

# THE NEW COMEDY BIBLE

The Ultimate Guide to Writing  
& Performing Stand-up Comedy



“Judy Carter helps others find their authentic persona and communicate it in a way that makes audiences laugh.”

— Lily Tomlin

# JUDY CARTER

**THE NEW**  
**COMEDY**  
**BIBLE**

**The Ultimate Guide to Writing  
& Performing Stand-up Comedy**

**JUDY CARTER**

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# IN THE BEGINNING,

there was ***The Comedy Bible***  
which was published in 2001...

**The world has changed.**


Comedy has also changed, so  
here is ***The NEW Comedy Bible***.  
(Completely new.)










Stand-up comedy is about breaking rules.  
But before you break them, learn them.

**Judy Carter**









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# INTRODUCTION

## The New Ten Commandments of Comedy



# The New Ten Commandments of Comedy

## 1. Thou Shalt Not Steal

Don't "borrow" jokes from other comics, from the internet, or from the examples in this book. The audience wants to hear *your* original story and voice. That's your bankable asset. Among comics, stealing is the original sin.

## 2. Thou Shalt Not Lie

Truth is stranger, and funnier, than fiction. Authenticity is the secret sauce of your act. Audiences want to know *you* and can tell if you're being disingenuous.



"The hardest thing to do is to be true to yourself, especially when everybody is watching."

—Dave Chappelle

## 3. Thou Shalt Become a Social Media Star

Build a major presence on social media platforms. Post or upload videos and connect with your followers every day. Your cell phone is your publicist, so talk to it, record observations and post them *every single day*.



YouTube star and influencer Jenna Marbles told me when she came over for a comedy consultation that she got her degree in nursing. She never got to that career because when she released her 2010 YouTube video, "How to Trick People into Thinking You're Good Looking," within the first week, it was viewed 5.3 million times. Now she has more than 17 million subscribers, 2.2 billion video views, and has made millions of dollars.

#### **4. Thou Shalt Pay Your Dues**

Stage time has no substitute. When you fail, get back onstage and try again. Keep what works and lose or rewrite what doesn't. The recipe for success is: Bomb • Try again • Cry • Try again • Eat a pizza • Try again • Repeat! Don't give up!

#### **5. Thou Shalt Network**

At every open-mic night, be friendly to the emcee/host, stay and watch the other comics, and thank the club owner. You need them as much as you need fans, if not more. One of these people may become a player in the industry and hire the people they like. No joke. Many New York comics wish they had been nicer to that bartender at the Improv who went on to run HBO. Networking is essential to your long-term success.

#### **6. Thou Shalt Bash the Powerful**

Comedy has always poked fun at the rich and powerful, holding them accountable. It's called "punching up." On the flip side, bashing those you perceive as less fortunate, based on religion, race, and sexual orientation, isn't smart. Don't use your comedy to oppress others.

#### **7. Thou Shalt Never Use Age as an Excuse**

You're never too young, or too old, to be funny. The late, great American comic Rodney Dangerfield got his big break when he was forty-four. Lewis Black was forty-eight when his appearances on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart turned him into a household name. At the tender age of sixty, my former student Vicki Barbolak got a standing ovation after her audition for *America's Got Talent*. Lori Mae Hernandez performed on *America's Got Talent* at the age of thirteen and made the judge's cut, later performing at LA's Dolby Theatre. At any age, if you're funny, there's an audience for you.



(It's weird that people want me to babysit...) I'm not a high school graduate. I haven't even been to high school. I don't have a driver's license. I can't even sit in the front seat. I'm still on safety scissors people! But you're going to leave your beloved child to me? My only qualification for being a babysitter is...I used to be a baby!

—Lori Mae Hernandez

## 8. Thou Shalt Work “Clean”

On the road to fame, you need paying gigs. That anal sex joke may be hilarious, but it will rule out lucrative corporate gigs. Save your “blue” material for the clubs. (Remember, cleanliness is next to godliness.)

## 9. Thou Shalt Not *Try* to be Funny

Trying too hard to get laughs on a stage is equivalent to trying too hard to get love on a date. Either way, you'll end up rejected. Develop material to communicate your opinions and ideas in a way that's authentically funny. (See Commandment 2.) Your natural humor must shine through.

## 10. Thou Shalt Write *Every Day*

No resting on the seventh day. Comedy is a 24/7 job! Your funny bone is not so much a bone as a muscle. Use it or lose it. Write *every day*, do all the exercises in this book, and work with your Comedy Buddy regularly. Do the heavy lifting so when opportunity knocks, you'll be ready.

**Warning: Don't Write Comedy Alone—*Click into Action***

Go to [TheComedyBible.com](http://TheComedyBible.com) to learn how to find a Comedy Buddy and to find where you can share your work as well as get helpful insights. Head over now for an opportunity to get my complimentary audio download of “Breaking Through Procrastination.”

## Full Disclosure

*“Will this book make me funny?”*

No. This book will *not* make you funny. Funny is something you are or aren't. Being funny is a talent, a way of looking at the world that cannot be taught. But, if you *are* funny, then this book will show you how to successfully workshop, write, and develop stand-up comedy material through tried and true exercises. These exercises will develop your comedy persona as well as enough material for a one-hour comedy special. These are the same exercises that helped develop many of the current stars of comedy today.

*Let's find out just how funny you are.*

# So...You Think You're Funny?

## EXERCISE 1: Where Are You on the Funny Scale?

---

This Funny Scale preliminary test identifies your strengths and weaknesses, bringing awareness to the joke writing process.

### 1. List of Three Punchlines (Turns)

Write a punchline to this setup: *Three things will survive a nuclear bomb: venereal disease, cockroaches, and...*

*List Three Different Answers*

### 2. Writing Captions (Visual Humor)

Write two funny captions for this picture.



© Alan Roberts

### 3. Dialoguing Funny (Act-Outs)

Your mom says, "You're going out in that?!"

*Write Two Witty Responses*

### 4. Stand-up (Mixes)

Finish this setup: *An ink pen is like sex because...*

*List Five Examples*

### 5. Self-Mocking (Contrary Thinking)

*I'm chubby, but there are some advantages to being overweight...*

*List Three Funny Advantages to Being Overweight*

### 6. Acronym Jokes (One-Liners)

*KFC, CPA, and VIP actually stand for...*

*Write Out Funny Definitions for These Acronyms*

### 7. Political Humor (Comparison Jokes)

*My mother and the leader of our country have something in common, they both...*

*Write Two Funny Responses*

### 8. Family Jokes

*The weird thing about my father is...*

*Write Two Funny Things*

### 9. Religious Jokes

*Last night, God gave me advice. S/he said...*

*Act Out God Giving You Advice*

### 10. Sex Jokes

*Is it me or is it really unattractive when someone says...?*

*Write Two Funny Responses*

## Your Funny Test Results

Count up how many jokes/responses you wrote. What is that number? \_\_\_\_\_

### 18 And Above

You might have what it takes to be a pro. Even if some of your jokes aren't killers, the fact that you didn't stop at just one answer shows your commitment level. Trust me when I say your tenacity and your will to succeed will take you a long way. (And not just in comedy.)

### 10 To 17

The willingness exists, but you're giving up too easily. It often takes *ten tries* before anything even remotely funny emerges. Maybe you're being too critical and it's blocking you from "getting to the funny." Go back and give yourself permission to suck! Pretend you're in the Planet Fitness "Judgement-Free Zone" and write, without as many "bad" answers as you can. You'll be amazed at what happens.

### Fewer Than 9

You may still be a very funny person, but practice writing a little longer to move beyond the resistance stopping you from completing the exercise. Writing practice is a necessity on the road to success.

**If you didn't do this test at all, and promised yourself you'll do it later...**

Congratulations! You have the personality of a true comic! All comics procrastinate. As the saying goes, "Dying is easy, comedy is hard." That said, do *not* put this book aside and move on to your second-choice career. Go back and fill in your answers. Even if you write the most *unfunny* answers ever, what's important is you *don't quit*. You could be a rebel, an asymmetrical thinker, a "bad" student...and also a hidden gem. A star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame awaits. But first, do the hard work of completing the exercises to see what you've got.



***“So, I just wrote my first jokes. What do I do with them?”***

Want to post your best answers? Go to [TheComedyBible.com](http://TheComedyBible.com) to learn how. By sharing your jokes and reading what others have posted, you just might see that you are:

- Funnier than you thought you were.
- Better at creating certain types of material.
- Inspired to work harder.

No matter how you did on this funny test, you’re going to improve, and your material will get better with practice. That’s a promise.



### **The Comedy Bible Workbook**

Keep track of the funny stuff you write with ***The Comedy Bible Workbook*** which is available as a download or, for those who like to write free-hand, as a paperback workbook at [TheComedyBible.com](http://TheComedyBible.com).

*Now I need something from you.*

## **EXERCISE 2: Commit to Your Comedy Vision**

---

### **1. Visualize this...**

I’m going to ask you to close your eyes and visualize having the comedy career you want. Imagine yourself becoming successful.

- What does success look like?
- How do you feel?
- Who is around you?
- What are your most private thoughts at your moment of success?

Some will picture doing their set in front of an audience that’s

crying with laughter. Others may see their first paycheck. For many, it's becoming famous enough to be recognized on the street.

**2. Spend ten minutes writing your success vision as if it were a diary entry. Example:**

*“Tonight, I’m recording my second Netflix comedy special in New York City. I’m nervous, but prepared. I spent the day going over my set with my Comedy Buddy and my manager. No partying afterward as I’ve got an early flight tomorrow to California. I got a gig at Caesar’s in Vegas. I’m loving life right now!”*

**3. Write a goal you will achieve one year from now. Example:**

*“On this date next year, I will have performed at least 100 times.”*

**4. Write that goal in your calendar one year from today.**

We’ll discuss your calendar more in detail in the next chapter, Getting Past Procrastination.



***Holding on to Your Vision of Success***

Jim Carrey once relayed a story to Oprah about his comedy debut at Yuk Yuk’s Club in Toronto. His father drove him, and then watched him bomb. Carrey worried he didn’t have the goods to make a living as an entertainer. But in 1985, just four years later, Carrey, broke and depressed, drove his beat-up Toyota to Hollywood. To pump himself up, the nineteen-year-old wrote himself a check for \$10 million for “acting services rendered.” He post-dated it ten years and shoved it in his wallet.

Carrey went on to earn well over \$10 million for movies like *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* and *Dumb and Dumber*. When his father passed away in 1994, Carrey told Oprah he slipped the check into his father's casket.

## 5. Make a Commitment!

Don't keep your success plan a secret! Go to [TheComedyBible.com](http://TheComedyBible.com) and fill out a commitment form! You'll receive a motivational message to help you attain your goals. (Just return my phone calls when you get famous.)

*Now...Let's turn your comedy vision into a reality!*