LOOK
AND
LAUGH

By Duane Laflin

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This publication is a revised edition of “LOOK AND LAUGH” which was published by Duane Laflin in January of 2006.
Dedication

To Trevor Lewis, Ali Bongo, and Karrell Fox. Three marvelous magical entertainers who taught me to have fun with magic and to make it fun for an audience. They taught me the power of sight gags and simple jokes. They also taught me the beauty and power of simplicity in presentation.

I am grateful that Trevor is still with us. I continue to view him as a mentor and teacher. He is brilliant. He has always been generous to me with ideas and insights. I hope to enjoy his friendship and influence for many years to come.

I miss Ali Bongo deeply. We spent much time together and for reasons I do not fully understand, in spite of our age difference, we seemed to get along especially well. When he was in the USA he was my guest and like a member of my family. Whether it was sitting at a table in a restaurant, or riding in the front of my truck on the way to a magic convention, or taking a walk together; we discussed magic, showmanship, and pretty much everything imaginable relating to creative entertainment. He was a never ending source of inspiration, great stories, and practical information. When I visited him in England, he made me feel like I was one of his best friends ever.

Karrell Fox was a ‘one in a million’. My wife and I were privileged with the fact that in the final years of his life he adopted us as one of his favorite magic dealers. At magic conventions he would put a chair behind our dealer tables and spend hours of each day holding court with those who would stop to talk to him. When the crowd dispersed to attend lectures and other events he
often stayed and talked to me. We almost always talked about the same things; his favorite tricks and bits of business. Yet it seemed every time the conversation was different because he always had something new to tell me or show me. I learned much from him.

I must also mention that Trevor is a great emcee ("compere" as he says it). Ali and Karrell were as well. In fact, the three of them certainly rank among the best emcees the world of magic has ever seen. Much of what I know about being an emcee has been learned from them.

So with gratitude to Trevor, Ali, and Karrell: I’m doing my best to continue the tradition of behaving as a gentleman as I combine solid showmanship with simple, visual, and magical comedy.

Duane Laflin
May 2010
Contents

Page 7 - Introduction
Page 9 - How I Learn A Routine
Page 11 - The Red E
Page 15 - RUE
Page 17 - The Question Mark
Page 21 - The Stage Hand
Page 23 - Boomerangs And More
Page 29 - The Jumping Star
Page 31 - Parting The Red C
Page 35 - Starling Is A Strange Word
Page 37 - Advertising Mistakes
Page 41 - The Sentence That Cannot Be Written
Page 43 - The Note Book
Page 47 - The “A Dress” Book
Page 49 - The Hand Book

(Contents continued on next page)
Contents

Page 51 - The Auto Graph Book

Page 55 - The Cat A Log

Page 57 - Two Books To Use Together

Page 59 - Revelations

Page 63 - Daily Bread And The Departed Doughboy

Page 67 - Spring Water

Page 71 - Whole Heart, Half Heart, Heart Felt, Thank You!

Page 75 - History Of The Sock

Page 77 - A Simple Sign

Page 80 - Bonus Idea

Page 81 - Final Thoughts
Introduction

“LOOK AND LAUGH” is not a complicated book. Each idea is presented by way of a relatively brief description and photo illustration.

It is important to know that each idea has been tested by way of live performance. The ideas made it into this book because they passed the test. They drew reactions from the audience that indicated people were truly experiencing entertainment.

Some of the ideas get big laughs. Some get grins. Some get groans. All of them are designed to allow the performer to smoothly segue into other aspects of his program. You need not use the ideas as transitions (as in emcee work). They can work as stand alone jokes (for clowns and funny talkers). However most of the ideas are intended for the purpose of providing gentle humor while introducing a new aspect of a show or while seeking to change the pace of a show.

About the groans: someone has said that “a groan is an excellent form of audience participation.” It can be fun for an audience to groan. It is a way for them to interact and sort of play along with the person on stage. This is not justification for bad jokes. It is recognition of the fact that human beings enjoy things on different levels and in different ways. A smart entertainer can work with the audience in such a way that they find pleasure in their opportunity to groan.

Most of the ideas came about because I needed
material for my emcee work. Therefore those who serve as *Master of Ceremonies* should find may useful bits on these pages. As well; magicians, clowns, comedians, ventriloquists, jugglers, and teachers should all be able to adapt material from this book for their work.

Not all of the ideas in this book began with me. If they did not, I have done what I can to credit them. Some ideas seem impossible to credit. They have been around for ages and no one knows who used them first.

I have put my personal touch on all of the ideas. Some of the ideas are actually my creations from the very beginning. I thank God for inspiration and originality.

**Note**

The material in this book was first published in 2008 as photocopied lecture notes. Since then I have realized that the value of the concepts calls for them to be available in better form. This publication is an effort to put out the material with improved appearance and improved or expanded explanations.
How I Learn A Routine

Before explaining the concepts that this book is really about, I thought it wise to offer thoughts on how I work toward mastering new material that goes into a show. It involves a three step process...

A. I talk through it
B. I walk through it
C. I talk and walk through it

A. Talk Through
This means I decide what I am going to say. I work on words. I do this without any props in hand. I have found that if I work on what I will say while I also play with the props, I get distracted and do not develop patter as well as I should.

I need to imagine how the routine will be presented and consider words that will be used. So I put the props away and work at creating a script. Sometimes I write the script out on paper. Other times I take long walks and mentally work through different ways to say what needs to be said.

Then I literally talk it out loud. With no one around, I stand and face a mirror or maybe just look out across the yard, and say what I expect to say. If I cannot work out a reasonable line of speech there is no point in working on anything else. The patter line must be developed first.

B. Talk Through
Once I know I have the right words, I go through the motions of presentation. I do this without talking.
With props in hand I think about what I must do and what the audience needs to see. I experiment with how I will pick the props up and how I will put them down. I decide how I will position the props on a table (if a table is necessary). I think about how much space is required. I consider angles and analyze viewpoints that the audience will have.

I suppose it could be said that at this stage I try to mime the routine.

C. Talk And Walk Through

When satisfied that I know the movements and positions involved, I put it all together. I say the words while doing the motions. This is where much refinement occurs.

This is crucial to learning routines well. While on your own, in a solitary situation, you must perform the routine as if it is a real show situation. Perform it in a complete manner without leaving anything out. Put all words and motions together and go through the process a number of times.

When I find I can talk and walk through a routine without any snags, and when the process of talking and walking through the routine makes me feel good about what I plan to do, I know I am finally ready to take it to the stage.
The Red E

CONCEPT

The performer holds up a large letter E. It is red. He says to the audience, “Look at this. It is a large E and the color is red. Why am I showing it to you? Because I am ready (red - E) to do something special!”

INSIGHT ABOUT THE CONCEPT

Timing is crucial. Don’t hurry this gag. Hold up the E and give the audience a moment to wonder why you are doing so. When you say, “because I am ready”, pause before saying, “ready” and point directly at the red E. Then, when you say the word, most people will get the pun.

Whether or not people do get the pun, go ahead and make an explanatory comment such as “ready as in red and E”.

Once the pun is clarified, don’t dwell long on it and don’t wait as if you expect a huge laugh. It does not deserve a huge laugh. It does merit grins, smiles, and groans. Give the audience just a moment to absorb the joke. Then move on to whatever it is you are red E to do. The fact that you use this gag to lead into something that really is ready gives justification for the silliness of the pun.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

- When emceeing a show where it was difficult to communicate with the backstage help because I was in
front of the curtain and they were behind it and there was no system in place to signal me when things were in place for each performer, I made up a red E (large cardboard E that was red) for a young lady to hold. When an act was ready and it was time for me to make the introduction, she would walk out and hold up the red E. I had her wear a nice dress and pose like the ladies who help the television game show hosts. She presented the red E with style. This added to the fun and production value of the show.

The first time she appeared I identified the gag by saying, “Oh. Look! This must mean they are ready (red E) for me to introduce the next act!”

For the rest of the show the red E was used as a running gag, but it actually did help me know when it was time to make introductions.

- This concept could also be used when selecting help from the audience. Hold it up, do the gag, then say, “Actually I am ready (red E) to find a helper from this audience.”

- It also can be a tool for raising the participation level of the audience. Rather than saying, “I am ready”, put it into the form of a question. “Are you ready (red E) to have some fun? Or “Are you ready to see something amazing?” Or “Are you ready to experience something wild and crazy?”
You can cut it out so it actually is just a big red E, but I have done it the easy way. With my computer I have printed a red E on a stiff sheet of paper (cover stock). I did not bother to cut it out. It worked just fine.
This is all you need. A sign that has a big blue R, a big blue U, and a big red E. As a cheat sheet, you might write out the explanations of the word on the back of the sign so you can look at them if you forget.
RUE

CONCEPT

The performer holds up a sign that indicates an usual word. The word is RUE. It is written in an unusual manner. The first two letters are blue, but the E is red.

The audience is asked if they know what the word means. The performer then explains, “The word has several meanings. In French the word indicates a street. In English it is an expression of regret and depression as when someone says, ‘I rue the day I bought stock in Enron.’ In the Bible this word is used to indicate a small plant or weed.”

The performer then continues, “Now there is something strange to notice about this word. Not only is it a word, it is a complete sentence. Can you see the sentence? It contains three words. Are (R) you (U) ready (E is red)!”

The performer then asks the audience to answer the question by way of applause if they are ready…”R U red E for a great show? If so, let’s hear you clap your hands and cheer!”

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

The idea is not original with me. A magician from Oklahoma by the name of Del Wilson, who at the present is the international president of the International Fellowship Of Christian Magicians, is the creator of the gag. He used it in ministry work. After explaining the meaning of the word, he would quote Matthew 24:44 and ask people if they were red-E (ready) to meet the Lord.
All I have done with the idea is expand on its purpose. I too have used it in ministry work just like Del does, but I have also found it a fun way to transition into a variety of show situations.

**HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT**

- I most often use the gag early in a show. Sometimes even to start a show. After explaining the word I ask the audience, “Are you ready (R U red E) for a good time?”

- The gag also works when selecting volunteers. “I need someone to assist me, are you ready (R U red E)?”

- It would even work for comedy once a person is on stage. Show the sign, ask him or her if he or she knows what the word means. Then say, “Are you ready (R U red E) for the blades of death?” (Or whatever the silly thing is you plan to do.)
The Question Mark

CONCEPT

Several years ago it was a fad to ask odd questions such as “Why do they drive on parkways and park on driveways?” or “Why do they call them apartments when they are all together?” (apart-ments)

Some overdid the questions. They posed too many questions and used the concept of the question list too often. Audiences got tired of it.

However, when the idea of listing funny questions is used properly, it can still be funny and it will still get laughs. The key in the matter is to use the questions wisely.

For this gag the performer holds up a picture of a large question mark and then proceeds to ask crazy questions. After having fun with the crazy questions, he asks a necessary question such as, “What is next on our program tonight?” Then he answers the question.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

I use the card with the question mark on it as a cheat sheet. On the back of it I have written the list of questions I plan to use.

My opinion is that five questions are enough. There are hundreds. You can find them on the internet and in books. DO NOT use every crazy question you find. A long list takes the comedy out of the queries. It is not a quest to see how many strange questions one could find. It is about creating brief and pleasant humor by way of unusual observations about the English
language.

My suggestion is that you pick out a few favorite funny questions and, as you do so, try to pick some that people are not likely to have heard before. Some of my favorite questions are…

- Why is abbreviated such a long word?
- If cows could laugh, would milk come out of their noses?
- What hair color do they put on the driver’s license of a bald man?
- If a turtle were to fall out of his shell, would he be naked or homeless?
- If a man writes a book called, How to be a complete failure, and no one buys the book; is it a success?

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Ask the funny questions then say, “Actually there is a serious question that must be posed.” Then give the answer.

The serious question might be, “What is next on our program?” You then would say, “The answer is, intermission!”

The question could also be something such as, “Have you remembered to turn off your cell phones?” or “Where are the emergency exits?” or “Do we allow video taping in this show?” or “Will their be souvenirs available after the show?” or “Who should be thanked for providing this wonderful evening of entertainment?”

Obviously, after posing the question, you would take time to answer it.

This gag allows you to create something interesting out of that which otherwise might be dull.
The Stage Hand

CONCEPT

There are two ways this can be used. The first is simple. The performer shows the audience a large hand (either a picture or else a cut out hand shape) and announces he found it backstage and therefore knows what it is. It must be a stage hand!

He suggests that it is handy to have a stage hand like this because it reminds him of the importance of giving a hand. In fact, it reminds him of an act that certainly deserves a hand (applause). Then the next act is introduced.

The second way to do it is more complicated. The hand is a picture on the front of a folder. On the back of the folder is another picture of a hand. The performer turns the folder over again and again as he talks about getting the upper hand or something happening that is under-handed or a handsome situation. Finally he opens up the folder. Inside is a picture of two hands that are in a pose indicating applause. He says, “Here is the best thing to do with our hands, put them together as we welcome…” Then he makes an introduction.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

The hand might be nothing more than a picture or cutout that is held up for the audience to see while puns are made about such things as a stage hand, handy, handsome, got to hand it to you, under-handed, upper hand, etc.

Then again, it can be a very nice way of
introducing a celebrity or giving credit to someone. Use the prop to make a few jokes then say, “Seriously, I’ve got to hand it to this next person. If it was not for the fact that he had his hand on this program, all these good things would not have happened!”

The person being recognized could be another performer, an honored guest, someone from the community who has done something special, or maybe even members of the technical crew,

Yet another direction for the gag would be to do the jokes and then say, “I’m showing this to you because I really do need a hand… I mean I need someone to give me a hand with my next routine… are there any volunteers to help me… please raise a hand?”

Of course it is good for emcee work. Use it to directly explain to the audience the importance of putting their hands together to encourage the performers.
The Boomerangs And More!

CONCEPT

A famous example of the reality of optical illusion is *The Boomerangs*. They are not really boomerangs. They are two objects that are sort of shaped like boomerangs. They are identical in size, yet they can be held so each one seems either larger or smaller than the other. The sizes seem to change every time the positions of the boomerangs are changed. Eventually the truth is revealed that they are actually the same size.

This idea takes the illusion farther. After showing the audience that one boomerang seems to be too large, it is cut with scissors to make it the correct size. This actually shortens the boomerang so now it really is not the same size as the other. Since the two boomerangs still are not the same size, the other boomerang is cut to make things right.

This process is repeated several times. Each time one of the boomerangs is cut to make the two the exact same length, yet they still will not match in length. The routine ends when, without cutting or stretching anything, the boomerang that really was cut shorter than the other appears to become the same size as the other.

**Note:** The above description may seem complicated, but the concept is simple to view. Two boomerangs are supposed to be the same size, but never seem to match up...until the situation is created where it would be impossible for them to match...and then they really do match up!

The shape of these “boomerangs” is shown on a
following page. Once you understand the shape, make up the boomerangs in any size you want. They will work well in any size.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Announce that you want to explain the concept of *illusion* and to do so you need two boomerangs which are identical. Hold the boomerangs with one about the other so they do not seem identical.

Act surprised and frustrated by this. Use scissors to cut one of the boomerangs to correct the problem. Hold the boomerangs next to one another so the audience can see they still are not the same size. Cut the other boomerang to rectify the situation. Hold one boomerang above the other so that, even though they now are the same size, they still appear to be different in size. Use your scissors to cut one of the boomerangs again in order to make them the same length.

Continue with this matter of cutting the boomerangs yet never being able to make them match.

Finally take the shorter boomerang and hold it directly under the longer boomerang. This will make them appear to be identical. Say something like, “Apparently I do not understand this illusion as well as I thought, but I do know something about what is on the program next…”

Another way to finish the routine is by having a printed message on the back of the boomerangs such as “Happy Birthday”.

The most simple way to end the bit is by saying, “I need to go back to the drawing board with this illusion…so let’s do something else…” Then announce what the “something else” might be.
The shape is not a true “boomerang” shape. It rather is a gradual curve. You can experiment with how severe you want the curve to be. My suggestion is that you make the curve close to the angle created by drawing around the top portion of a large serving plate. Use the serving plate to create the angle, then make your boomerang shape. Once you have the shape, you can use it as a template. Place it over colored poster board and draw around it to create boomerangs that will all be the same size. Different colored boards allows you to make boomerangs of different colors. A stiff poster board is best for handling.
They are both the same size, but the way they are held makes the boomerang in the above position seem shorter than the one below. Cutting the “longer” one actually does make one shorter than the other.
In this picture the lower boomerang actually is shorter than the one above. Yet, because of how it is held, it appears to be the same size. It is a great optical illusion!

So the overall sequence is...

1. Show two boomerangs that are the same size in a way that one seems larger than the other.
2. Trim the boomerang that seems larger. Now it really is shorter than the other.
3. Show that it is actually shorter than the other, so trim the longer one down to match it.
4. Even though they are the same size, by holding one above the other it appears one is still larger.
5. Again trim the one that seems larger. Then show that now it is smaller.
6. Finish the routine by showing the boomerang that is definitely smaller to appear to be the same size as the larger. Do this by holding it directly beneath the larger boomerang.
The Jumping Star

CONCEPT

The performer shows a large magic wand. At one end of the wand is a star. He claims he will make the star jump to the other end of the wand. To do this the wand must be behind his back.

The wand is placed behind his back and obviously turned end for end. The wand is then brought out from behind the back and shown to the audience. The performer says, “Look! It worked! The star is now at the other end!”

The performer offers to repeat this miracle and does so. Again the wand is obviously turned end for end while behind his back.

At last the performer offers to explain the miracle. The audience assumes he will admit he was turning the wand end for end.

Instead the performer claims the secret is Velcro and shows how the star is attached to the wand by Velcro and can be removed from one end and switched to the other end. The performer says this is what he was doing while no one was looking. This is such a ridiculous suggestion…it gets a good laugh.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

You might be tempted to skip this idea because, unless you see it done, it is hard to imagine how it can be funny. But it is funny!

The key is to act as if you believe this is a genuinely mystifying trick. Since what you are doing is
super obvious, it gets a laugh.

Then the Velcro explanation at the end gets a bigger laugh because it is totally unexpected…and ludicrous. The audience knows you did not use the Velcro method. They know you turned the wand end for end!

It is the obviously absurdity of the bit that makes it entertaining.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Do the gag then make a play on words. It is a magic wand so say something such as “You may be wandering (wondering) what is next in the show?” Or “Don’t let your minds wander, you do not want to miss what is going to happen next! It is wanderful (wonderful).”

You can also use it to lead in to selecting a volunteer. After the gag say, “I am wandering (wondering) if anyone would like to help me with my next trick?”
Parting The Red C

CONCEPT

The performer announces that it is time to do something biblical. He shows the audience a picture of a C. The C is red.

He reaches up and removes the C from the picture. Another red C is left behind on the picture. He remarks, “You have just witnessed the parting of the red C.” (Red C).

Then he takes the C in his hand and passes it over the picture of the other C and says, “Now I am crossing the red C.”

He follows this by saying, “This joke makes some people seasick (C-sick). In fact you might think this joke belongs in the dead sea (C). I had better cease (C-sss) from this bit of silliness before you seize (C-zzz) me!”

The conclusion of the gag is when the performer says, “I showed you this because there really is something you need to see (C), it is the next act!” (Or whatever is next to be seen.)

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

The comedy bit involving splitting two red C’s to illustrate parting the Red Sea has been around for a long time. I have no idea who thought of it first. Most commonly the gag is done with two C’s made of sponge. One can be hidden behind the other. I have the sponge C’s and often use them.

My variation on the gag was to print a large red C on a piece of heavy poster board and then make another
C that is an exact duplicate to the one on the board. I used a dot of Velcro to stick the duplicate C over the one pictured on the board. (I colored over the white Velcro dots with a red marker so the dot did not show up on the C.)

The reason I use the board C in place of the sponge C is in some situations I can have something written on the back of the board, such as the name of the next act, and use the back of the board as sign when making the introduction.

**HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT**

- Use it just because the visual pun built around parting the red C is fun. Let is be a joke that is part of a comedy show.
- Use it to lead in to whatever you want the audience to see (C) next. Tell them they are to “see” something special.
- Use it to get a volunteer from the audience. Say, “It is time to see (C) if I can find a helper.”
The letters are attached to the board with Velcro. One at a time they are removed to create a new word. You need not make your display board and letters this big. I made mine as large as possible because the event where I planned to use it would have about two thousand people in the audience.
Starling Is A Strange Word

CONCEPT

The performer shows the word “STARLING” on display on a stand. He comments that there are very few words in the English language of eight letters in length like STARLING. What makes the word unique is it is possible to remove one letter at a time and every time have a new word without rearranging any of the other letters.

This is demonstrated.

The L is removed. The new word is staring.
The A is removed. The new word is string.
The R is removed. The new word is sting.
The T is removed. The new word is sing.
The G is removed. The new word is sin.
The S is removed. The new word is in.
The N is removed. The new word is I.

Each time a letter is removed, a brief comment is made about the new word. When “I” is reached, the performer says, “Now it is I. I have something I must show you..” This leads into whatever is next in the show.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

I got this idea form Sid Lorraine. Abbott’s Magic Company publishes a book called Sid Lorraine’s Scrapbook. Sid loved words. In the book he explained how the word starling can be reduced letter by letter to
make a new word every time. He viewed it as a novelty. When I read his work, I immediately saw that this novelty could be used in a show. I designed a stand that would hold the individual letters so one at a time they could be removed. Later I used Velcro dots to attached the letters to a long narrow bar. By this I did not need a table or special stand to display the word. I could hold the entire gag in my hands.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Audiences find the reduction of the word, letter by letter, to be interesting. When you take a letter away and make a new word, have a brief comment to make each time.

When you get to the “I” simply reveal what you will do next. I have used this gag many times when emceeing a show that I also performed in as an act. When it was my turn to be the act, I introduced myself by way of this Starling gag.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT

“Starling is a bird that sits in a tree. Staring is what we might be doing right now. We are staring at the word that used to be starling. String is something to tie around a finger so we do not forget what we want to remember. Sting is what a bee can do. Sing is what I do not plan to do. Sin is what many of us do…too often! Let’s not talk about it. In can be part of a question such as ‘In this show tonight what will happen next?’ I is the answer. I am the one who is about to perform so here I go!”

36
Advertising Mistakes

CONCEPT

Major corporations have made some big mistakes when taking their advertising slogans to other nations. The performer shares some of these mistakes. He finishes reporting on the mistakes by showing a slogan that indicates what is next on the show. About this he says, “Make no mistake about this, what you will see next is certainly something special!”

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

These goof advertising slogans can be found on the internet and in other places. I collected as many as I could, then sifted through them to determine which ones would work on stage.

The slogans I choose to use were then printed on large sign boards. On the front of the board was the slogan. On the back of the board was the bad translation that was made of the slogan.

To perform the gag, make up the signs and then show them one at a time. Announce the slogan (front of the sign) then turn the sign around to show how it went wrong.

Print up a special sign to end the bit. On this special sign should be a statement or slogan about what is next in the show. Remember to use the words “Make no mistake about this” to introduce what is next.
THE ADVERTISING GOOFS

- They wrongly translated Coca-Cola for the Chinese. The translation meant “Bite the wax tadpole”. Coke did not sell fast because Chinese people did not want to bite the wax tadpole!
- They wrongly translated “Come alive in the Pepsi Generation” for the Chinese. What it read to the Chinese was, “Brings your ancestors back from the dead.”
- They wrongly translated the beer slogan “Turn it loose” into Spanish. In Spanish it actually meant “Experience diarrhea.”
- They wrongly translated the saying “Got milk” into Spanish. It meant “Are you lactating?”
- They wrongly translated Kentucky Fried Chicken’s “Finger licking good” motto into Chinese so it meant “Eat your fingers off.”
- They printed tee shirts that they though said in Spanish “I saw the Pope” when actually the tee shirts read “I saw the potato.”
- They tried to sell the automobile called Chevy Nova in South America, but did not realize that in that part of the world Nova means “It won’t go!”
- They wrongly translated the product Claroil Mist Stick into the German language. It actually read “cow manure stick.”
COCA-COLA
(Chinese)

Bite The Wax Tadpole
The flaps reveal or conceal the various spellings of the word. The back of the circle has a 2 in the center...so you can get “a round 2”.

![Images of flaps revealing different spellings: TO, TOO, TWO, and KING and Presto]
The Sentence That Cannot Be Written

CONCEPT

There really is a sentence in the English language that cannot be written. It involves the word “to” or “two” or “too”. Since these words all sound the same you can say “There are three ____ in the English language,” but you cannot write that sentence.

As you see, I cannot write it. A version of the word is supposed to go in the blank, but since there are three versions, which spelling would you use? There is only one “to”, only one “two”, and only one “too”, yet there are three.

I designed a chart to illustrate this sentence. There are flaps that cover the three words. Each time I state a version of the word I lift a flap to show the version to which I am referring.

The chart is round. Eventually I leave the matter of trying to explain the problem and show the back of the chart instead. There is a large letter 2 in the center of the back. Since the chart itself is round, I make a joke. “It is time to get a round to (2) something important.”

Finally the chart is opened (it is designed like a giant folder) to show the matter to which I need to get “a round.” In the pictures you will see how I used this chart as a joke to introduce a duo act.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Show the chart and announce that it is time for a
lesson about a sentence in the English language that cannot be written. Say the sentence. “There are three ____ in the English language.”

Use the chart to explain the problem. “Which version of the word do I use? Is it to as in go to bed? Or is sit too as in me too? Or is it two as in not one but two?”

Have fun with this. Use the words a lot and open/close the flaps to indicate the version of the word you have in mind. Such as…

“See? This is hard to explain because there are more than two ways to say the word. You can say to and two, but you can say to too! This is too hard to explain because there is not just one meaning or two, there is the other meaning too! I guess I should stop trying to explain this and get (now is when you turn the chart around to show the 2 on the back) around to telling you what is next on the show. It is two wonderful performers!”

If the next thing on the show is not two performers you can cease the play on words and simply get around to whatever it is you need to do next.

Note: To read this may make it seem complicated and non-funny, but my experience has proven it to work very well. Just try the sentence on someone and see how they react. Then write out the three variations of the word and use them as flashcards while you explain the sentence. You will discover it is interesting and entertaining. I suspect this will lead you to making up the entire big chart. (Get around to it!)
The Note Book

CONCEPT

The performer shows a folder that has a musical note on the front. He says, “This is not just any book, it is a notebook.” Then he opens the book and show it contains other notes. A foot note (picture of a foot), a bank note (picture of a bank), a love note (picture of a heart).

At last he explains that this notebook is important because it tells him what to do next. He looks into the book and reads what is next.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

This idea and the book ideas on following pages come from Trevor Lewis of Wales. Trevor is a world champion magician, super clever entertainer, and dear friend. He shared the ideas with me and gave me permission to put them in this book. I have modified his suggestions in minor ways that suit my personality, but the invention of these ideas is all his work. Thank you Trevor!

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Before talking to Trevor, I used the music note idea by having a music note on a card and then, after showing it to the audience, explaining that it was a “note card”. This would get a decent reaction.

Turning the note concept into a book made it much better.
Design a four page folder that sort of looks like a book. On the front put a large musical note. This indicates that it is a note book. On an inside page put a picture of a musical note along with a picture of a foot. This is your foot note. On another inside page have a picture of a bank or bank vault with a large musical note on it. This is your Bank note. On yet another page have a picture of a large heart with a musical note over it. This is your love note.

Present the gag by showing the book and its pages while identifying the various notes. It is truly a matter of visual pun and will get both groans and laughs. Actually use the book as your notebook. Check its pages to identify whatever it is you need to do or say next.
The “A Dress” Book

CONCEPT

This is another book idea. The performer has in his hand a book that has a picture of a woman’s dress on the front. He says to the audience, “Excuse me while I look up something in this book. Do you know what kind of book it is? It is my a dress book!”

Then he opens the book and looks to find something that needs to be addressed. It might be something about what is next in the show or it might be an announcement such as “I find it is time to address the fact that tonight the banquet will begin at 7:00 with seating starting at 6:30. If you are wondering about the dress code, the answer is…”

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

I have used this idea for many years now and it does work well. I admit that the pun “a dress” seems lame. In spite of this, people laugh about it. I think the key to the matter is how you present it. If you just say “It is my a dress book” and leave it at that, people are not much impressed. However if you follow up the statement with “Here is something that needs to be addressed…” and then you actually say something of substance; this justifies the joke and people are even impressed by it.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Make up a folder with a picture of a dress on the front. Make sure the design of the dress is such that it
will be recognized from a distance.

When presenting the folder, do not directly say, “This is my *a dress* book.” The audience will not laugh. The joke needs proper setup. Give the audience time to become curious. Let them see that it is a book with a dress picture on the front. Have them watch as you open it to peer inside. Then glance up and ask, “Do you know what kind of book this might be?” Wait for a moment. Close the book and stare at the dress on the front. Finally look to the audience and say, “Obviously it is my *a dress* book!”
The Hand Book

CONCEPT

This does not need much explanation. It is another in the book series. Make up a folder with a picture of a hand on the front. Comment that it is a handbook.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

If you are doing a comedy routine where something apparently seems to go wrong you can pick up this book and say, “I’m sure I can figure out how to handle this…it is in the handbook!”

If you need to introduce or explain something, simply consult this handbook to find the information.

When selecting a volunteer from the audience you might pick up the hand book and say, “Why am I looking into this hand book? Because right now I need a hand, not a picture of a hand, but a real hand. Will someone volunteer to give me a hand? If you are willing to help, raise our hand!”

Note: I have used this a fundraiser type shows. Late in the show I pick up the book, make the simple joke that it is a hand book, then I open it and read names of those who had a hand in making the event a success. I finish by saying to the audience, “Please give a big hand for all these people who worked so hard!”
The Auto Graph Book

CONCEPT

This is an especially fun idea. The audience is shown a book (actually a folder) that has a picture of a car on the front. The performer says, “This is an interesting kind of book. I wonder if you recognize what it is?”

Then he opens the book so the back cover can be seen. On the back cover is a picture of a graph.

“Do you see what it is now? It is an auto-graph book!” (A picture of an automobile and a graph.)

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

The only thing difficult about making this up is the need to be sure the pictures can be recognized from a distance. The graph should be simple. All you need is a basic table design with a jagged line on it that would be like a chart of projected sales.

The car picture should be almost cartoonish. A fancy picture will seem blurred when viewed from the back of an auditorium. An outline drawing of a car with only one or two colors will be more distinct.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

This visual pun is hard for people to figure out on their own. Once you say it they instantly get it. Until then they will think hard about it. Therefore present it as a puzzle. Show the car picture first and do not say the word “automobile”. That is too much of a clue. Say, “On
the cover you see a car.”

Open the book so they see the car and graph picture together, but do not call the graph a “graph”. Instead say, “On the back of the book is a chart. What could this be?”

You may have to finally fully identify the wordplay by saying, “A car is an auto. A chart can also be called a graph. Obviously this then is an auto-graph book!”

Inside the book you might have the name (autograph) of someone who needs to be introduced. (Possibly a honored guest in the show).
It is an auto-graph book! Remember that the pictures need to be clear when viewed from a distance. Do not use art that is busy. Use simple line drawings and basic colors.
The Cat A Log

CONCEPT

This is my favorite of the book ideas. A book (actually a folder) is shown to the audience. On the front of it is a picture of a log. The performer says, “Ladies and gentlemen, I know what you are thinking. You are thinking this must be a logbook. I’m sorry to disappoint you. It is not a logbook.”

At this point a picture of a cat comes up behind the picture of the log. “In reality it is a cat a log!” (Catalog).

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

To make this “cat a log” you need a folder with a log picture on the front. On the back you need to make some sort of tray or holder into which the cut out design of a cat can be placed. I made my holder out of a few pieces of cardboard and masking tape. It was easy to do.

This keeps the cat hidden behind the folder and allows you to slowly slide it up into view just by putting pressure on it with a thumb or finger and then lifting upward.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

When the audience sees the log picture they are likely to guess that you are going to say it is a logbook. Therefore, do not ask them what they think it is.

Instead take the approach of assuming they have
already guessed. Say, “I suspect you think you know what this is. You are guessing it is a logbook.”

Then surprise them by sliding the cat into view. Give them a moment to realize what it is. When you say it is a “Cat a log” it should get a good laugh.

Once you have done the gag you can open the book and pretend to examine the catalog of events for the evening in order to find an announcement or introduction that needs to be made.

Note: I want to again mention that the book ideas are from Trevor Lewis. I wish I could say I invented this “cat a log” joke, but I did not. It is wonderful fun. I’m grateful Trevor has shared it so others can put it to use.
Two Books To Use Together

CONCEPT

Yet another book idea is to put a picture of a bank on the front of a book (folder) and call it a bank book. The problem is, this does not seem to get much of a reaction from the audience. They understand the picture and play on words, but don’t seem to think it is all that clever.

To use the bank book idea to create entertainment you need to add a second book. This one has a picture of Dracula on the front. The performer says, “Here is a book that has a picture of a bank on the front. Clearly it must be a bank book. But what is this? Another book with Dracula on the front. Why does this book go with the bank book? It is because along with a bank book you need the a count book. (Count Dracula)

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

A simple yet strong thing to do is follow the identification of the books by saying, “And the Count is counting on you to give a huge round of applause as you welcome the next act.”

If you are wanting to ask for a volunteer you can say, “Speaking of Counts and accounting, I wonder whom I can count on to help me with this next routine?”

To use the books to give recognition to someone or something say, “My jokes with these books may be silly, but I seriously want to comment about someone who can always be counted on to do a great job!”

If the event has been a fundraiser or there has
recently been an auction or raffle with results that need to be reported, you can say “I am pleased to announce that the results have been counted and the amount is…”
Revelations

CONCEPT

It should not be hard to create Look And Laugh gags of your own. Simply take familiar jokes and put them in a new dress.

Sometimes it is as easy as printing out the punch line on one side of a card and putting the setup for the joke on the other side of the card.

This works especially well when wacky definitions are used in reverse. Johnny Carson did this with his Carnac skits. (Remember him?) The idea is you show the answer first, then the question.

EXAMPLES
- Side one of the card says, *GO BACK FOR SECONDS.* Side two of the card says, *WHAT DOES A CLOCK DO WHEN IT IS HUNGRY?*

- Side one of the card says, *POULTRY IN MOTION.* Side two of the card says, *ANOTHER TERM FOR THE CHICKEN CROSSING THE ROAD!*

- Side one of the card says, *B NEGATIVE.* Side two of the card says, *WHAT IS THE BLOOD TYPE OF A PESSIMIST?*

- Side one of the card says, *MIND OVER PLATTER.* Side two of the card says, *WHAT DO YOU CALL A SUCCESSFUL DIET?*
ABOUT THE CONCEPT

There are funnier questions and answers than what I have suggested here. The strange thing is, even though the lines are not extremely funny, entertainment is created by the fact that you show one side of the card first and then, after a pause, show the other side. The audience is likely to groan about the revelations as they did for the when Johnny Carson played Carnac.

What this is really about is the interaction between the performer and the audience. Spontaneous remarks that will be made by audience members during the course of jokes like this are likely to be much funnier than the jokes themselves, but if the jokes aren’t there the audience is not inspired to say anything.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Make up the cards with the revelation on one side and the statement on the other. You might jazz up the presentation by putting on a funny hat or costume to suggest you are a genii or fortune teller.

If you need to use this concept as an introduction or segue, all that is necessary is to have the last card say on one side, WHAT IS NEXT IN THE SHOW? Turn the card over and reveal the answer.
POULTRY IN MOTION

Another term for the chicken crossing the road!
Daily Bread And The Departed Doughboy

CONCEPT

The performer shares news from a publication known as the *Daily Bread*. The news is about the demise of the Pillsbury Doughboy. This news involves many puns and corny jokes. The presentation ends with a simple transition along the lines of “Now some news about what is next on the agenda.”

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

The “Death of the Doughboy” is an item that was circulated on the internet. I have no idea of its source. I suspect it is one of these things that grew as it was bounced around through cyberspace. As various people saw the joke, they added their ideas. The final form of the joke is a conglomeration of contributions (As is a lot of stuff on the internet).

I streamlined what I found on the internet. Typically, internet jokes like this have too much in them. They are better when they are trimmed and edited.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Design cards as listed on the next page. If possible, make the cards themselves in the shape of a giant slice of bread.
To do the gag, show the first card. It says DAILY BREAD.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you may not have heard of it, but there is a news source for the food industry known as the Daily Bread. Recently it published this sad bit of news.”

Show the next card. DOUGHBOY.

“Yes. It is sad, but true. The Pillsbury Doughboy has passed away. The word is he suffered from a yeast infection aggravated by repeated pokes to the tummy.”

Show the third card. ROSE.

“I suppose you all know of the success of the Doughboy. He is one who rose to the top of his industry.”

Show the next card. TURNOVERS.

“Life as not always easy for him. Along the way he experienced many turnovers.

Why did this happen? Because of his tendency to get involved in half-baked schemes.”

Show the next card. HALF BAKED.

“When he did get involved in such schemes there were those who were quick to say he was not such a
smart cookie. Others claimed he was a bit flakey. It is true that, as he aged, he became a bit crusty, but still he was…”

Show the next card. ROLL MODEL.
“Roll model to millions.
Many friends showed up at his memorial service. “
Show the next card. FLOURS.
“There were flours everywhere!
When people spoke in memory of him they were quick to comment that the Doughboy probably never knew how much he was…”

Show the next card. KNEADED.
“Kneaded!
As far a survivors are concerned, the doughboy left behind a wife. Her name was Play. (Play-Dough). A son named John. (John-Dough). A daughter named Jane. (Jane-Dough). And it is rumored that there was also…”

Show the next card. ONE IN THE OVEN.
“One in the oven!
Out of respect he was placed into a lightly greased coffin.”

Show the last card. 350 TWENTY MINUTES.
“The service took place at 3.50 and lasted exactly twenty minutes. Everything worked out just right.”
Spring Water
Spring Water

CONCEPT

I was there when this gag was invented. Since then it has been manufactured by several dealers and used by many performers, none of whom seem to know how it started.

It happened at the Midwest Magic Jubilee in St. Louis, Missouri about ten years ago. I was seated at a table with Oscar Munoz (a champion magician and wonderful guy). On the table were some plastic water bottles and a couple of plastic Slinkys (famous toy consisting of a large spring that stretches and then slinks back into shape).

Why the Slinkys were there I do not know. I think someone had ordered them from Oriental Trading to use as giveaways to children.

Oscar picked up a water bottle and said, “You know, if you cut this bottle in half and inserted the Slinky, you could say it was spring water!” He then proceeded to take out a pocket knife and cut open the bottle. Next he made a slit in the side of the bottle where one end of the Slinky could be inserted. He made another slit so the other end of the Slinky could be inserted into the bottom half of the bottom. Once this was done, he let the bottom half of the bottom hang down from the top by way of the Slinky and said, “Sure enough. I have invented spring water!”

Oscar and I laughed about it, but we both also realized it was a cute idea. I told him I would like to use it next time I emceed a stage contest. He said, “Go ahead”.

67
The following year, at the annual stage contest of the Society Of American Magicians, I used the “spring water” joke. It went over very well. As far as I know, I was the first person to actually show the joke anywhere.

Once other people saw the joke, they began to make up their own versions and do it too. Within a year or so many were doing it and almost no one realized how it originated.

I write this to make it clear. The “Spring Water” gag is the creation of Oscar Munoz. He invented it. I was privileged to be the first to show the idea on stage, but I take no credit for the concept.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

It is a quick sight gag. You can’t get a lot of time out of it, but it will bring about a good laugh if you do it properly.

To make it you need a plastic water bottle and a plastic Slinky. I prefer to cut the bottle just beneath the color part of the label. Sam’s Club sells drinking water in bottles with blue labels that work very well for this. Cut the bottle completely into two pieces. They do not have to be halves. You might have a bottom third and top two-thirds. Whatever looks good in light of the shape of the bottle you use and the label it has on it.

Make small slits so the ends of the Slinky can be slipped through the wall of the top part of the bottom and then threaded back in again. Do the same with the bottom part of the bottle. If you can find some tape that is a color that matches the label on the bottle you may choose to put tape over the part of the Slinky that comes through to the outside of the bottle before it slips back in.
again.

It is a simple matter. Just figure out a way to attach a Slinky between two pieces of a water bottle!

**HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT**

Push the two parts of the water bottle together so the Slinky is inside and unseen. Hold the bottle so the audience can see it. (Your hand will hide the area where the two parts of the bottle come together).

Say, “Ladies and gentlemen, you might be especially interested in what I have in my hand. This is a bottle of pure spring water. Have you ever wondered about the water you purchase in stores and gas stations. Have you wondered, ‘Is this really spring water or are they just filling these bottles up at the faucet with tap water and then calling it spring water?’ I am here to tell you it is possible to know it is pure spring water. How do you know? Real spring water looks like this!”

Drop the bottom of the bottle so it dangles down from the spring and bounces around. “Yep, it is definitely spring water!”

That’s all there is to it. It is short, sweet, and funny. Do the joke then get on with your show!

**Note:** The same thing can be done with a small flower pot, artificial flowers, and a Slinky. Make “spring flowers”!
Spring Flowers!
Whole Heart, Half Heart, Heart Felt, Thank You!

CONCEPT

The audience is shown a folder with a picture of half a heart on it. A comment is made about the show not being a result of “half-hearted efforts”. The folder is opened to show a picture of a complete heart with a hole in it. The next comment is that the show is the result of “whole (hole) hearted effort.”

The performer then touches the picture of the heart as he comments about expressing “heartfelt thanks”.

Finally the folder is opened wide to show to big hearts. In the center of one heart is the word THANK. In the center of the other heart is the word YOU.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

This is something I designed for a program that featured young performing artists. I wanted a clever way to express thanks to all the people who helped the youth develop their talents. It is not meant to be funny. It rather is intended to be a visual aid to use when sincerely expressing appreciation and thanks. It worked very well for the program for which it was designed. Since then I have used it in other situations with good success.
HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

Make up a folder out of three large pieces of poster board. It is sort of a tri-fold affair. On the front put a picture of half a heart. On the back put a picture of a heart with a hole in it. I actually cut a hole in the heart I use. Then on two of the back pieces of the folder put large hearts. In one is the word THANK and in the other is the word YOU.

In making the presentation start by showing the half heart picture. “Ladies and gentlemen, an event like this does not come about by way of half-hearted efforts.”

Show the hole heart picture. “It only can happen because wonderful people put their whole heart into it.” (Hole).

Put your hand on the heart and tap it to make it clear you are touching it. “To these people it is now time to express our heart-felt thanks.” (With your hand you felt the heart). “So let’s all put our hands together to express from our hearts a gigantic thank you!”

Open the folder to show the two big hearts that say THANK YOU.

That is the idea in its fundamental form. I think much more can be done with it.
“Half” hearted

Heart “felt”

THANK YOU!
History Of The Sock

CONCEPT

The audience is informed that it is time for a history lesson. They are about to learn something that very few people know. It is the fact that a common item with which all are familiar was not invented until the year 1000 A.D. It is the sock.

At this point the performer holds up a sock. He then continues by saying, “And as an invention the sock did not catch on until seven hundred years later when someone invented a second sock!” Now he holds up another sock.

“How was the invention of the second sock so popular?” the performer asks. The two socks are placed into a bag. “It is because, as everyone knows, two socks make a pear (pair)!" The bag is opened up and the socks are gone. In place of them is a pear (artificial kind, purchased at Walmart or the Dollar Store).

ABOUT THE CONCEPT

Clearly this bit is ridiculous. Somehow though it connects with the audience and they immediately see the humor.

To do the bit all you is need is two socks, a pear (artificial kind is best...not so heavy), and some sort of change bag. The change bag is a magician’s prop that has a secret compartment. The socks are hidden in the compartment as the pear is revealed.

Note: I use a “tear apart” type change bag. I Velcro the
pear so it remains in the bag and is displayed as the bag is popped open.

HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT

This is another situation where timing is extremely important. Do not rush the joke.

Begin with a serious tone…”Ladies and gentlemen it is time for a bit of history. I would like to tell you about something that many people do not know. It has to do with a common ordinary item that all of us possess. Curiously enough, this item was not invented until 1000 A.D. I am talking about the mundane, everyday item of apparel now known as the sock.”

Obviously the sock as not invented in 1000 A.D. so everyone will realize you are setting up a joke. Show one sock.

“You will probably amazed to know that as an invention the sock did not catch on. It was not popular. No one liked it until seven hundred years later when someone finally invented a second sock.” Hold up a second sock and wait for people to get the joke. They will. But this is not the end so don’t hold the sock for long. Put it with the other sock, then put the two of them in the change bag.

“Why was the invention of the second sock so important? Because everyone knows two socks make a pear!” Open the bag and show the pear. (Socks have disappeared).

For emcee work you might then segue into an introduction of a pair (pear) of performers. “The pair that is about to appear on stage
A Simple Sign

CONCEPT

This is really an idea rather than a gag. Occasionally performers find themselves in situations where they must wait on others to get ready. The performer is on stage. What follows him is back stage, off stage, or out in the audience. He must do what he does while wondering, “When will the next act be ready?”

Years ago I was emceeing a stage contest where this was the circumstance. My position was in front of the curtain. I was to talk and entertain while the contestants put their things in place and got ready to perform. There was no way for me to know what was going on behind the curtain. I did not want to introduce an act before he or she was ready, but I also did not want to make the show long and boring by talking more than necessary.

I solved the problem by creating small traffic light designs out of poster board. They were about ten inches tall and five inches wide. When an act was ready backstage, a young lady (dressed in an appealing manner) would walk out and stand beside me with the traffic light sign. The green light in the design would be bright in comparison to the other colors. She would hand the sign to me. I then would say, “Ladies and gentlemen, I have been given the green light so it is time to introduce the next act...”

The thing about this that made it extra useful was on the back of each traffic light poster was room for information to be written. So I would have the name of the act and important facts about the act in a place where
I could easily read them. In other words, along with letting me know the act was ready, the traffic light signs served as note cards. (I made up separate traffic light signs for each act...ten performers meant ten signs.) That way I did not have to worry about remembering names and details at the same time I was trying to fill time in front of the curtain.

**HOW TO USE THE CONCEPT**

Make yourself some large traffic light cards. Make the green light prominent.

Over time we developed this into something extra fun. Sometimes the young lady would come out with a red light rather than green light. I would say, “Oh, I see they are not ready yet. Guess I will tell another joke.” The young lady would then quickly hold up a yellow light and say, “Caution...sometimes your jokes are not funny!”

Bottom line is this is an idea that I found to be a good tool. Play around with it. I suspect you will find a good use for it.
Ready to go!
Bonus Idea

I learned this from my friend, Ali Bongo. When doing emcee work or being the host to a show, it is not wise to have tables and large props of your own. If you do have such things they are likely to be in the way of what others bring on and off stage. Therefore, rather than keeping the show moving at a brisk pace, your emcee work slows the show down because your equipment is in the way.

When he was emcee, rather than using tables, Ali used fancy shopping bags. He would walk out on stage with a shopping bag in hand. The prop he planned to use for his trick or sight gag would be in the bag. When he needed it, he took it out of the bag. When he was finished with it, he put it back into the bag. Then he picked up the bag and left the stage clean as he introduced what was next in the show.

This was definitely good for keeping the show moving along in a good way. It also made things interesting. People were usually anxious to see what was next to be found “in the bag”.

Ali told me I should do this too, and I do. I have found that Dollar Stores have many bags with wonderful colors and designs and the cost, of course, is just a dollar. So along with being a wonderfully practical idea, it is inexpensive to implement.
Final Thoughts

I am a magician. I do use magic tricks in comedy programs and emcee work. I deliberately left them out of this book. Maybe someday I will write a book about magic tricks as “look and laugh” gags.

I did not want the gags to depend on making an investment in a special prop. I did not want the gags to depend on having a skill or knowledge that only comes from a particular performance discipline. I wanted this book to be a tool that can be used by anyone who desires to add interest and humor to a presentation.

Therefore, with the exception of the History Of The Sock, all of the gags in this book can be made with common materials and none require special talent…apart from possessing the gumption to get up in front of an audience and attempt to provide entertainment.

About the History Of The Sock; to do it as described you need a magician’s prop known as a change bag. However, without the change bag you can still do the joke. You don’t have to change the socks into a pear, just hold up an artificial pear. So I included the gag believing people could use it without the special device, although the ultimate way to use it is with the special device.

I finish this book with a simple challenge to the reader: “Have fun. Do what you can to bring smiles to faces and happiness to hearts!”
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