

**Be a Team Player**  
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Whenever we appear as clowns, whether individually or within a unit or group, we are part of a fraternity and family of clowns. We represent an organization of professional smile-makers and creators of joy. And we need to understand the basics of this fine fraternity and always work together as a team. **The Clown Team.** Therefore, while working together on our team, we should be respectful of the rules and traditions so we may spread joy and create smiles while existing in a harmonious way.

While we all have similar goals as we create happiness, sometimes we lose sight of the ethics and we don't always pay enough attention to common sense. The subject of using a clown gag that someone else uses is something that comes up often. If you are a veteran clown, you might read this to brush up on the basics. If you are new to clowning, there are some ethics you should be aware of and understand.

As with most professions, we learn the tricks of our trade from our more experienced joeys. When we begin our clown education, we learn about make-up and costumes. We learn about the various clown categories and clown types. We look at the varieties of wigs, costumes, shoes and accessories. Most of us already have a basic understanding about joining into this fine association of clowns. We likely want to create our own unique costume and personality and become as popular as possible. The thought of copying others isn't on our minds, and yet we need to learn this trade and we need to start somewhere. We should understand however, that it is simply not the best idea to become a carbon copy of another clown. After all, each clown should have their own identity, appearance, personality and reputation.

The area of conflict is usually concerning clown gags. Perhaps we should think about gimmicks and gags as written stories. We are all aware that copying another's written work is plagiarism and a law exists for that, with a severe penalty for breaking that law. Of course, we don't want that, but we do want to create similar respect and values within our clown family and clown community that are evident within the community of authors and journalists. We simply need to honor and respect others who create something and value the traditions of our professions. **Be a Team Player.**

Let's establish some guidelines regarding gags and gimmicks. Since we all know that some gags and gimmicks work better than others, and since we all want to be successful and popular with our audiences, it follows that if we are all working together, we will likely be better at our craft than if we were to try to compete with one another. Let's all be on the same team and **Be a Team Player.**

If you see another clown using a great gag or gimmick and you would like to add this to your repertoire, ask for permission. Many clowns will be flattered and will be happy to see your interest in their trade. They will likely give you permission and help you become successful as well. Or, they might consider their gimmick to be personal and sacred and they should understandably have the right to refuse. They might like to be the only one to use their gag, especially when they are around. It is very possible they might allow you to use this gag when they are not there. Please ask and find out.

You might create your own gag or gimmick which is a spin-off of another. It is still advisable to talk with the original creator and request permission or assistance with your quest. You should consider making enough changes that it will become different enough so as to not interfere with each other. A simple agreement to not use other's tricks when you are both working the same event is probably the easiest solution.

If every clown does the same gag for the audiences, it stands to reason that we will simply not be as entertaining as we could be. Remember that we're all in this together and part of **The Clown Team**. Example 1. Try to imagine that you are a Mom or Dad attending the circus with your children. A friendly clown greets you with a friendly smile and shows you something silly from his pocket. You smile and laugh and think about sharing this memory with your friends at work the next day. You imagine your children at school reminiscing about their experiences at the circus and telling the stories about the clown's antics. This is certainly going to be a great day, filled with wonderful memories.

After meeting this friendly clown, you continue on your way into the circus venue and are greeted by another clown. He comes up to you and shows you the same silly gimmick and, of course, you already know about it. Your reaction is not as good as before, only because they both did the same thing. So, you continue on your way into the circus. Imagine your growing disappointment if each clown were to show you the same trick.

Let's look at a different scenario. Example 2. The first clown who greets you shows you something silly and entertaining. The next clown shows you something else, also silly and entertaining. As you continue on your way, each clown has his own gimmick and each one is silly and entertaining. Nothing is repeated. Everybody wins and everybody is happy.

Obviously, example 2 is preferred. Most of us understand this. However, some of us do not. Therefore, these examples are used to communicate the basics to the new clowns who need to understand them clearly. **Be a Team Player.**

Along these lines, there is a related subject - the audience. It is very important to remember that we are entertainers and that our audience is important to each of us. None of us ever wants to be in the middle of a conversation and become interrupted by another. None of us ever wants to be performing a trick or showing a gag or gimmick and have someone interrupt with whatever they are doing. We all need to be aware of our surroundings and practice common courtesy. It's as simple as the Golden Rule – Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I know and understand that when we get into our costume and make-up, we transform into characters that think and act differently than before. We all do and say things that we might not do or say otherwise. However, respecting each other and acting professionally is imperative for all of us. We all need to follow the Golden Rule.

This has been said before in these columns - communication is the key. Remember that when you are clowning alone, you are still part of a team. The Clown Team is the greatest team in the world. Our team has but one goal – to spread joy and create smiles wherever we go. If we are aware of the guidelines and traditions, we will usually be better prepared and have a much better opportunity for success. And as a team, we should all shoulder the responsibility to educate each other to these traditions and rules. If you know of a clown who breaks traditions and rules, educate them and help them to be part of the team. **Remember the Clown Team. Be a Team Player.**

**And, as always, Keep Smiling....**

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