he picked himself up, "I made it!" "What's your hurry?" asked a deck hand. "The boat's coming in." and A man bought a railroad ticket, picked up his change, and walked off. After a few minutes he returned and said to the agent: "You gave me the wrong change." "Sorry, sir," replied the man behind the window. "You should have called my attention to it at the time." "Okay," acquiesced the passenger, "you gave me five dollars too much."

Repartee
Repartee is the branch of wit that covers clever replies and retorts. But for all of the reported instances of true repartee, the majority are in reality like that old saying, "I wish I'd said". Mark Twain defined repartee as, "something we think of 24 hours too late." One famous story is about the artist Whistler and Oscar Wilde. The famous painter had once said something brilliant at a table conversation and the famous writer turned to him with the complimentary, "I wish I'd said that." Whereupon Whistler retorted, "You will, Oscar, you will." Most instances relating to famous people are spurious. Made up later. Kinsey, the sexologist, was once lecturing on his favorite subject to a mixed audience. At the end of his talk, during the q & a period, one woman got up and asked, "Tell me Dr. Kinsey, what is really the vital difference between a man and a woman?" "Madam, I can not conceive," readily replied the celebrated authority.

Repartee includes the insult, the double insult, reversible and parallel. The most prevalent form of repartee is the insult. Two women are talking. One says: "I refused to marry Bob three months ago and he's been drinking ever since." The other replies, "That's what I call carrying a celebration too far!" The double insult is a situation when one person affronts another only to be crushed in return. One person, a member of the Algonquin Wits, Dorothy Parker, was famous for her rapier wit. A friendly enemy said to her, "I'm sorry, I quite forgot your party last night." "Oh, weren't you there?" replied Dorothy in mock surprise. Reversible repartee is another frequent type. Like the case of the doctor who was interviewing a new patient. "If I find an operation necessary," he asked, "would you have money to pay for it?" "And if I didn't have the money," returned the man, "would you find the operation necessary?" An example of parallel repartee is a story told about Ilka Chase. An actress congratulated Ilka Chase on her latest book. "I enjoyed it immensely," she said. "Who wrote it for you?" "I'm glad you liked it," smiled Ilka showing her fangs. "Who read it to you?"
Repeatism

The use of repetition to gain special effects is fairly common in all kinds of speech and writing. In popular humor, repetition is present largely in comic sayings. These repeatisms derive their clever effects from the duplicaton or triplication of a word or phrase: *There is no time like the present for a present. Public opinion is what people think other people think.* The repeatism often resorts to compound shifts of wordplay: *There is more than the shore to see at the seashore.* These effects are often the opposite of puns where one word usually represents more than one meaning. The comic emphasis or repetition is cleverly illustrated in the movie courtship of Groucho Marx when he is flattering a wealthy widow. "You're so beautiful and so rich," he says, "and so charming and so rich, and so intelligent and so rich." Sometimes repeatisms and epigrammatic wit are combined in close relation and the witticisms fits either. As Mark Twain said: "He liked to like other people, therefore people like him."

Reversible

One of the most common elements in humor is the reversal. It may relate to a change in language, situation or ideas. Dr. Jarvis talks about the way people greet the morning. Some say "Good Morning Lord!", Some say, "Good Lord, morning". Then there was the dustbowl story about a man who, after a drought that had lasted many months, felt the first few drops of rain and fainted. He had to be revived by having a bucket of dust thrown in his face.

Round

The round is humor based on a circular course and ends where it begins. Rounds may be short or long. In a small town a man used to call the telephone operator every morning and ask her for the correct time. After several weeks the curious operator asked him why he did so. "I have to be very careful about the right time," he explained, "because I blow the noon whistle at the factory." "That's strange," she answered, "Why, every day at noon I set our clock by your whistle."

Sarcasm

Dr. Charles Jarvis defined sarcasm as "humor barbed with contempt". Sarcasm is one of the lower branches of irony commonly found in gags and funny stories. It is a verbal sneer compounded of ridicule and contempt and usually directed by one person at another. Then there was the man who bought a half dozen apples in a fancy New York fruit shop. "That will be $1.75, sir," said the clerk. The customer handed him two dollars and proceeded to walk out. "You forgot your change, sir," called the clerk. "Never mind. You keep it," sarcasted the customer. "I stepped on a grape on the way in." Like other forms of irony, sarcasm employs words to represent something quite different from their literal meaning. The cream of the jest lies in a person's unawareness of the ridicule which is concealed behind these taunts. Like the woman who said to her husband when she arrived home in her car which was badly smashed in front: "And the traffic cop was very nice about the accident. He asked me if I'd like to have the city remove all of the telephone poles."

Satire

Merriam Websters Collegiate Dictionary defines satire this way: trenchant wit, irony or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly. Public speakers planning to use satire in their presentations need to tread lightly. Especially if any of the material is aimed at the audience to whom they are speaking. The synonym of satire is wit. We go back to Dr. Jarvis's phrase, "humor pictures, wit punctures". If you have earned the position as a noted and well known commentator on life and satire is your natural weapon, then go for it. Otherwise, in order to uplift your audience and help them remember, use good clean humor and stay away from pointed or critical humor.

Situational Humor

I define situational humor as "humorous situations from your own experience". Situational humor does
not require that you memorize a punch line because it is based on a situation that itself is humorous. Even better, if it is a situation you personally have experienced, then no one in the audience will have heard it. If it relates to your subject, that is even better. Like any humor told by the speaker, about the speaker, it can warm up a group to you and be extremely funny as well. You are not telling a joke, but I can assure you that, if well told, you can expect a lot of hearty laughter. So when you start to look for material, do not overlook the rich resources of your own personal experiences. They may be sufficient to carry the whole talk, and nobody will have heard them.

**Slanting**
To relate humor to the audience, fill in/embellish with factual material known to the audience. Slanting requires an element of truth. Slanting enhances believability.

**Spoonerism**
Spoonerisms constitute a special type of wordplay, the defining element being "linguistic reversal". The are also known as transposition puns, metathesis, turnabouts, reversals, marrowskys and tangletalk. Unintentional reversals are a form of malapropism, where the mind switches words or parts of words without intending to do so. They may also be deliberate and can be built into jokes that are carefully scripted with a set up and a punchline where the reversal occurs. They are an example of humor that is created by incongruity, where the contrast between two images is startling or absurd. As Mae West stated, "It's not the men in your life, it's the life in your men". An excellent paperback on Spoonerisms and their background is "Cruel and Unusual Puns" by Don Hauptman.

**Switching**
When considering the humorous content of a joke or story, 1st you will look for the key elements of that story. You can switch the setup, the punchline, the concept, or even the time frame. This allows you to take one joke, switch certain elements and come up with another joke.

**Tall Tale**
Folklore has contributed greatly to the creation of tall tales. In its briefest form, a tall tale is an exaggeration, a nonsensical extravagance expressed in the form of a witticism such as My home town is so tough, all the canaries sing bass. The tall Tale itself is a more extended form, a yarn or anecdote with a looser, less definite structure. When I was a lad I was once visiting my grandfather in the mountains. We were sitting on the porch, with grandpa puffing away on his corn cob pipe and telling me about the strange experiences he had in his time. I crawled down into the yard to get a stick to whittle on when out of the brush came a big grizzly bear. He grabbed me and knocked me down. I thought I was a goner, but grandpa took a deep puff and blew a big smoke-ring that settled down on the bear's nose. It jammed his jaws so tight together that he couldn't bite me. While he was trying to claw the smoke-ring off, grandpa blew another and bound the bear up tight. Then he blew a third one that wound around the grizzly's neck and strangled him.

**Twist-Wit**
Twist-wit is the standard term for the distortion and contortion of any kind of popular expression. The most fertile class of twist-wit, and also the most fertile class of epigrams, is the twisted proverb. The didactic nature of the proverb, its sententious form, and its familiar variety combine to make it a never-ending source for this brand of comedy. For example, Familiarity breeds contempt & Children should be seen and not hurt. Familiarity breeds attempt. Familiarity breeds. Children should be seen and not obscene. Sopranos should be seen and not heard. Twist-wit is the antithesis of tangletalk which comprises twisted blunders. It may be a neat distortion of ideas, a skillful shift in situation or any amusing turnabout. When it is a linguistic twist, it may take the form of reversible wordplay, as in Oscar Wilde's classic transposer: A man once remarked that drink was the curse of
the working classes. Wilde responded: "And work is the curse of the drinking classes."

The Typographical Error

Printer's errors are usually spelling puns. As in the pun, which is essentially spoken although it is commonly read, the humor of the printed slip lies in the different meaning that a slight change creates. A drastic change in the spelling, by removing the resemblance between what was intended and what really is, would destroy the humor just as the wit in oral puns is lost when the sounds of two words are not very closely related. Mr. & Mrs. William Bates will entertain at open house Sunday, from three until tight. Most of the guests fled into the early morning cold with cats hastily thrown over their night clothes. Dr. Jones returned from Europe yesterday and will take up his cuties at the hospital.

Understatement

Statements are one kind of thing, but anything whatever that does not measure up to some accepted standard of size, degree, quantity or intensity, can be the cause of laughter. Charlie Chaplin's mustache may be described as an understatement in this sense just as his shoes are an exaggeration. Gargantuans are an overstatement and Lilliputians an understatement of man. It is not funny to be little however. The funny thing is to be too little. Lincoln's well-loved story about the dog who swallowed a bomb with the fuse attached and was scattered all over the landscape, is a good example of understatement. "Rover was a good dog," his master said, "but as a dog I am afraid his days of usefulness are over." Waiting to be whipped - says Josh Billings - iz the most uninteresting period of boyhood life. The fascination of shooting as a sport depends almost wholly on whether you at the right or the wrong end of the gun.

Wellerism

The Wellerism is a comic saying in which a quoted phrase or remark illustrates a concrete instance. This form of humor remained unnamed for centuries before Charles Dickens put many of these sayings in the mouth of Mr. Pickwick's devoted servant, Sam Weller. "We would like very much to have you for dinner," as the cannibal said to the captured missionary. "Virtue is in the middle," as the devil said when he seated himself between two politicians. "Pretty swell joint you have here," as the doctor said when he examined his patient's knee. "Oh, how those ingrown hares do hurt!" as the rabbit said when she gave birth to a litter. The quotation may be a proverb or exclamation: "Business before pleasure," as the man said when he kissed his own wife. "Well, I'll be damned!" as the little brook said when the elephant sat down in it. The Wellerism structure consists of a quotation followed by as the.

Wisecrack

A word generally applied to any clever remark. A wisecrack is a distinct form of witticism dealing with a particular person or thing. Most wisecracks are made up of wordplay, often referring to an individual and often a caricature in capsule form. The characteristic opening is "he" or "she", but may also be 1st person singular or about any person: He is a man of letters, he works at the post office. I live in an apartment, overlooking the rent. My mother-in-law sits around all day grieving because she hasn't a fortune with which to disinherit me. Emcees or comedians may use the 1st person singular if they do not have a partner or straightman. Wisecracks were developed originally for radio because there was a need for humorous material that was quick and not time consuming. Overuse led to the development of patterned wisecracks such as the exaggerism, a witticism overstating something about a person or thing. Most popular forms ridiculed the special traits of an individual by means of absurd illustration: His teeth have so many cavities, he talks with an echo.

Wit

Wit is defined as, "the power to evoke laughter by remarks showing verbal felicity or ingenuity and swift perception, especially of the incongruous". Synonymous with wit are, humor, irony, sarcasm, satire and repartee, which are all modes of expression intended to arouse amusement. But there is another element to wit which Dr. Jarvis explains by saying, "Wit punctures, humor pictures.” A person with wit delivers witticisms
which are defined as cleverly witty and often biting or ironic remarks with the ability to relate seemingly disparate things so as to illuminate or amuse.

Wordplay

Wordplay refers to verbal wit. Most forms of humor are based on wordplay. A practical joke played on someone, based on some physical action would not be wordplay. In your arsenal of humor, which should be at your fingertips, you should be aware of the many forms of wordplay.

Part 4. Delivery

One question that comes up most often when discussing humor is delivery. Delivery could be defined as the ability of the speaker to present the humorous material in the most effective way. How many times have you heard a person tell a long, labored, complicated joke, only to swallow the ending and leave everyone frustrated? You may have heard that anyone can tell a joke. Well, perhaps. But a joke is only the raw material; it must be crafted to fit smoothly into your talk, without telegraphing to your audience that a zinger is on the way. And, as a speaker, you are not there to tell jokes.

Humorous speakers do not just tell jokes. They use humor to effectively illustrate their message.

You are likely there to educate and/or entertain. If you are there to educate, a judicious use of humor in your talk will keep the audience with you, always waiting for the next gem. Their attention will be to you and your message. If you are there strictly to entertain, then a string of jokes will not be the way to go either.

How many jokes can you stand at one sitting? If you listen to Dr. Jarvis, you will hear how he smoothly intertwines humorous stories, jokes and other material seamlessly and effortlessly. He is a humorist. His approach to presenting humor however, can provide excellent training for speakers who wish to incorporate humor to make a point during a relatively serious presentation.

A look at the definition of a joke will have direct bearing on your ability to "deliver" humor. Consider the definition: A joke is a brief oral narrative with a climactic humorous twist. Within that simple definition lies two critical points you must know to use humor successfully. First of all, it is BRIEF. Second, it has a climactic twist. For humor to work, it must spring upon the mind in an unexpected way, without a long drawn out set-up. When you incorporate humor into your talk, it should slide in naturally. The setup must be direct and to the point, without too much embellishment. If you throw in all of the bells and whistles, going to extremes to paint the picture, you may telegraph the existence of the humor, thereby reducing its effectiveness. As for the climactic twist, make every effort to put it at the very end of the story.

The closer the twist is to the very end, the more effective the surprise. What you are delivering is the setup of the humor followed by the climactic humorous twist. In today's quick paced environment, people don't like to hear jokes that are too "built up". They like things to be brief, concise and neat. And the same goes for the climactic humorous twist. It must be neat, absolutely clear and sudden. An excellent discussion of the elements of successful delivery is presented in Eastmans, Enjoyment of Laughter. He presents in detail his Ten Commandments of the Comic Arts; all relate to delivery and the type of humor used.

You can improve your delivery through regular practice. One thing you can control is the length of the pause before delivering the punchline. Jack Benny was famous for his ability to use the pause to heighten the impact of the punchline. Timing can make the difference between a joke that is extremely effective and one that flops. It is concerned with the amount of time delay between the end of the setup of the joke and the delivery of a punchline. Too short a time and the impact is lessened by the abrupt end of the joke. It is your task to listen to the delivery of punchlines by professionals and to see how they wait until just the right amount of time has passed before they deliver the punchline. In your practice, notice how you can vary the delay to achieve the most effective results.
To use humor effectively, your materials need to be practiced and perfected. How do you do that? The answer is simple. Once you have found material that looks promising, work on it in your mind. Roll it over. Massage it. Look for ways to make it appear spontaneous. Connect it to the important points of your message, weaving it in as a seamless part of your patter. Make it yours. Earlier I mentioned that long jokes were not appreciated. To clarify, I should say that jokes with too much "hair" are not appreciated. Have you ever heard someone say, "He's carrying it to far"? What is being carried too far? Humorous stories are an exception and Charlie's "The Bird" story is one. He is famous in speaking circles for his delivery of this gem. Not only can you learn delivery by practicing this humorous story, but if done right, you will create gales of hearty laughter in the process. But, if you are going to tell it, be sure you have the time. You can hear it on his "Things are more like they are now than they ever were" cassette tape. This one story is a classic for learning delivery, timing and style.

Mark Twain said, "The humorous story is strictly a work of art -- high and delicate art -- and only and artist can tell it; but no art is necessary in telling the comic and witty story; anybody can do it". Perhaps, but even telling jokes takes some skill. "The Bird" is however, a humorous story with the added value of a punchline. I have heard it ruined by several well-meaning speakers. Learn it word for word and practice it so that each separate part generates its own laughter. Pace, intonation, pauses all are critical elements that can be used to make this bird story fly or flop. It is a long humorous story with many details. Don't try it out until you can do it well. Then, tell it as often as possible, practicing your delivery. If you need to illustrate the importance of being detail oriented in customer service, you may find that you can use this in a public speaking situation. But for now, practice this on friends, once you have it down well. Here is the story, verbatim as spoken by Dr. Jarvis. Note the lines in bold. Each offer an opportunity to add humor to the presentation. Work on getting the best effect at each point.

The Bird Story

A man just wants to buy a bird. That's all. Goes into a bird store. Hundreds of Birds. Little yellow birds. He's trying to make a wise choice. They all look the same. They are all $4.95. You can tell because there is a little yellow tag hanging from their legs. He's going round. He's going around, trying to make a wise choice, reading all of these tags. Goes over in the corner. $136.50 He goes back up to the proprietor. You trying to pull a fast one on me? Trying to make a wise choice here, select a bird, they all look the same. Except, you've got one kinda hidden back over there in the corner, must be different because he's $136.50, not $4.95. The proprietor says, "You're pretty sharp aren't you? You devil you, I'll bet it didn't take you 5 minutes to find him. That bird is different. He not only sings, he talks." Well that's the one I want, wrap him up.

So he takes him home. The next day he brings him back. He didn't sing, he didn't talk either. Hmmmm, well he did down here. He didn't at my house. He says, Well, did he peck on his little bell? He said bell? Oh well, you didn’t buy a bell, you need a bell. They need music you've got music, stereo, television, everything else. They need a bell, happy bird, pecks on the bell. Starts singing, talking. Well how much is a bell? $6 Dollars. Well, that makes sense, I believe I'll take a bell.

He goes home, he comes back the next day, he doesn’t bring the bird this time, but he says the bird didn’t sing. He didn't talk, he did peck on his bell. He said, Did he climb his little ladder? I guess I should have bought a ladder. He said, don’t blame yourself. That’s my business. I’m the salesperson down here. I’m supposed to offer these things that benefit you. Of course the bird needs a ladder. Up and down the ladder. You jog, you get your exercise, the bird needs exercise. Healthy bird, sing, talk, happy, peck on the bell. Well, he said, "I've got to admit, there is a lot of logic there. How much is a ladder? $11 Dollars. Well he said, alright, I'm going to take the ladder.

He comes back the next day. He didn't sing, he didn't talk, he did peck on his little bell and he climbed his little ladder. Did he look in his little mirror? He said, Now you are going to tell me I need a
mirror. No I’m not, you’ve got a mirror. The bird needs a mirror. You’ve got a mirror, you preen in your mirror. The bird wants to preen, the bird gets to looking in that mirror, thinks there’s another bird and tries to carry on a conversation, starts talking. Well he said, “How much is a mirror”. $16 Dollars. He says, “OK Buster, I tell ya, I’m going to see this thing through, right to the bitter end. I’m taking a mirror”.

He comes back the next day. He said, he did not sing, he did not talk, he did look in his little mirror, he climbed his little ladder and he pecked on his little bell. And I know because I dragged a chair up there, I didn’t go to work and I watched him all day. He said, “Did he swing on his little swing”? He said, gimme a swing.

He came back the next day, he said, “the bird’s dead”! The bird’s dead? That’s what I said, the bird’s dead, I can tell a little dead bird can’t I? Feet Up. Well, did he ever sing? No, but you would have been proud of that bird. This morning when I took his cover off he looked happy and health. He looked directly at me and then he went over there and pecked on that little bell, hopped over to the ladder and went about half way up, and I put the mirror about half way up and I’m not saying a bird can smile, but looked like he did. Went on up to the top of the ladder, jumped over to the swing, he’s swinging, swinging, right before he toppled off, he looked at me and said, “They didn’t sell bird seed”?

Now. Think about that humorous story. Look at all of the different humorous points. Write it out word for word. Notice that it is a conversation between two people. It is written to sound like conversation that is spoken, not written. It builds. Each trip back to the store increases the humorous tension building for the punch line, yet each trip has its own opportunities for humor. Make this joke your own. Polish it to perfection; it is a gem that you do not want to squander. Work it through carefully and give it with confidence.

**Part 5. Know Your Audience**

If you are going to use humor in your speaking, it is critical to know your audience. Find out all you can about their demographics, their interests, their political leanings, their favorite sports teams, everything. This will prevent you from putting your foot in your mouth by accident. It will also give you a good base from which to draw your materials. Service clubs will have histories that should be studied. They will have famous members that all members will know. They will have procedures, rituals and idiosyncrasies that can be fertile ground for humor. Are they hostile or friendly towards your position? Is your presentation to be given on an occasion special to the group. The more you know about your audience, the better you will serve their needs and be able to relate to their strongly held feelings. As a humorous speaker, you must be acutely aware of subject matter and the psychology of the audience. If you inject a bit of humor that the audience definitely does not receive "in fun", you are asking for trouble. A sensitivity to their background, interests, political leanings, mores and beliefs is vital if you are to entertain with humor without insulting your audience. As we proceed through this introduction to humor, I will provide you with a several rules; guidelines that are essential and must be followed.

An inappropriate reference can take them out of "in fun" instantly! The study of humor is complex and its components are tightly intertwined, so we may well return to these key rules repeatedly, in different contexts and situations.

Another consideration is topical humor related to the group that you are speaking to. Find out all you can about the group. Investigate well known individuals, customs, history and special observances of the group. This falls into the "know your audience" category. Talk to the program chair, look over the organizations publications, talk to long-time members. In my home town, a long time member of Kiwanis was well known for his humorous quips that appeared in their newsletter. They were collected and published as a fund raiser. What made the collection so interesting was that many quips used the names of well known local business leaders and Kiwanis members.
As with any presentation, it must be said again, that humor must be used with good taste. As a professional you cannot afford to make any blunders or use questionable humor. You'll need a general message that can be a substantial framework in which your humor can reside. The humor you use will be drawn from jokes (raw material adapted to your situation) and situational humor that presents a humorous picture. Dr. Jarvis is a master at this, using his incredible repertoire of humorous stories to support a strong message of hope, happiness and the need for responsibility. If he does tell a joke, he tells you he is going to do so. Your use of humor will depend in large part on the occasion. How you will use humor will be based on the nature of the event. An awards ceremony for example, with a serious purpose to recognize those who have accomplished great things, might not be well served by a humorous presentation of awards. A technical paper presentation might not seem a place for humor, but considering the potential for inducing sleep in the audience, might well be a place to inject some humor, as long as it fits in well and does not seem to be tagged on. In such a situation it may be difficult to find appropriate materials. One place to look is in the trade magazines and technical journals in your field. And don't just look in current issues. Go back several years to find "fresh" humor. Changing times may cause some items to lose their edge, but may also share a unique perspective as to the changing knowledge of the field.

Part 6. Sources of Material

By now you may be wondering where you can find good, clean humor that you can use in your talks. The answer is everywhere. To start, listen in on conversations when you are in public. Sitting in a restaurant, a bar, going to a store, wherever you are, listen to people around you. You would be amazed at how much humorous material surrounds you every day. Listen for comments that make people laugh. Again, ask yourself why. Take the germ of what was said, study the meaning and the punch line, look for applications in your own field of interest. Watch for humorous situations; simply be aware of material. The humor that is the most effective is humor that you have experienced yourself. Personal situations that no one else knows about or can copy. Look for personal stories that have an element of self-effacing humor. Remember the definition of humor? A painful thing told playfully. Once you are attuned to the search for new material, you'll find it everywhere.

Don't all talks that use humor rely on jokes? If they did, how would you know if your audience had already been exposed to humor you were planning to use? The answer is simple, you wouldn't. And here is another important point. As long as you rely on jokes as the raw material for humor in your talk, you are at a disadvantage. You may have heard that there is nothing new under the sun, well that applies equally to jokes. If you draw your materials from current sources, you may end up presenting jokes that are known and consequently, not funny for those who have heard them already. There are two things you can do to alleviate this problem. First, look for material in places that are dated several years prior. You may well find an appropriate gem that can be polished and presented that is likely "new" to your audience. Second, you can use situational humor.

Printed sources. One of the best is the Readers Digest. Not the new issues, but old issues that have had time to be forgotten. The material is excellent, clean and likely can be adapted to your needs.

Joke books. You have to skim the cream. You may read 100 jokes and only find one that really fits your style or subject. Write that one down. Then there are publications like Orben's Current Comedy Corner that offer new humor on current events. You'll often hear his work presented by the likes of Paul Harvey.

Internet. Today, perhaps the best source for material, organized by subject matter, is the world wide web. Search for humor and you will find close to 2,000 possible sites. They are often categorized by subject matter. This can be a great way to find humor for your own unique field of application.
Part 7. In Conclusion

When I realized how incredibly complicated the study of humor was, I decided just to try and present a brief look at the subject. This will get you started on your own exploration of the subject. If you would like a copy of my concise 4-page study guide, please let me know.

If you are interested in speaking on the circuit and believe you have the ability to see the humor in every day’s life and problems, you should consider the CDs of Dr. Jarvis’s talks and workshops. They will be an invaluable asset in your studies and are available online. In addition, you will find a variety of resources online at ON HUMOR that you may be able to use for both public speaking and speaking on the circuit as a professional.

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www.squaresail.com/ohnumor.html
www.drcharlesjarvis.com
tony@squaresail.com

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Dr. Charles W. Jarvis spoke on the professional circuit for over 30 years, bringing his unique brand of humor and hearty, healthy laughter to audiences across the U.S. He received the Mark Twain Award for Humor, Toastmasters Golden Gavel Award and is a member of the International Speakers Hall of Fame. His ability to deliver a serious message on life, love, patriotism, honesty, responsibility, faith and hope with a large dose of humor was his hallmark. As he would say though, "I'm not here to make you laugh, I'm here to make you think". He used clean humor to effectively illustrate his message; his dedication to the study of humor helped make him the best. While few can fill his shoes, there is much we can all learn from his flawless delivery and extraordinary talent for humor.

Your Personal Perspective on and Interest in the Use of Humor

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<td>100%  90%  80%  70%  60%  50%  40%  30%  20%  10%  0%</td>
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Ask Yourself: Can I really use humor? If your answer is no, then don't. Your credibility is at stake........

The Psychology of Humor

Should we study the psychology of humor?
Why do we laugh?
What makes something funny?
What is a sense of humor?
What is meant by "In Fun"?

The art is in using clean humor to entertain.
Dr. Charles W. Jarvis

Tools of the Craft: Types of Humor

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Mechanics

What physical audience & lectern arrangements are the most conducive to the success of a humorous presentation?
What type of humorous speaker requires the most careful public address system setup?
What concerns should you discuss with the program chairperson when asked to present a humorous talk?
What type of introduction should you provide and how should you work with the Master of Ceremonies?
What type of speaking situations and audiences should you avoid?
Selection of Material

How much material do you need?
What type of material? (One liners, jokes, humorous stories? Satire? Wit punctures, Humor Pictures.)
Will the audience understand it? (Is it too subtle?)
What subjects should be avoided? (Religion, Politics, Minorities, Handicaps, Blue Humor, etc.)
Where do you find fresh material? (How old is fresh?)
What material is always fresh and can not be used as effectively by other people?
For audience specific material, where do you find out about their concerns and sensitivities?
How do you minimize your audience' sensitivity? (Use of self-depracating humor.)
Who are safe targets in your audience and how do you handle remarks about specific individuals?
How do you categorize and file humor?

What are good sources of material?
Literary humor collections. Humorous but do not lend themselves easily to speaking.
Joke collections. May require switching and slanting to fit audience and speech purpose.
Magazines such as Readers Digest are good, search older issues to find "fresh" materials.
Internet. Best way to find humor on specific subjects by searching.
Cartoons. Interpreting cartoons into verbal presentation may offer good source.
Trade Journals. Use company/industry literature to find humor that the audience will relate to.
Personal Experience
Everywhere......Ask yourself, Why did they laugh?

What questions should you ask yourself when evaluating potential humorous material?
Is it clean? Can I use it? What does it illustrate? How many categories does it fit in?
What does it lead into? What does it follow?

Speech Structure & Delivery

How and where can you incorporate what you know about the audience into your talk?
How and should you incorporate information you know about individuals in the audience?
Use knowledge of audience to structure opening remarks:
1. Your introduction
2. Your response to your introduction either planned or adlibbed. (Say the unexpected.)
3. General Remarks to audience. This is a class group.
4. Specific remarks about person in audience after receiving permission.
5. Get into your subject, being sure that the story relates to your topic.
6. Conclusion

How do you arrange material for the best effect? (Time vs. Intensity; Continuity of illustrations)
How do you Piggyback? (Using humorous remarks of someone well-known, then build on your own material)
How do you get into the humor unnoticed? (Not "Have you heard the one.")
How does delivery differ between types of humorist speakers? (Comedian vs. Humorist vs. Point Maker)
What if they don't laugh?
How can you use the knowledge of the difference between the written and spoken formats of humor to improve.
What are Bits, Chunks and Pieces and how do they support delivery of humorous material?
What type of speaker would use Bits, Chunks and Pieces?
How can we improve the effectiveness of the punchline? (Timing and Delay of Nub)
What is an absolute necessity in the effective delivery of humor? (Clarity of speech, accuracy of nub)

The Ten Commandments of the Comic Arts from the Enjoyment of Laughter, Max Eastman
1. Be Interesting.
2. Be Unimpassioned.
3. Be effortless.
4. Remember the difference between cracking practical jokes and conveying ludicrous impressions.
5. Be plausible.
6. Be sudden.
7. Be neat.
8. Be right with your timing.
9. Give a good measure of serious satisfaction.
10. Redeem all serious disappointments.
Anyone can tell a joke; the art is in telling the humorous story.

Dr. Jarvis is famous in speaking circles for his delivery of the Bird story. Not only can you learn and perfect your delivery by practicing this story, but if done right, you will be rewarded with gales of hearty laughter. If you are going to tell it, be sure you have the time and you know it well. It is a masterpiece well worth the effort. Learn this story word for word and practice it so that each separate part generates its own laughter. Pace, intonation, pauses are all critical elements in its delivery. The story is long and detailed. Don’t present it until you can do it well. Then, tell it as often as possible, practicing your delivery. If you need to illustrate the importance of being detail oriented in customer service, you may find that you can use this in a public speaking situation. When you present this story, have fun, but be diligent in your observations of the responses of listeners. Every time you present your material, look for ways to improve it. The phrases in italics are points at which humor builds to the climax. Each can provide laughter - plan to emphasize them carefully.

The Bird Story

A man just wants to buy a bird. That’s all. Goes into a bird store. Hundreds of Birds. Little yellow birds. He’s trying to make a wise choice. They all look the same. They are all $4.95. You can tell because there is a little yellow tag hanging from their legs. He’s going round. He’s going around, trying to make a wise choice, reading all of these tags. Goes over in the corner. $136.50 He goes back up to the proprietor. You trying to pull a fast one on me? Trying to make a wise choice here, select a bird, they all look the same. Except, you’ve got one kinda hidden back over there in the corner, must be different because he’s $136.50, not $4.95. The proprietor says, “You’re pretty sharp aren’t you? You devil you, I’ll bet it didn’t take you 5 minutes to find him. That bird is different. He not only sings, he talks.” Well that’s the one I want, wrap him up.

So he takes him home. The next day he brings him back. He didn’t sing, he didn’t talk either. Hmmm, well he did down here. He didn’t at my house. He says, Well, did he peck on his little bell? He said bell? Oh well, you didn’t buy a bell, you need a bell. They need music you’ve got music, stereo, television, everything else. They need a bell, happy bird, pecks on the bell. Starts singing, talking. Well how much is a bell? $6 Dollars. Well, that makes sense, I believe I’ll take a bell.

He goes home, he comes back the next day, he doesn’t bring the bird this time, but he says the bird didn’t sing. He didn’t talk, he did peck on his bell. He said, Did he climb his little ladder? I guess I should have bought a ladder. He said, don’t blame yourself. That’s my business. I’m the salesperson down here. I’m supposed to offer these things that benefit you. Of course the bird needs a ladder. Up and down the ladder. You jog, you get your exercise, the bird needs exercise. Healthy bird, sing, talk, happy, peck on the bell. Well, he said, “I’ve got to admit, there is a lot of logic there. How much is a ladder? $11 Dollars.

Well he said, alright, I’m going to take the ladder.

He comes back the next day. He didn’t sing, he didn’t talk, he did peck on his little bell and he climbed his little ladder. Did he look in his little mirror? He said, Now you are going to tell me I need a mirror. No I’m not, you’ve got a mirror. The bird needs a mirror. You’ve got a mirror, you preen in your mirror. The bird wants to preen, the bird gets to looking in that mirror, thinks there’s another bird and tries to carry on a conversation, starts talking. Well he said, “How much is a mirror”. $16 Dollars. He says, “OK Buster, I tell ya, I’m going to see this thing through, right to the bitter end. I’m taking a mirror”.

He comes back the next day. He said, he did not sing, he did not talk, he did look in his little mirror, he climbed his little ladder and he pecked on his little bell. And I know because I dragged a chair up there, I didn’t go to work and I watched him all day. He said, Did he swing on his little swing? He said, gimme a swing.

He came back the next day, he said, “the bird’s dead”! The bird’s dead? That’s what I said, the bird’s dead, I can tell a little dead bird can’t I?. Feet Up. Well, did he ever sing? No, but you would have been proud of that bird. This morning when I took his cover off he looked happy and health. He looked directly at me and then he went over there and pecked on that little bell, hopped over to the ladder and went about half way up, and I put the mirror about half way up and I’m not saying a bird can smile, but looked like he did. Went on up to the top of the ladder, jumped over to the swing, he’s swinging, swinging, right before he toppled off, he looked at me and said, “They didn’t sell bird seed”?
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**More about ON HUMOR: Jarvis Revisited and the ON HUMOR website**

This handout on using humor is a summary of many points Dr. Jarvis shared with me about his experience plus points from my own study of humor. It is designed to be a study guide and covers many areas worth exploring. For a more thorough presentation read "The Art of Using Humor in Public Speaking" which can be found on my website called ON HUMOR. The ON HUMOR website is dedicated to Dr. Jarvis and the study of using humor in public speaking. In addition, consider investing in his set of 4 talks on CD which showcase his great wit and skill in applying humor to life’s lessons. For advanced study, his 8-CD educational set is well worth considering.

www.drcharlesjarvis.com