# CLOWN HITS & SKITS

*by Richard "Zeppy" Strelak and*
*Marty "Dr. Professor" Sherman*
*of Main Stage Productions*

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# INTRODUCTION

The following is a general guideline for creating your own skits or routines. Basically it is written for the inexperienced performer but the seasoned performer could also use this information to his advantage.

This is an educational tool to help you organize your skit writing. Using this guideline can save you time and effort as well as giving your group a common framework to proceed with.

Richard "Zeppy" Strelak

## *I. Organization*

A. Decide who will be in the skit
B. Set a time and place to sit down and write it
C. Include all members of the skit in its writing
D. Brainstorming
   1. Brainstorming produces more than individual ideas
   2. Brainstorming produces answers to questions one person can't solve
   3. Brainstorming allows all individuals to contribute parts of themselves (their clown characters) to the skit

## *II. Select a Topic, Theme or Action*

A. Use your imagination
   1. A new idea is always refreshing
   2. Your imagination personalizes your skit
   3. Write down all ideas, no matter how absurd
B. Use your experience
   1. Not all ideas must be far-fetched. Sometimes the most mundane themes make the funniest skits (i.e. the washbucket)
   2. Your familiarity with a subject makes it easier for your character to approach and more believable for the audience
C. Use your resources
   1. Skills
   2. Props on hand
   3. Get ideas from cartoons, movies, TV plots
   4. Parodies of people, situations, professions

## *III. Skit Bones*

A. Setting

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1. Time and place
2. Mood

B. Characters
   1. Can depend on topic, profession
   2. Can be based on clown type

C. Plot or Story Line
   1. Beginning: sets scene, introduces the characters, creates a mood
   2. Middle: puts characters into action, tells a story, creates conflict, leads the audience towards a logical conclusion
   3. End
      a. Logical conclusion: calls for a strong characterization
      b. Reversal: strong blow-off, good surprise element

### *IV. Fleshing Out the Bones*

A. Create setting with:
   1. Actions: breath deeply to create an outdoor setting, ring a doorbell to show an entrance, etc.
   2. Props: use props to show your location
   3. Words: if all else fails you can state where you are

B. Character — defined by:
   1. Your actions: the way you move and speak
   2. Others' reactions: what someone says, or reacts to you
   3. Your costume: i.e., a doctor wears a lab coat, a boxer wears boxing shorts
   4. Your unique element: your own personality

C. Plot
   1. Beginning
      a. Short introduction
      b. Character or setting
   2. Middle
      a. Develop gags to push action toward conclusion
      b. Work point by point: one gag leads logically to the next
      c. A picture is worth a thousand words: use physical humor whenever possible
      d. Gags build toward conflict:
         I. Clown vs. Clown
         II. Clown vs. Objects
         III. Clown vs. Situation
   3. End
      a. Logical Conclusion
         I. What audience has been led to expect; needs a very

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strong characterization
II. Timing: builds to a climax then tapers off to end
b. Reversal
I. Unexpected: audience is led to expect one conclusion, clown finds another
II. Timing: Builds to climax which is blow-off, no tapering of action

## *V. Streamlining*

A. Economy of gags
1. Does it fit the characters, setting?
2. Is it necessary? Does it further the plot?
3. Is it funny?
a. If not, is the idea funny?
b. Is the execution of the gag funny?

B. Economy of props
1. Don't build Grand Central Station when a conductor's hat will do.
2. Can a prop have two uses? (In the same or different skits)
3. Does it have to be that big? Does it have to weigh that much?

C. Economy of motion (Or cooking without spaghetti)
1. Big: make your movements cartoon-like in nature
2. Clean: if one motion expresses the thought, use only one

D. "If one chicken is funny, 10 chickens are 10 times as funny!" Clown Fallacy #368. Don't overuse a funny line or gag.

E. Run through the gag to make sure it can be done *physically*

## *VI. Props*

A. Build a quality prop
1. Make them sturdy and durable so they won't fall apart in a show
2. Make them safe, no sharp edges, etc.
3. Make them neat
a. Color-coordinated props look more professional
b. Keep props in good repair

B. Accentuate, don't detract from, the action
1. Usable size and weight
2. Portable
3. Multipurpose whenever possible

C. If one prop is funny it doesn't mean that 10 props are 10 times as funny.

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### *VII. Rehearsal*

A. Rehearse
B. Rehearse
C. Rehearse again!
D. Perform for your friends and peers
E. If there are no laughs at point VII-D, proceed directly to point I-A. Do not pass GO! ETC!

### *Helpful Hints:*

1. Incorporate one or more of the Five Basic Comedy Elements into your skit:
   A. Mimicry
   B. Trickery
   C. Stupidity
   D. Slaps, Falls, Water
   E. Surprise
2. Everything *must* have a purpose. Don't bring out something you don't need. Keep the action clean.
3. Keep it clean, the *interpretation* that is. Remember, you are an entertainer for children. Keep the content clean.
4. Take things to the *max:* an action, a facial expression, an idea, a double-take. Don't hold back once you've started something; go all the way. It will add to the overall comic effect you are trying to build.
5. *"The Magic 3's"* When developing the skit, do things in "3's" for the best comedic effect: build up, build up, blow-off. This formula can be used within the skit (i.e.: actions, slaps). Going beyond three gets to be too repetitious and boring.
6. "It's been done before." Most ideas have been done before so don't be afraid to try a "standard" by putting your own personal touches in it.
7. Variations on a Theme: Take an old "standard" and update it.
8. You can kill a skit by putting *too* much garbage into it. Keep it short, sweet, and to the point.
9. *"Is it funny?* Or am I the only one who thinks so?" Also, be careful of using "in-jokes" that are only funny to the performers. You can lose your audience.
10. There are many different ways to approach a routine or skit. Try them all to find the one that works for you.
11. Assign the roles in your skit according to the clown types and/or their individual characters. Keep the "ideal" clown types in mind (the hierarchy of clowns, i.e.: A Whiteface picks on an Auguste who picks on the Tramp) in assigning roles. Or,

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in the case of two Augustes working together, the one with a "smarter" character should pick on the "dumbbell," not vice versa.

12. Clowning is a "skill." It is much like playing a trumpet: you can't play for the symphony after taking only two lessons. You must gain the skill first and that only comes with *practice and more practice*!!!
13. Study. You are an imaginary character. Study other clowns and performers. Especially study cartoons to learn how to use economy of motion to express ideas.
14. Be professional in attitude and presentation. One does not have to make money to be a "professional." It has to do with attitude. Clowning is an "art form" and a "professional" clown will maintain a high regard for the art form he is working in. This type of clown will strive to put his best face forward. He will keep trying to up-grade and improve himself (make-up, wardrobe, character development, props, etc.) and whatever he is presenting, be it a small walk-around, or a skit. Somehow, someway, every "good" thing can be better, if you look for it. Nothing is so "perfect" that it could not be improved upon.

"Break a leg" with your new skits!!!

From all of the clowns at Main Stage Productions!!!

*(Kiko, Zeppy, Fritz, Augie, Festie, Trampy, Jiffy, Dr. Professor, Woody, Gimpel)*

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## *PREFACE*

Welcome to the wonderfully wacky world of clowning! By now I am sure you have created a clown face and the proper clown outfit for your character, but something is still missing! It's like being all dressed up with nowhere to go. Congratulations!! Almost anyone can dress like a clown, but you are taking the additional step to becoming a clown. A clown is merely a person in a funny suit until he acts and performs like a clown.

Herein lies the purpose of this collection: to provide you with the tools and routines to act, perform and become a "children's entertainer."

The routines presented in this book are divided into different categories. Within each of these categories are routines which require no props, props of easily attainable items, or special props that require building. The routines use anywhere from one to five clowns. All of these routines have been personally performed by us on countless occasions. They have been thoroughly "road tested" for their laughability!

Throughout this collection we use the pronoun "he" whenever we refer to an individual clown. This male pronoun is simply a matter of convenience in reading and has no bearing whatsoever on the sex of the clown performer.

There are enough routines included here to build a show of any time length you may need. This will make your group more versatile. To create a well-rounded show, it is best to use some routines from each of the categories.

Remember, these are basic routines. There is no dialog written except for certain cue words that serve a purpose. You must adapt these routines so that they fit your own personal style. With the dialog being your own, the interaction between you and your fellow clowns makes the routine uniquely yours. Try not to use too much "canned" dialog. Keep the dialog improvisational and the humor fresh.

To set up your own show, read and re-read all of the routines. Decide which ones you will do first and prepare for it. Build or obtain the props that are needed. Rehearse, rehearse and rehearse again! There is no substitute for rehearsal.

Here are a few more helpful hints in building a show:

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1. Use routines from all categories. Don't follow the order in the book. Mix the routines so they "flow" one into the other.
2. Try not to put all the water gags together. Spread them out.
3. Try to have the same clown, usually a Tramp (if not, an Auguste), get all the water.
4. Use the "Dumb Magic" routines as "fillers." A "filler" is performed to allow the other clowns time to change costumes or set the props for the next routine (i.e., one clown has to change into the nurse's dress for the Dentist routine).
5. If possible, use one person as an Emcee. He could be dressed in a business suit or a Ring Master's costume. He serves two purposes:
   a) He can make the show run smoother and he can relate the punch lines over the microphone if sound is a problem. It is most important to have someone on stage at all times. Even 30 seconds with an empty stage will make an audience restless and noisy. The Emcee gives continuity to the show.
   b) The Emcee becomes a "middle man" between the clowns and the audience. Clowns can sometimes scare small children. The Emcee should be "human," or out of make-up, so he can be a "go-between," showing the children that the clowns are OK, and that there is nothing to be afraid of.

As was earlier stated, the most important factor is practice. Just reading the routines is not enough. They are meant to be performed! The more you perform, the easier and more enjoyable the performing will become. It is at this point that you will find yourself becoming a clown, inside and out. The confidence on the inside will show on the outside.

Now you have the tools to be a "complete" clown. How you use them is limited only by your enthusiasm and imagination.

Yours in Clowning,
Rich "Zeppy" Strelak
Main Stage Productions

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# CLASSIC GAGS

What makes a gag a "classic" is its sure-fire appeal for all ages through all generations. A "classic" clown gag lasts forever because its basic premise is as fundamental as human nature itself. The "classic" gag is totally flexible — adjustable to the clown's own style. The interaction may be different every time someone performs the act, making the humor as fresh now as it was 25 years ago. Learn these routines. See how you can change them to fit your style of action and comedy.

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# The Balloon Chase

***Number of Clowns:*** Three or more.

***Props:*** A few balloon sticks taped together
Round, multicolored balloons, fully inflated, tied to the sticks

***Action:***

Clown 1 enters with balloons, barking: "Balloons for sale, $5.00!" He circles the stage looking for someone to buy them. A second clown enters, hears the first and tells him he can't sell balloons here, especially for $5.00. Clown 2 warns Clown 1 that another of the clowns (mentions clown by name) is going to take his balloons. Clown 1 ignores the warning and leans over to sell a balloon to a person in the audience as the clown named enters, grabs balloons and runs. All clowns join in running around stage and into the audience. Clowns always pass balloons coming from *opposite directions*, from the right hand of the clown passing the balloons, into the right hand of the clown receiving the balloons. Clown 1 keeps missing the balloons. After much yelling and running around, Clown 1 finally gets his balloons back and runs back up to the stage yelling that he got them back. Upon reaching the stage, Clown 1 trips and falls on the balloons, breaking them all. The rest of the clowns exit laughing at Clown 1 who gets up, looks at the broken balloons, thinks for a second and says: "Balloon sticks for sale!" Clown 1 exits.

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# Dead and Alive

***Number of Clowns:*** Two

***Props:*** A large hat, worn by Clown 2

***Action:***

Two clowns get in a fight. Clown 1 slaps Clown 2 who falls flat on his back, arms against his sides, legs spread. Clown 1 takes off Clown 2's hat and tries to revive him by fanning him with the hat. He sets the hat on the ground above the "dead" clown's head and prepares to move him. He puts Clown 2's legs together and the arms spread out. When he moves the arms back, the legs spread again. Clown 1 gets an idea. He straddles the body, facing the feet, pins the arms between his own feet and Clown 2's sides, then bends over and moves the legs together. This causes the "corpse" to sit up, bumping Clown 1 from behind. He turns around, still straddling the body, and pushes the chest down, causing the legs to hit him in the fanny. He turns around and straightens out the body with a great effort. Clown 1 then lifts the stiff body up by pulling on the shoulders, takes a deep sigh of relief and then notices that Clown 2's hat is still on the ground. He walks away to get the hat and the "dead" clown starts to fall backward. Clown 1 catches him and sets him upright. He tries to reach the hat by holding on to Clown 2 and stretching out as far as he can, but can't quite reach. Clown 1 gets an idea. He lays on his back between the "corpse" and the hat, feet up in the air towards the back of the "dead" clown. Clown 2's body falls against Clown 1's feet. Clown 1 reaches over his head, grabs the hat, lowers the body down by bending his legs and puts the hat back on Clown 2's head. He pushes Clown 2 back to a standing position. He stands up, bends Clown 2 into a bow, bows himself, they both wave and exit.

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# The Whipcracker

***Number of Clowns:*** Two

***Props:*** A piece of rope tied to a short stick (the whip), a single sheet of newspaper folded sharply in quarters

***Action:***

Clown 1 enters holding the whip. He announces that he is working on a new act but needs an assistant to help him with it. Clown 2 enters, holding the creased newspaper open, walking along reading the paper. Clown 1 stops him and asks him if he wants to assist in a new act. Clown 2 looks at the whip, then at the crowd and shakes his head "no" violently. He raises the newspaper back up and stands there, facing Clown 1, reading the newspaper. Clown 1 thinks for a moment, then gets an idea. He faces Clown 2, raises the whip, and cracks it towards Clown 2. Clown 2 rips the newspaper in half, as though it were torn by the whip, looks at both halves of the paper, then over at Clown 1. Clown 1 acts completely innocent. Clown 2 shrugs, goes back to reading the paper. Clown 1, again, cracks the whip, tearing the half-sheet of paper in half (Clown 2 doing the tearing). This time, Clown 2 is more suspicious of Clown 1 but eventually goes back to reading his quarter-sheet of newspaper. The third time, Clown 1 cracks the whip and the paper doesn't tear. As he prepares to try it again, Clown 2 sees him and yells. Again, Clown 1 misses. Clown 2 turns to get away and while doing so, slips his hands through his suspenders. Clown 1 cracks the whip one more time and Clown 2 yells and shoots his arms out, through his suspenders as though he was hit by the whip. His pants drop. Clown 1 bows. Clown 2 picks up his pants and chases Clown 1 off.

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# The Chair Routine

***Number of Clowns:*** Minimum of 2, 3 best

***Props:*** Chair — light-weight, folding type
Large prop firecracker and real firecracker

***Action:***

First clown enters (Tramp or Auguste) and seats himself Center Stage facing the audience. Clown 1 exclaims he wants the show to start. Second Clown enters and tells Clown 1 that he must leave. Clown 2 calls in Clown 3 to assist. They try to coax, bribe, even physically pull Clown 1 off the stage. Finally Clown 2 has an idea. Clowns 2 and 3 huddle. Clown 2 exits. Clown 3 gives Clown 1 one last chance to leave. Clown 2 re-enters and sets large firecracker under chair. Clowns 2 and 3 exclaim, "You'll get a big BANG out of this!!!" During this Clown 1 is saying that nothing can budge him, with one hand he grabs the side of the chair. Clown 2 lights real firecracker. Upon the explosion, Clown 1 jumps up flinging both arms which causes the chair and clown to fly in opposite directions. Clowns 2 and 3 are laughing and Clown 1 is getting up, rubbing his posterior.

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# The Dentist

***Number of Clowns:*** 4 (Patient, Friend, Doctor Yankum, Nurse)
3 (omit Friend)

***Props:*** Doctor's lab coat; Nurse's hat, dress & balloons. Large tools: pliers, hammer, chisel, stethoscope, large rubber tooth, cloth to tie tooth, chair, pieces of white styrofoam. (Bottle of water marked, "XXX," flash pot)

***Action:***

Patient with tooth tied around his head, starts yelling and moaning. After a few yells, he is helped out by the Friend. Friend is asking for a dentist as the Patient has a toothache from too much cotton candy. Doctor Yankum is called out and he proceeds to examine everyone but the Patient. Friend pulls Doctor over to the Patient. He looks at Patient and says, "I can't do anything without my Nurse!" In walks drag Nurse with much bump and grind. ("Stripper" music should be played if sound is available.) Nurse bends over Patient and Doctor examines her posterior. Nurse advises Doctor that the Patient needs a shot. Doctor: "That's what we need; a shot!" He takes out the bottle and takes a swig. Nurse: "Doctor! Not that kind of shot!" Doctor spits water out onto the floor and the flash pot goes off. Doctor: "That's some shot!" Doctor tells Nurse to administer anesthesia. Nurse hits Friend with hammer, knocking him out. Doctor: "Not him, the Patient!" Nurse knocks out the Patient. Doctor asks for a hammer and chisel. Puts chisel near tooth and hits three times. (Patient can spit out styrofoam pieces after each blow.) Doctor asks for pliers. Nurse hands it to him and asks what time it is. Doctor: "It's time to pull the tooth!" Friend recovers and all three dance around the Patient, chanting, "It's time to pull the tooth!" Doctor finally stops, looks at audience and says, "I'm going to pull the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth!" Doctor and Nurse huddle over the Patient. Doctor with his back to audience and Nurse helps to grab the tooth with the pliers. Doctor finally yanks out the tooth and exhibits the tooth triumphantly. Meanwhile, the Patient comes to and yells louder than ever. When asked what was wrong, yells, "He pulled the wrong one!" and chases Nurse and Doctor Offstage.

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# The Long Shirt

***Number of Clowns:*** Tramp with shirt; 3 or more extras

***Props:*** 1 long multicolored tubular shirt, 18 to 30 feet long

***Action:***

The basic action is that a fight is started between an instigator clown and the Tramp wearing a shirt. Just before punches fly, the instigator has the Tramp look at his shoes and starts pulling off the long shirt. The shirt should be pulled slowly and stretched to emphasize its length. Tramp should "ham it up" by wiggling and even jump up once in a while. When shirt is off, Tramp stands up and starts walking towards the instigator when his pants fall down. All clowns cry out and Tramp grabs pants hurriedly trying to exit. There will be two basic methods leading to the fight:

1) The fashion show: all clowns enter one at a time exhibiting costumes. The last clown out is the Tramp with the shirt. Other clowns are upset with a Tramp in the fashion show, instigator then starts fight.

2) Clown 1 enters and sits in a chair reading a newspaper. Clown 2 enters, takes newspaper and shoves Clown 1 off chair; sits and reads paper. Clown 3 enters and does likewise to Clown 2. Last clown out is Tramp. He, likewise, takes newspaper and shoves clown out. This time the clown gets up and rips the newspaper in half. Tramp gets mad and starts fight with clown, leading to the pulling of the shirt.

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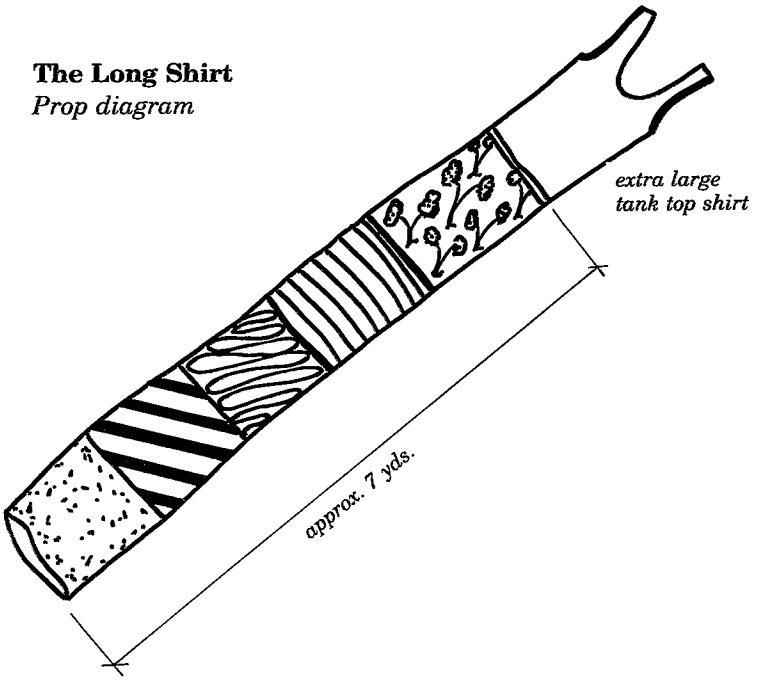
**The Long Shirt**
*Prop diagram*




Purchase seven yards of very bright colored print *cotton* material, 60 inches wide. Sale items, and odd print, reduced-to-clear material is perfect, but it must be cotton. Any stretchable material will bind up on the performer when pulling it off during routine. Cut material in ½ yard pieces (18"x60") — alternate color patterns. Sew first along the 18" edge to form the tube, then sew the 60" edges together. Finally, sew tube to bottom of an *extra-large* tank top available in most clothing stores. For strength, double-sew all seams. Shirt is pulled over clown "accordian style." Clown must have extra large pants. Tank top can then be pulled over shirt so it appears a very "fat" clown is just wearing the tank top.

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# The Photographer

***Number of Clowns:*** 3-4: Photographer, Husband, Wife, Assistant

***Props:*** A special box-type camera that squirts powder, water, contains spring snakes and smoke squib; chair (regular or collapsible); black skirt on drag clown that matches camera skirt; (large puff — foam rubber — smeared with powder)

***Action:***

Photographer enters with camera (chair is pre-set). He explains that he has just gone into business and is looking for a customer. Enter Husband and Wife. Photographer talks them into getting a portrait for $10.00. Husband and Wife agree and Photographer poses them. (Husband sits on chair and it collapses). Photographer is embarrassed, helps Husband up on to chair and it collapses again. Photographer apologizes and sits on chair himself to show that chair is safe. He poses the couple, looks under the camera skirt, says "Smile!" and squirts them with powder. The couple jumps up screaming and yelling — they start to leave. Photographer tries to calm them down. He lowers his price to $5.00. He re-poses the couple, says, "Smile!" and squirts them with water. More screaming and yelling. The couple again starts to leave and the photographer lowers his price to $2.00. He then re-poses Husband and Wife.

***Sub-Action A:***

Photographer looks through the camera and says that there is a shine on the Husband's nose. He calls out his Assistant, who carries a powder puff. Photographer tells his Assistant that he'll look through the camera and signal him if the Husband's nose needs powder. Photographer tells him to powder when he says "Now." Photographer inadvertently gives the signal a number of times and each time the Husband gets hit (i.e. Photographer says: "Well, now . . ." [Hit] "Not now" [Hit] "Wait till I say now" [Hit]). Photographer finally returns to the camera. Wife asks him if camera is safe. Photographer walks toward couple saying:

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"Safe?" This camera is so safe . . ." (smoke bomb goes off inside camera). Couple starts to leave again and then notices that the lens cap is still on. They all exclaim that the lens cap was the problem. Photographer removes the lens cap and spring snakes fly out. Couple gets mad and again starts leaving. Photographer grabs Husband and tells him he'll take his picture for free. Meanwhile, Wife has gone to camera and is looking under the skirt. Photographer poses Husband while constantly looking and talking to him. He lifts up Wife's skirt, she jumps up screaming and Husband runs over to them. Wife swings at Photographer who ducks and connects to Husband who sprawls out on the floor. Photographer grabs the camera and runs off. Wife helps Husband up and they both chase Photographer.

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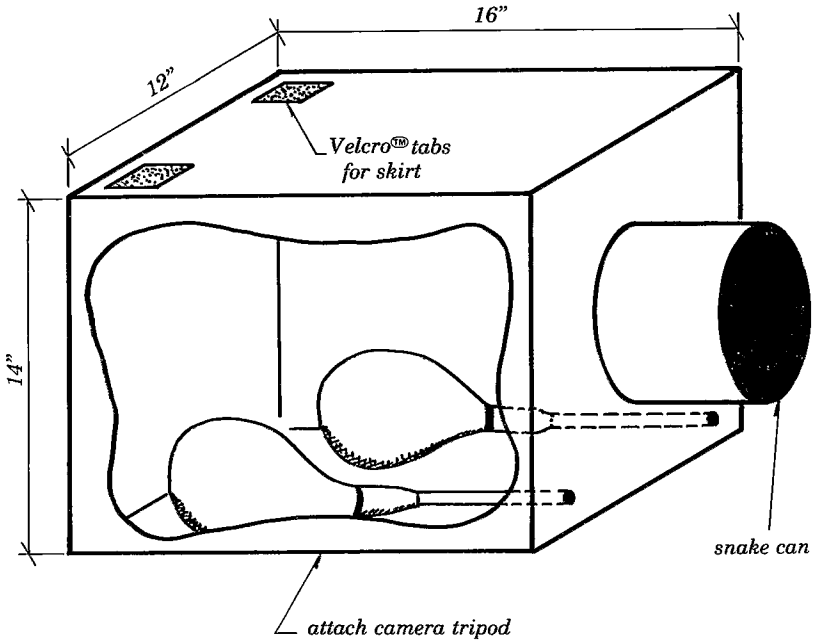
**The Photographer**

*Prop Diagram*




Camera is made of lightweight plywood or masonite. A snake can, which can be obtained at a novelty shop as a peanut brittle can, is painted and attached to front of camera. Make sure you get the large can. Obtain two (2) squeeze bulbs, like the bulbs for filling batteries with water. Drill holes to accommodate the ends of the bulbs, one on each side of the can about three inches up from bottom. Drill hole in bottom of camera to accommodate a camera tripod. Make skirt for camera from one yard of black material. Attach velcro tabs to skirt and top of camera (this way camera skirt can be removed to wash). Camera skirt will extend beyond top of camera to cover up "photographer's" head. To "load" camera, put water in one bulb and baby powder in other. Raise bulb before you squeeze to get powder or water to the nozzle end.

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# The Wash Bucket

***Number of Clowns:*** 2 — Clown 1, Instigator Clown

***Props:*** Special bucket, half of which is compartment filled with confetti, the other half is open. A special base has a hole cut through top which matches hole in bottom of bucket and a catch bucket inside.

***Action:***

There are two variations of the same conclusion:
1) Clown 1 enters, takes a bucket of water and pours most of it in the special bucket leaving a small amount in bottom of first bucket. Clown 1 then starts washing laundry. Instigator Clown enters and tries to convince Clown 1 to leave. Clown 1 takes a cord from his pocket that has a slipknot on either end. He places the cord around each index finger of the Instigator Clown, pulls the cord taut and hangs the laundry on the "line." Instigator stands there perplexed, looking at Clown 1 washing. Suddenly realizing what happened, he throws down the laundry, picks up the first bucket with the small amount of water left and hits Clown 1 with it. Clown 1 gets mad and picks up the special bucket from the stand, chases Instigator Clown. He runs toward audience and ducks as Clown 1 throws confetti into audience. All exit.
2) Clown 1 enters to do laundry as in Variation 1. Instigator Clown enters, sees Clown 1, pauses, than takes off jacket, shoving it to Clown 1, stating, "wash it!" As he turns and walks away, Clown 1 says, "Wash it yourself!" and throws it at him. Instigator Clown repeats process with same results. Finally he gets an idea, drops to his knees and begs Clown 1 to wash his jacket. Clown 1 feels bad and takes the jacket, balls it up and throws it over his shoulder saying, "Wash it yourself!" This angers Instigator Clown who picks up the first bucket with small amount of water and hits Clown 1. Ending is same as in first version.

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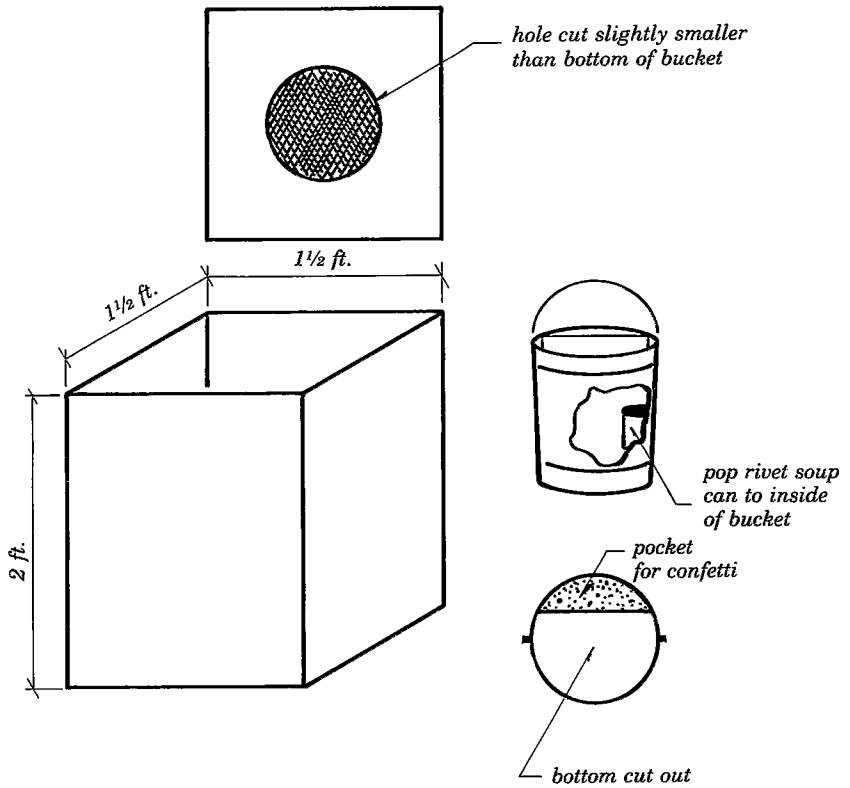
**The Wash Bucket**
*Prop Diagram*




Stand is complete box. Top is covered with screen to cover hole and entire top is painted black. Plastic catch bucket goes inside to catch water poured through gimmical bucket.

Regular bucket, bottom is cut out. With sheet metal, a "pocket" is formed on one side to hold confetti. If this is not possible, pop rivet a soup can to wall of bucket near bottom to hold confetti.

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# DUMB MAGIC

This section deals with a special kind of magic — clown magic. What's so special about this magic? It doesn't work. And even though it doesn't work, it is still magical because it has that certain quality of illogic that is the basis of all clown gags. It is most important that the clown magician appear to have supreme confidence in his own magical abilities and be completely surprised when the trick fails to work or to impress the audience. Ideally, the tricks would be performed by a bumbling Auguste clown. Have fun with them and remember to adapt them to your own character.

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# The Gum Drop

***Number of Clowns:*** One

***Props:*** A pack of gum

***Action:***

The clown enters and loudly proclaims that he has a new magic trick to show the audience. He holds up the pack of gum and says: "Ladies and gentlemen, you see before you an ordinary pack of gum. Would anyone care to examine it?" The clown displays the gum around. "I am now going to transform this gum into a piece of candy right before your eyes. Watch carefully." The clown holds the pack of gum out in front of himself dramatically, pauses and lets the gum fall to the floor. He points to the fallen gum and announces: "Ladies and gentlemen, a gumdrop." The clown takes a fast bow and exits.

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# The Disappearing Cracker Trick

***Number of Clowns:*** One

***Props:*** A regular cracker that can be easily held in one hand and crumbled

***Action:***

The clown enters dramatically and announces to the audience that he has perfected a mystifying new magic trick, would they like to see it? No matter what the response, he continues, "This trick involves nothing more than an ordinary cracker. I will make this cracker disappear right before your eyes." At this point, someone in the audience will usually yell out that the clown plans to eat the cracker and the clown then announces that he is not going to eat the cracker. He may wish to take a volunteer from the audience to examine the cracker and assure the rest of the audience that it is, indeed, an ordinary cracker. The clown then holds the cracker between the thumb and middle finger of one hand, palm upwards. He passes his second hand over the first pretending to grab the cracker in the second hand. Actually he drops the cracker into the open palm of his first hand, closes the palm, crumbling the cracker. He holds his second hand in the air, pointing to it with his first hand and announces that he will now make the cracker disappear but he must first sprinkle it with magic whiffle dust. He reaches in his pocket, pretends to take out the dust in the hand that holds the crumbled cracker, holds the hand over the second hand and crumbles the cracker over it. He displays the empty second hand, takes a quick bow and makes a very fast exit.

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# The Bird Bag

***Number of Clowns:*** One

***Props:*** A paper bag holding a lot of small, bright-colored feathers, folded

***Action:***

The clown enters and announces that he is about to perform a remarkable magic trick. He holds up the bag, unfolds it and displays it. "I am going to make a live bird appear inside this bag." He proceeds to blow up the bag, wave his hand magically over the bag and recite any choice of magic words. He then says: "At the count of three, the bird will appear inside the bag. One, two, three!" He slams his free hand against the bag, popping it loudly. Feathers fly all over. The clown pauses, looks down at the bag, looks up and says: "Whoops." Exits.

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# The Magic Scarves

***Number of Clowns:*** One Clown Magician

***Props:*** A hat — top hat or similar large hat will do
6 Bandanas — 3 separate colors, 2 of each color

***Action:***

During preparations clown folds three scarves, one of each color, and places them in the bottom of the hat. A piece of material that matches the inside of the hat could be laid over the bottom to create a "false bottom." If the false bottom is used, clown may show the hat empty. Clown enters out to Center Stage and places the hat on a table. He shows the three remaining scarves. He ties the three scarves together by diagonal corners. Clown plays up the fact that the scarves are really tightly tied — he pulls tightly on the knots. He then rolls the knotted scarves together and places them in the hat. Clown begins magic conjuring, waves his hands, closes his eyes, and says a few magic words. Slowly he reaches into the hat, under the knotted scarves and he pulls out one of the separate scarves. He waves his hands again, reaches in the hat and slowly pulls out the second separate scarf. Finally he reaches in and pulls out the last scarf. The Emcee calls for a big round of applause. The clown takes his bows, lifts the hat up to place it on his head, and the knotted scarves fall out. Clown grabs the end of the scarves and runs out with "streamer" behind him.

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# TRICKS

One of the basic elements of Clowning is Trickery. It is a combination of the deviousness of the instigating clown and the gullibility of the fall guy. All of the following gags have the added element of turnabout never ending up being fair play —no matter how hard he tries, the fall guy still gets tricked. Ideally, these gags should be performed with a Whiteface clown as Clown 1, an Auguste as Clown 2, and a Tramp clown as Clown 3. The audience should not feel too sympathetic towards Clown 2 in these gags, since it is through his own greed or desire for revenge that he gets himself in trouble. Again, what is outlined here is the skeleton of a clown gag. Only you can make it come alive by your own ideas and actions.

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# King Bee

***Number of Clowns:*** Two

***Props:*** A chair, a glass of water

***Action:***

Clown 1 enters with a chair and water. He sets the chair in Center Stage and hides the glass of water behind it. Clown 2 enters. Clown 1 asks Clown 2 if he wants to play a great new game called King Bee. Clown 2 looks unsure. Clown 1 tells him: "You even get to be the king." Clown 2 agrees to play. Clown 1 sits Clown 2 down on the chair and explains the game: Clown 2 is the king bee. Clown 1 is the worker bee. The worker goes out and gathers honey while the king sits on his throne. When the king wants to collect the honey he just says: "Worker bee, come on in. Give it to me." And the worker bee gives him all the honey. Clown 2 nods and they start. Clown 1 sneaks behind the chair, takes a drink of water and holds it in his mouth. He then buzzes around pretending to go from flower to flower. Clown 2 calls him in and when he says: "Give it to me," Clown 1 shoots the water at him and laughs. Clown 2 gets mad. Clown 1 calms him down by saying: "We'll do it again but this time I'll be king." Clown 2 agrees. They start the game. Clown 2 takes a drink of water and buzzes around but Clown 1 never calls him in. Finally, Clown 2 swallows the water and yells at Clown 1 to play the game right. Clown 1 also takes a gulp of the water. Again, Clown 2 never gets called in. At last, he spits the water out and yells at Clown 1: "You were supposed to say, 'Worker bee, come in.' Then, 'Give it to me.' " When Clown 2 says "Give it to me," Clown 1 again squirts him with the water and exits laughing. Clown 2 follows sadly.

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# Pattycake

***Number of Clowns:*** Three

***Action:***

Clown 1 comes to Center Stage. Clown 2 enters. Clown 1 says to Clown 2: "Hey! Let's play a game!" Clown 2 says: "All right. What do you want to play?" Clown 1 says: "How about Pattycake?" Clown 2 agrees and they begin. As they start, Clown 3 enters and stops to watch them play. The action of the game is this: Clowns 1 and 2 face each other in a slight crouch. They both slap their hands on their thighs, clap, slap each other's hands, clap again, slap their thighs, clap once more. At this point, Clown 2 puts his hands out facing Clown 1 to be slapped. Clown 1, instead, slaps Clown 2 across the face. The sound of the slap is made by Clown 3 who is looking on and laughing at Clown 2. Clown 2 gets mad at Clown 1 who apologizes and asks Clown 2 to try it again. They start again and repeat the same sequence of actions. Once again, Clown 2 gets slapped in the face and Clown 3 looks on laughing. Clown 2 gets mad at Clown 3 for laughing and says to him: "If you're so smart, why don't you try it?" Clown 3 agrees and changes places with Clown 2. Clown 2 stands behind the other two clowns, but between them, laughing and talking to the crowd about how Clown 3 is going to get it. They start the pattycake routine with Clowns 1 and 3 this time. They follow the same routine but this time both Clowns 1 and 3 slap Clown 2. Clowns 1 and 3 shake hands, exit together. Clown 2 stands there for a second, wondering what happened, and then leaves slowly.

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# Niagara Falls

***Number of Clowns:*** Three

***Props:*** A one-quart bottle, a large funnel, a large coin, a hot water bottle

***Action:***

Clown 1 enters and announces that he's got a trick he wants to play but it requires a really dumb person. He has the audience help him call out Clown 2. He asks Clown 2: "How would you like to win a trip to Niagara Falls?" Clown 2 gets very excited and asks how. Clown 1 tells him that all he has to do is: 1) put the funnel in his belt; 2) tilt his head back and put the coin on his forehead; 3) on the count of three, tilt his head forward and drop the coin in the funnel. Clown 2 says it's easy and they begin. As they start the count, Clown 1 picks up the quart bottle and pours water into the funnel while yelling "Niagara Falls!" Clown 2 gets mad but Clown 1 calms him down by convincing him to try the trick on someone else. Clown 2 says: "Who would be dumb enough to fall for that?" Clown 3 enters. Clowns 1 and 2 look at each other and nod. They grab Clown 3 and explain the rules and set him up. When Clown 3 puts the funnel in his belt, it actually is stuck in the neck of the hot water bottle which is concealed in his pants. Clowns 1 and 2 begin the count, pouring water into the funnel. When they see that Clown 3 isn't getting wet, they stop the count. Clown 3 asks what's wrong and they tell him that they forgot what the number was. They look at each other wondering what happened to the water. They start again and the same thing happens. The third time, they finish the count, Clown 3 drops the coin into the funnel and starts to leave. Clown 2 stops him and says: "How come when I did the trick I got all wet while you're completely dry?" Clown 3 pulls out the hot water bottle, says: "I've already been to Niagara Falls!" He squirts Clown 2 with the water and exits. Clown 1 shrugs and Clown 2 chases them both off.

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