How to be a Comedian

by Tom Shillue

Team:

Challenge

Create and perform a 3-minute comedy routine.

Module Overview

Big Meet: Review the Guidelines, Introduction, IIIT Formula, & Example. Complete the Exercise.
Masterclass: Learn from an industry expert about communication.
Roundtable I: Propose ideas & pick the top 3 jokes. Then, write the jokes using the IIIT formula.
Roundtable II: Pick a presenter and practice your routine. Refine based on feedback.
Presentation: Perform your 3-minute comedy routine.

Guidelines

Do

Have fun. Be creative, clever, and relevant. Be confident, energetic, and engaging. Use humor that is relatable, appropriate, and genuinely funny. Don't be afraid to take risks, but exercise good judgment.

Don't

Don't use racist, sexist, vulgar, or discriminatory humor. Don't swear, make sexually explicit jokes, or ridicule individuals or groups. Avoid humor that is unnecessarily divisive, offensive, or mean-spirited. Being edgy is fine; being crude or cruel is not.

Audition

Each comedian should rehearse their full routine in front of their entire team before performing. Teams should provide candid, constructive feedback to sharpen the jokes, improve delivery and timing, eliminate weak material, and ensure the routine meets the challenge guidelines. Test the material, learn what works, and refine it.

Audience

Know your audience and engage the entire room. You're not performing just for your closest friends, but for a cross-section of the AMU community, including students, faculty, and staff. Avoid inside jokes, obscure references, or humor that only a small group will understand. The best comedians make everyone feel included in the fun to get more laughs.

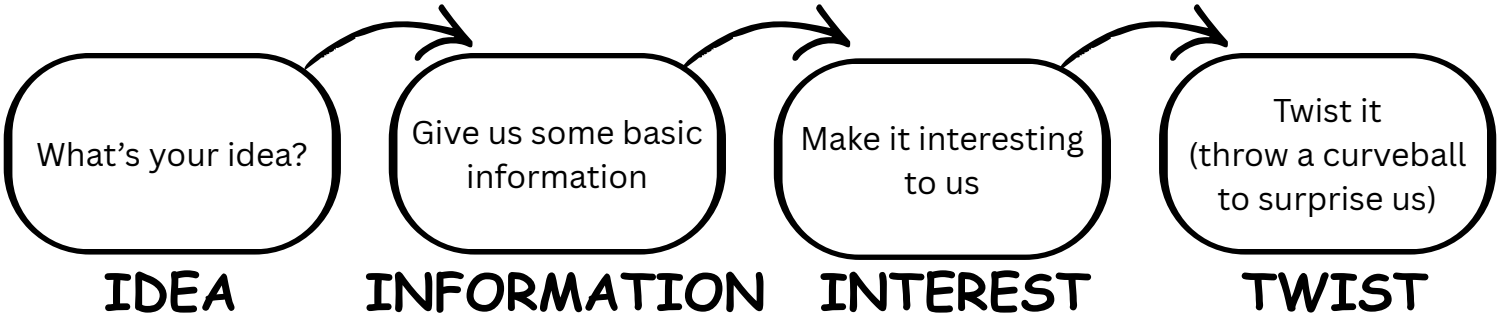
Introduction

Stand-up Comedy is just communicating an idea. You split the idea into set-up and punchline. The punchline is where you help the audience "punctuate" your idea with a laugh. As a stand-up comedian, you are always Setting Up or Punching.

The IIIT Formula

As you go through your day, you will have ideas. They don't have to be "funny" right off the bat - they are just interesting things, the kind of things that "make you think." Write them down. These are the foundations of your stand up routine.

To get your ideas into Set-Up and Punchline form, use this formula:



Running Shoes Example

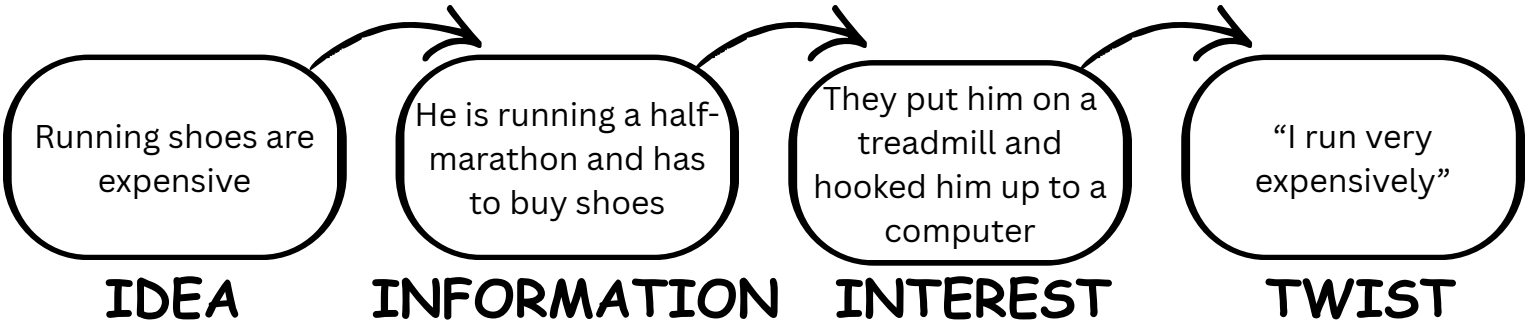
Watch Andy Hendrickson's bit on Running Shoes (start at 1:01):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVBSHIAk00g

Andy went to buy running shoes and he was shocked at the price, so that is his simple **information**: "Running shoes are pricey." To communicate this comedically, he has to reveal that they are pricey in a funny, unexpected way.

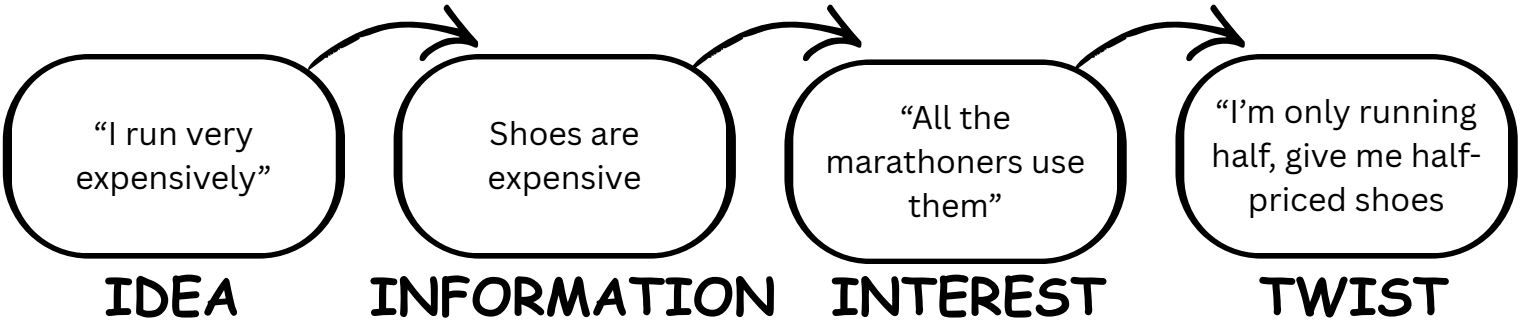
He needs to go to step two - make it **interesting** to us. He brought us into the moment of his sticker shock by describing the store experience. It turns out the store put him on a treadmill, which is a nice and slightly strange detail. Now we're interested.

Then to the surprise **twist**. He wants to show us that shoes are expensive - but instead of just saying "Shoes are expensive" he proves that they are expensive with his story. He says that the store will recommend a shoe "based on how you run." Then he says "I found out I run very expensively."

Here, we break up Andy's joke:



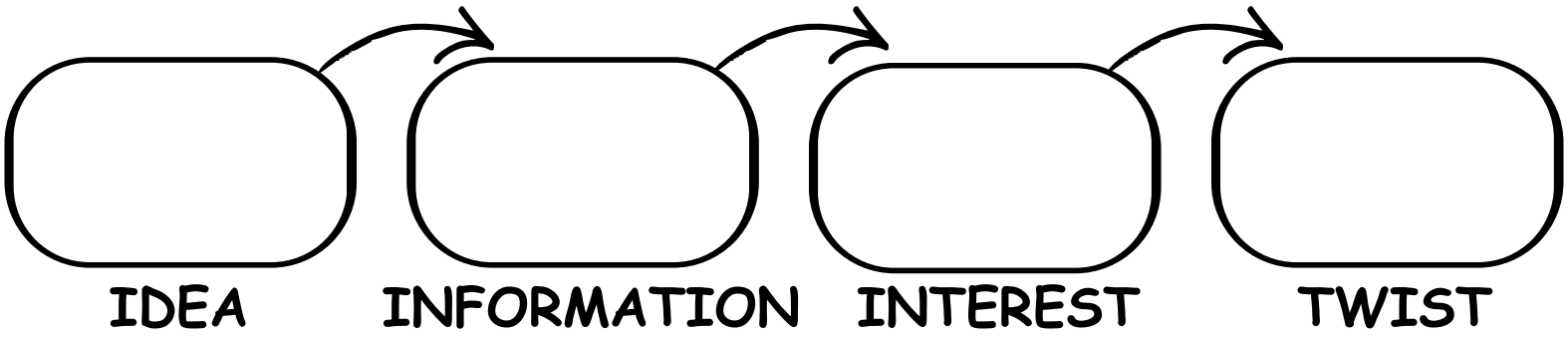
As a bonus, Andy then uses his punchline as the set-up for his next joke:



Grandparents Exercise

Now, watch Ivan Decker's bit on Grandparents: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/C6ZopMLFUFI*

EXERCISE: Split up the clip of Ivan Decker into that same format.



HOW TO WRITE



IDEA	INFORMATION	INTEREST	TWIST

IDEA	INFORMATION	INTEREST	TWIST