

5 Ways to Make Them Laugh: Using Humor in Speeches

If you've ever heard a really memorable speech before, there's a good chance it involved at least some humor. Humor can be difficult to pull off. However, while it isn't the easiest thing to perfect, it's a useful skill to have! Telling a good joke, fitting in a sneaky pun, or even saying something in a fun accent can lighten the mood, grab your audience's attention, and make you seem more friendly and relatable as a person. So how does one use humor correctly?

A little while back, I read the book *Humor CPR* by storyteller, comedian, and motivational speaker Kelly Swanson. (While this book is mostly aimed toward adults and might not really make sense or be suitable for younger children, it has many great tips and tricks to creating and using great jokes.)

In this blog post, we'll be looking at 5 of the methods mentioned in the book to easily *be funny*.



1. **Use the Set Up – Assumptions – Alternative Explanation Method.** In this method, Swanson explains that you must first come up with a random statement, list what you would assume if you heard that statement, and then come up with a surprise punchline that defies those assumptions.
 1. One example of this is the quote by author Stephen King in which he says, “People think that I must be a very strange person. This is not correct. I have the heart of a small boy. It is in a glass jar on my desk.” When you first hear the beginning of the quote, you assume that he is referring to a childlike personality. Then, the quote takes a surprising- and decidedly creepy- turn.
2. **Destroy Stereotypes.** Similar to the first method, this formula involves taking a common, accepted stereotype and then surprising the audience with a detail that defies that stereotype.

1. For example: A little old lady with a cane...who plays football.
3. **Include a play on words.** By slipping a pun or play on words somewhere in your speech, you can take your audience by surprise. Here are some of my favorites (Don't roll your eyes! You have to admit these are pretty good...):
 1. I know it's cheesy, but it's grate to be here!
 2. Our milk was expiring soon, so I gave my brother a spoiler alert.
 3. I was going to tell a joke about prunes, but it was too dated.
 4. Some guy got cut in half! Don't worry though, he's all right now.
 5. My aunt has a fear of speed bumps, but she's slowly getting over them.
 6. A book fell on my head this morning...I've only got myshelf to blame.
 7. My pet bunny has a bad attitude...it's like she doesn't carrot all!
4. **Come up with funny names for people or places.** If you include a funny or ironic name for a person or place in your joke, the absurdity of it can make your audience laugh! You can develop these names into characters over the course of a few sentences as well.
5. **Don't "step on the laughs".** This term is used to describe when someone tells a funny joke, but ruins it by following with another joke too quickly. Timing is key! Let your audience laugh, and when you see that they're finished, follow with the rest of your speech. If you are planning to tell another joke, space it out so that they have a bit of time in between. If you can, also avoid laughing at your own jokes. If it's so funny that you absolutely have to, just make sure you tell the joke seriously and then laugh a reasonable amount. A lot of times, it's even funnier when you act as if you were being serious or contemplating.

While there are many, many, other ways to be funny, these few methods can carry you far! The next time you give a speech, or really any time you'd like to tell a good joke, try and use one of these methods and make your speech memorable and fun!