

HOW TO CHOOSE A COMEDY INSTRUCTOR THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU ...

(... even if it's not me)

By

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Okay, so you're tired of seeing all these ads for comedy instructors and you're confused about which one to choose. The truth is, they're all pretty good, but most of them tend to teach ongoing 'group' classes, teach formula comedy, or are not geared toward the individual.

Should I choose a Teacher or a Coach?

Luckily I do not fall into the category of comedy 'teacher', nor do I teach an ongoing 'class'. There is no such thing as a comedy teacher, because comedy cannot be taught. However, it can be coached. The difference is guidance versus defined rules. A coach leads you in the right direction and does not offer up age-old joke formulas to follow. If you are writing comedy material with the help of a book or an instructor that stresses writing 'formulas', you will most

likely end up sounding like everyone else. If everyone reads the same book, everyone sounds the same. This is the kiss of death for a performer who must stand out from the crowd and have a unique voice. All of my students have completely different styles: observational, personal, storytellers, one-liner, physical, deadpan, etc.

A coach, unlike a teacher, is a support system for the up-and-comer. Someone you can share your fears and triumphs with, a shoulder to cry on and a trusted friend. Most 'teachers' of group classes don't have time and spread themselves too thin to really care. A coach will show up at performances and give you on the spot guidance.

This is why I only work one-on-one with my students and limit my client load. Everyone receives my full attention and gets input specific to their needs. There are no generalizations preached to a classroom full of potential funny people.

Beware of instructors that franchise their classes. Their name or the school's name is used like Colonel Sanders and a local comedian teaches from a book written by the founder. Make sure you are working face to face with the original.

How much should I pay?

Does it cost more to study with a private, one-on-one coach? Not really. If you break down the actual one-on-one time you get in a group class, private coaching is a much better value. Choose an instructor that will work within your budget and will allow you to make payments if necessary.

Should I choose Opinion or Technique based instruction?

Some comedy instructors offer their opinion as to what is funny and others offer different techniques to create material. I favor neither. I prefer Experience based instruction. When I am reviewing a client's material, I rarely approve what I personally think is funny. Instead, I choose material that an audience will find funny and will get the

performer work. How do I know? Experience. I continue to sharpen my skills by being a student of comedy. I study the comedians, but more importantly, I study the audiences. Times change and so do audience's tastes. I cannot be a good coach unless I continually stay up to date and change with the times. Take a look around your local open mike to see which comedy instructors are in the audience cheering for their students. And find out if their students have recently performed on national television shows and won major comedy competitions.

Can a comedian become dependent on an instructor?

This is my pet peeve. Actors have professional acting coaches for their entire careers and so do singers. It is perfectly acceptable and I recommend that comedians/public speakers, etc., do the same. I have worked with many beginners who have gone on to be national headliners and have their own sit-coms, and I have worked with them every step of the way. As you reach different levels in your career, there are new problems to tackle. Whether you work with me or someone else, find a coach you click with and hold on to them.