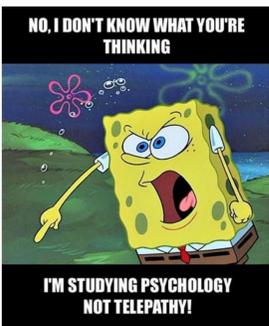
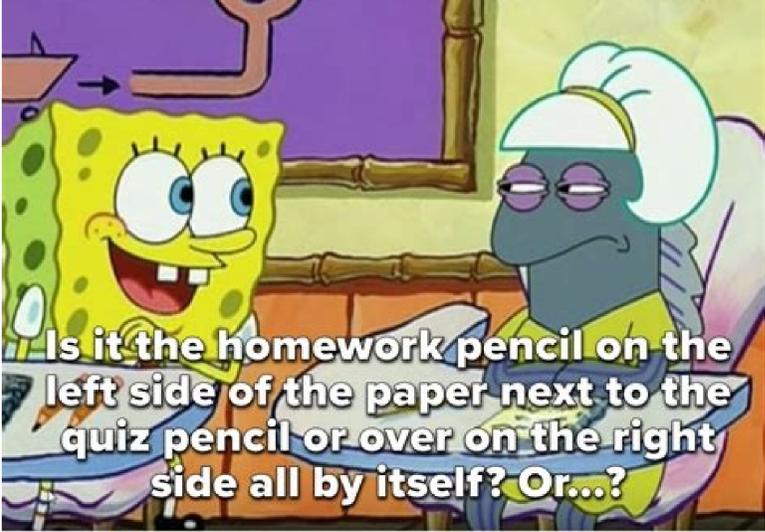


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Media Platforms Design TeamWant to crack up your buddies with a good Obama impression? Try it while you're shaving. The best way to master an impression is to practice in front of a mirror, according to a study published in Psychological Science. British researchers videotaped 20 adults as they recited jokes, then asked participants to recreate and photograph four facial expressions featured in their videos. While practicing, some people looked at photos of their attempts, and some rehearsed without any visual feedback. The results: The people who practiced with visual feedback were more spot-on with their impressions, while those who practiced blindly got worse. "When you can see what each attempt looks like shortly after you've made it, you can better detect errors," says study author Richard Cook, Ph.D., a professor at the Department of Psychology at City University London. By watching your progress in the mirror, you can associate the physical feelings of certain expressions with what they look like. But here's the thing: You're probably not an SNL star, and if you copy the people around you all the time, you could find yourself without friends. "If you want to be liked, it's more important to develop humor skills than imitation skills," says Peter McGraw, Ph.D., an assistant professor of marketing and psychology and director of the Humor Research Lab (HuRL) at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Fair enough. To be the funniest guy at the party—and keep all your friends—start with these pointers: 1. Tell at least one joke a day. According to McGraw, most people don't attempt jokes often enough for fear of failure or worse: offending the audience. That's because the root of humor is "benign violation," a situation that simultaneously seems wrong, but harmless. Moreover, it's not easy to nail a joke. To up your odds of eliciting laughs, test new jokes among friends—because they already like you, they'll be more forgiving if a punch line flops. If you must joke with a stranger, imitate his or her body language (it will put them at ease) and show some teeth. "A smile tells your audience that this is a joke, and that this thing that is wrong [the violation] is OK," says McGraw. And if your joke still isn't perceived as funny, or it makes someone uncomfortable? Use this simple save: "I'm just kidding!" 2. Start with a complaint, and end in an analogy. "Most people don't like complainers, but they do like humorous complainers," says McGraw. After all, when you transform something negative into something you can laugh about, it feels less irksome. To craft a joke, identify something that's negative—awful weather, tasteless food, the office loudmouth—and compare it to something unrelated that has similar qualities. McGraw's example: "My Internet connection is as slow as a 4-year old getting ready for bed." It's funny because it's not cool to make fun of 4-year-olds (violation!), but in this context—an article about jokes that's written for adults—it won't hurt a kid's feelings. 3. Make yourself the punch line. Most standup comedians open with a self-deprecating joke. Why? "It makes him or her seem more human and likeable," says McGraw. Plus, it's easier to laugh at a joke if you like the comedian, because you trust that they have good intentions. That said, never scrutinize your deep-rooted insecurities when you make fun of yourself. Instead, begin with a light topic like the mismatched outfit you threw on in a hurry, or your unrelenting hat hair. This story originally appeared on WomensHealthMag.com. If you liked this story, you'll love these: Media Platforms Design TeamMedia Platforms Design TeamLet me preface this by saying that I have no staircase in my home, like most people who live in Manhattan apartments. But I get such a kick out of watching my husband go down the stairs into our imaginary basement. I belly laugh every time he does this silly little march, crouching down behind the wall, as he slowly disappears—and tells me, "I'm just going to run down there real quick." We all have our little shticks we do with friends and loved ones just to make them laugh. It's that instant memory, phrase or action that puts you into a fit of hysterics, even if you haven't seen that person in a while. With my sister, it's as simple as staring over her head as she talks to me, because it's the very thing she used to do to me when she was little that would drive me up the wall. A childhood friend and I still have a running joke about gingerbread, because of a foiled batch of cookies we made together in middle school. But my absolute favorite is one of my inside jokes with my dad. He used to tuck me in at night and say, "Safe driving!" Are inside jokes funny because they often don't make sense to anyone else or because they're oldies but goodies? In any case, I hope you're entertained today by sharing or remembering one of your own. Do you have an inside joke with someone special in your life? Tell us in comments. -Dana GottesmanWatch Next Newsletter Sign Up 1 of 50 What did the ghost teacher say to the class? Keep your eyes on the board while I go through it again. 2 of 50 Where do stylish ghosts go shopping? 3 of 50 What do you say when you catch a ghost? 4 of 50 How does a ghost unlock a door? 5 of 50 How did the ghost get from New York to London? 6 of 50 What do ghosts eat with meatballs? 7 of 50 What's a ghost's favorite treat? 8 of 50 Where do ghosts go trick or treating? 9 of 50 How do ghosts wash their hair? 10 of 50 Why didn't the ghost go to the prom? He had no body to go with. 11 of 50 Why don't ghosts convince anyone when they're lying? Because everyone can see right through them. 12 of 50 What do you call a ghost in the fireplace? 13 of 50 Why do ghosts ride elevators? 14 of 50 How did the ghost make her eyes pop? 15 of 50 How does a ghost cry when he's sad? 16 of 50 Why was the ghost kid embarrassed? 17 of 50 What places are on the ghost family's beach-vacation shortlist? Boo-dapest, the Boo-hamas, and Mali-boo. 18 of 50 Why do ghosts diet? So they can maintain their ghoulish figures. 19 of 50 Why does a ghost hate getting caught in the rain? 20 of 50 What old-fashioned advice do ghosts give their kids? Only spook when spoken to. 21 of 50 What position does a ghost play on the soccer field? 22 of 50 Where did the ghost go to pick up mail? 23 of 50 How do ghosts prefer their eggs? 24 of 50 What's a ghost's favorite pie? 25 of 50 Who did the ghosts bring to the party? Just some old fling he dug up. 26 of 50 Why did the outdoorsy ghost get in trouble with the law? He was out there without a haunting license. 27 of 50 A ghost got lost in the fog. 28 of 50 Why didn't the ghost eat the local delicacy? He didn't have the stomach for it. 29 of 50 What does a ghost panda eat? 30 of 50 Many people shy away from telling jokes because they once told one that fell flat or they are afraid of appearing silly or of offending someone. Jokes are canned humorous stories which are subtly different from personal anecdotes. With personal anecdotes you have the authority to tell them because they happened to you. Jokes are independent and in a sense artificial so you take a little risk when you launch into one. However, when told well, a joke can cause great amusement and lift the mood of the gathering. A speaker who puts some relevant and well-told jokes into his or her speech will be appreciated by the audience who are often bored with bland presentations and are crying out for a little entertainment. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - Here are some tips on how to tell a good joke: 1. Select. Choose three or four jokes that really tickled you from the internet or a joke book. If you are giving a talk or presentation look for ones that have some relevance (however slight) so that you can work them into the pitch. Have one or two generic or topical ones that you can use on any occasion. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - 2. Practise. Practise them aloud - in front of a mirror if possible. Deliver them with style, confidence and panache. Focus on the punch line and ensure that you can deliver it word perfect. 3. Choose your moment. If there is a convenient hook in the conversation for one of your jokes you can introduce it then. Otherwise wait for a pause. Sometimes the most amusing jokes occur when people least expect the teller to tell a joke. So, if appropriate, be serious as you introduce the story and then catch your audience out with the punch line. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - 4. Deliver slowly and with confidence. Many people ruin jokes by rushing them, mumbling incoherently or just getting the words wrong. Your practice should have overcome this but there is still a temptation to hurry. Slow down a little. Try to pause for effect before you deliver the punch line. That can add enormously to the impact. 5. Match the joke to the audience. A joke which is hilarious with the guys on the 7th tee might well be a disaster at the Church Bazaar. Jokes often challenge taboos so it is OK to risk a tiny amount of offence to one or two people. But if your joke seriously offends people then you were guilty of misjudgment. In mixed company during the day you should stay with safe material. In the evening you can be a little more risqué and with the men in the bar you can be outrageous. Choose wisely. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - 6. Reciprocate. Never finish anyone else's joke. Always laugh or smile even if you have heard it before. Be a good joke teller and receiver. 7. Develop. As you build experience and confidence try more and different jokes. But don't overdo it. Don't hog the conversation with one joke after another. A few really good jokes that you can tell with perfect confidence is the aim. - Scroll down to continue reading article - - Scroll down to continue reading article - Finally have some one-liners to throw in from time to time. Here are a couple to get you going: Velcro - what a rip-off! 'Shut up!' my father explained. Funny jokes make the world a more interesting place. Enjoy your joke telling!

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