



WEBCOMIC PIONEERS

BLAZE YOUR OWN TRAIL

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WHAT YOU WILL NEED **A**

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF LAUNCHING YOUR SITE

These days, it's remarkably easy and inexpensive to launch and maintain a website. To get up and running, you'll need three things:

1. A **hosting provider**
2. A registered **domain name**
3. **Software** to manage your content



A WHAT YOU WILL NEED

SELECT YOUR HOSTING PROVIDER

A website needs to be housed on one or more computers that have the processing power and network speed to serve a high volume of pages quickly around the clock.

Web hosting companies maintain dozens of these servers and essentially lease space to individual sites. Most hosts now offer unlimited storage and bandwidth for a low monthly rate.

Research your options and pick the host that works best for you. It's a bit of a hassle to change providers later, so try to make sure you find one you like.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED **A**

Here are the top ten providers, as ranked by the website **Hosting Review**:

1. iPage
2. FatCow
3. JustHost
4. 1 & 1
5. HostPapa
6. GoDaddy
7. InMotion
8. BlueHost
9. ixWebhosting
10. Host Gator

Note: This list is from May 2012 - check www.hosting-review.com for the most up-to-date listings!

A WHAT YOU WILL NEED

REGISTER YOUR DOMAIN

Your domain is your address on the Internet. `google.com` and `facebook.com` are examples of domains. Most hosting companies can also register your domain, so this is generally the first thing you do once you've selected your host.

The most important factor in selecting your domain is that it should be easy to remember. Obviously, the ideal domain name would be the same as your comic's title, but that may not be possible or practical.

If your comic's title is particularly long, you will want to use a shorter version for your domain. So, for instance, if you comic is called *The Adventures of Thadeus Manly, Gentleman Assassin*, you'd probably want to use *thadeusmanly.com* for your domain.

(*thadeus.com* would be even better, if it were available.)

WHAT YOU WILL NEED A

If you enter a domain and find that it is not available, you will probably be presented with variations that use alternate top-level domains. A top-level domain is the part that comes after the “dot” such as *.com* or *.net*. Generally, it’s better to stick with *.com* if possible.

Readers will often forget if you’ve used a different top-level domain. A better solution would be to simply append “comic” to your domain. For instance, when *thespecialists.com* was not available, we used *thespecialistscomic.com* rather than *thespecialists.net*.

One last bit of advice: though you can use hyphens in your domain name, it’s better not to. People will have an easier time remembering your domain without them.

A WHAT YOU WILL NEED

INSTALL YOUR SITE SOFTWARE

Fundamentally, websites are built with two interconnected technologies: Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and Cascading Stylesheets (CSS). If you're going to run a website, you should have at least a rudimentary grasp of these two languages, and the more you know about them, the better.

However, most modern sites do more than just display content. Many include features such as a reader commenting system, easy navigation of the comic's archive, transcripts of comics, and more. These can't be done with only HTML and CSS. Fortunately, there are free software packages that will allow you to include these features in your site without having to learn complicated programming languages.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED **A**

WordPress is by far the most commonly used platform for hosting webcomics. It's flexible and relatively easy to use and best of all, it's free. Though there are other options available, WordPress is so ubiquitous that it is the only package I'll cover here.

Your host may be able to install it for you. Otherwise, you can download it from the **WordPress** site and follow their instructions to install it.

On the next few pages, I'll discuss popular themes, plugins, and customizing. However, if you want a more step-by-step walk-through, there is a 5-part tutorial available at:

<http://www.makingcomics.com/portfolio/so-you-wanna-publish-a-web-comic-2/>



A WHAT YOU WILL NEED

WORDPRESS THEMES

Once the WordPress platform is in place, you will most likely want to install a theme. The following themes are popular for webcomics:

ComicPress - Probably the most popular webcomic theme. Unfortunately, it is no longer officially supported. Still, because there are so many ComicPress users, it is usually not difficult to find someone to answer your questions.

Webcomic - Another popular theme that is still actively supported. Simpler than ComicPress with less PHP. More CSS.

You'll need to read the documentation for WordPress and your chosen theme to get everything installed and configured. However, if you do everything right, you can have an operational site in just a couple hours.

MORE WORDPRESS PLUGINS

There are many free “plugins” for WordPress that provide additional features. The plugins listed below are practically essential. You can search for and install these from the Plugins page of your WordPress dashboard.

Akismet - The leading spam filter for your comments. Very effective.

Google Analytics for WordPress - Makes it easy to add Google Analytics tracking to your site (you'll need to create an account on the **Google Analytics** site to be able to use this plugin; this is also free).

Jetpack by WordPress.com - Contains several features, including a web stats package.

WP Super Cache - Caches your pages, dramatically improving the performance of your site.

B SERIAL LONG-FORM...

One of the first decisions you'll need to make about your comic is what form it should take. There are two main formats in common use in webcomics: longform and strip.

Longform comics usually update one to three times a week. Each installment is usually about the size of a half or full comic book page, though some longform comics don't constrain themselves to a particular form factor; for these comics, each installment is as large as it needs to be. Finally, longform comics rely on a continuing narrative.

Strip comics (also called "gag strip" or "serialized") often update three to five (or more) times a week. Each installment tends to be just a few panels long, like traditional newspaper comic strips. Although strips often have regular characters, and some sense of continuity, they are usually less reliant on an ongoing storyline, and ideally, each strip is fairly self-contained.

...OR EPISODIC STRIP? **B**

These definitions are not concrete. Many comics sit somewhere in between the two extremes.

For instance, Scott Kurtz's PvP is essentially a strip, but it does have ongoing storylines. Ben Chamberlain's Supermassive Black Hole A* is essentially a longform comic, but it updates every weekday and is formatted like a strip. For the purposes of this discussion, let's assume that a longform comic is one that requires the reader to read several pages to understand the story, while an individual strip can be enjoyed on its own.

B SERIAL LONG-FORM...

PROS & CONS - LONGFORM

Since they require commitment from the reader and are more closely tied to a particular genre and story, longform comics have a niche appeal compared to strips. Once you've accumulated a large archive, that becomes a built-in hurdle for new readers. They'll have to read through your archive to catch up, and the longer your comic is running, the larger this problem becomes. Finally, since individual pages are meaningless without the context of the pages that came before them, longform comics are much less likely to "go viral" through link-sharing sites like StumbleUpon or reddit.

On the other hand, the need to catch up can result in more page views when you do get a new reader. Also, once you've hooked a reader with your story, they will usually be more loyal and will keep coming back (so long as your story remains interesting).

PROS & CONS - STRIPS

Since strips don't rely heavily on a specific story or genre, they have a broader appeal. Strips that lampoon common subjects, like office life or video games, have a huge potential fanbase, and a well-written joke may transcend the subject matter of the strip. Strips are more likely to be shared. Also, the more frequent updates of strips result in more pageviews, both because there are simply more pages to view, and because they can more easily become part of readers' regular browsing habits (this is especially true of daily strips).

On the other hand, your archives may go untouched by new readers, since they can start reading any time. Also, with no ongoing story to keep them engaged, your readers may drop off if your subsequent strips aren't as funny as the one that brought them to you in the first place.

B SERIAL LONG-FORM...

DECIDING ON A FORMAT

The pros and cons above may give the impression that strips have a clear advantage. It is true that strips have dominated webcomics for years, but more and more longform comics are cropping up all the time. In fact, big-name creators like Mark Waid, Warren Ellis, and Doug Tennapel have begun to explore webcomics as alternatives or complements to traditional print comics.

But all of that is irrelevant when deciding what format your webcomic will take. It all comes down to one simple question: Do you want to tell a story, or do you want to tell jokes? As I said above, the two are not mutually exclusive. A longform story can be humorous, and a strip can have an ongoing narrative. But one thing or the other will be your focus. Answer that question: story (longform) or jokes (strip), and then work out the details of your format.

BREADTH OR DEPTH?

Consider the appeal your comic might have. Is it for the masses, or a niche?

A broad audience is made of a very large group of moderately invested readers. This readership consumes free content, but isn't invested in buying the work. Revenue can come in from ads, but don't leap to making T-shirts or books! As a rule of thumb, assume only 1-3% will buy.

A niche audience is a small group of highly invested readers. This readership engages with the creator and each other, and is more willing to support and buy from the creator. Since there are less of them, ad revenue may be low, but the amount that will buy can be 4-10% or higher.

In general, strips have broad audiences, longform niche. This can change based on how YOU interact with your community!

C TO COLLABORATE...

Comics are a marriage of writing and illustration. Many webcomics are solo operations, executed by one doubly-talented creator. Others require a collaboration of two or more people. What follows are some thoughts on whether you should collaborate, and if so, how to go about it.

EVALUATE YOUR TALENT

But before you embark on your solo webcomic adventure, take an honest look at your abilities and make sure you're considering both halves of this equation.

DON'T OVER THINK IT

Don't let your shortcomings prevent you from making your comic. You don't have to be an excellent writer and an awesome artist to get started. Just be aware of the importance of both writing and illustration disciplines, and don't assume that your ability in one will fill in for a lack of ability in the other.

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Always work on improving ALL your skills!

IMPORTANCE OF WRITING

Some people think that the ability to write a more-or-less cohesive sentence is all that's required of a writer. But there's a lot more to writing than just the dialogue and captions. There's story structure, character development, pacing, and a host of other factors. Don't assume that being articulate is the same as being a good writer.

IMPORTANCE OF ART

There have been some very successful webcomics that are illustrated with stick figures (xkcd and Order of the Stick are prime examples). This may lead you to believe that artwork is not important in a webcomic. Think again. Good art goes beyond the detail or beauty of the illustrations. It also involves such considerations as line weight and panel composition. Most good comics that feature simplistic artwork do so for stylistic reasons rather than because of a shortcoming of the creator.

C TO COLLABORATE...

THE INS AND OUTS OF COLLABORATION

If you do decide that you need a collaborator, there are several things to keep in mind. Collaborating on a creative endeavor can lead to tension and disagreements. You want to make sure that you find a collaborator that you can work with, and that you plan ahead for potential (or inevitable) conflicts.

FINDING A COLLABORATOR

It is not who does the best work, but who you work with the best that drives great collaborations. If there is someone you are thinking of working with, do a limited collaboration on a trial basis before you lock down a long term working relationship. That way, you can get to know their style, work habits and have the experience of seeing what the dynamic would be like first hand.

...OR WORK ON YOUR OWN? ©

Open communication is vital. Artists can make jokes better and writers can help block a scene. Look for someone you are comfortable giving (and getting) criticism. Many times good collaborations just “feel” right. If working on the first project with a potential collaborator is frustrating or draining, move on, if it is energizing and fun you may be ready to create a more formal partnership.

SETTING GROUND RULES

It is best to have at least a rudimentary written agreement in place before you go too far down the collaboration road. Discuss what both parties want from the collaboration and write those expectations down to work as the framework for a collaboration agreement. A collaboration agreement should (at the very least) cover the following vital areas:

C TO COLLABORATE...

- (1) Ownership:** Who owns the rights to the story, characters, artwork, etc...
- (2) Profits:** How are any profits from the collaboration divided?
- (3) Expenses:** How are any costs related to the collaboration handled?
- (4) Transparency:** How are business and financial decisions made and how is that information shared?
- (5) Exit Strategy:** What does it look like if the collaboration dissolves? How long does the agreement last and when will it be revisited?

Make sure you have mutually beneficial relationship from the start. Do some research or even get some legal advice if you feel like you need to get all your bases covered. A little preparation and caution on the front end saves a lot of frustration later on down the line.

HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS

The majority of the time, good collaborators come to a consensus on what works best, but when it boils down to “A” vs “B” and there is creative disagreement you need to have a process to address it. One option is for the writer to make the final call on text and story and the artist to make the final call on how things should look. This shows a trust and respect for the individual disciplines and smooths over most egos (yes, there are a few people in the art world who still have egos.) Another option is to agree to accept the decision of a neutral third-party. Find a mechanism that works for both parties, but above all make sure that you communicate openly and respectfully and don't hold a grudge if you don't always get your way.

Finally, if you collaborate with a friend, keep your priorities straight. It may be best to abandon a project in order to maintain your friendship if disagreements start to turn sour.

D IS THIS YOUR BUSINESS...

Is your comic a business or a hobby? It's not really a fair question, because the two are not mutually exclusive. If you consider it a hobby, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't carefully manage your expenses. If you consider it a business, that doesn't mean that it can't be a lot of fun.

TWO EXTREMES

As a Hobbyist:

There are no responsibilities to "customers". You get to write the story for you, and you alone. No censoring, marketing, networking, or community-building is necessary. Far less monetary risk is involved. No costs for conventions, merchandising, or marketing. No tax and accounting costs. Additionally, there is far less time investment. Your schedule can be as erratic as you want. You can quit any time with few repercussions. There is no need to maximize social media build networks, or attend conventions.

As a Business:

You must wear many hats: Creative, Customer Service Rep. Accountant Marketer. Networker. It can become a lot to juggle. There is also far more monetary risk involved. In order to make meaningful profit on merchandise, you must buy in bulk, which means finding a way to sell a LOT of merchandise to break-even on your investment! Don't forget fees for company registration, filing taxes, and sales licences. It also requires a greater time investment. Networking, marketing, merchandising, and community-building all take time away from making the comic. It becomes a huge time sink -- particularly if you're working a day-job at the same time. Finally, if you want to be successful with a particular demographic, you may have to make sacrifices in your content. You can't be "family friendly" with obscenity and nudity, for example.

D IS THIS YOUR BUSINESS...

MOST PEOPLE ARE A MIX OF THE TWO!

It doesn't have to be all or nothing! You can make a comic as hobby, but have a business mind-set when it comes to marketing, or interacting with fans. There are ways to create products without major investment, if you can accept not making much profit either. Pay-on-demand sites typically absorb most of the money you could make. That said, it can be a great way to test your market & help you decide if you want to take a larger risk for a larger gain later.

Regardless of hobby or business, success takes time, consistency, and quality. There are no short-cuts! Any type of business typically takes 3-5 years of continuous growth before it becomes self-sustaining.

BUSINESS MODELS

The most common webcomic business model involves giving content away for free and once a readership has reached a certain critical mass, finding ways to capitalize on it. Usually by selling print (and more recently, digital) collections or ancillary products like tee shirts, stickers, or buttons.

Another model is to charge a fee to access content. Some content, such as the first chapter or a selection of strips is usually provided for free, so readers can see a sample and be enticed to pay for more. In the Internet age, people expect content to be free, so for now at least, this model is extremely uncommon.

Regardless of the model, always be on the lookout for new revenue streams. Many artists sell their original comic art and/or do work on commission. For these artists, their comic serves as an online portfolio.

D IS THIS YOUR BUSINESS...

DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB

Regardless of your business model, you must be prepared to put in a lot of time and energy before you start making money. It takes time to build up your readership and to develop a community. And remember: generally, only a small percentage of your readers will ever buy anything from you. That's just the nature of webcomics (and of the Internet in general).

Even the most successful comic creators took years to get where they are. Brad Guigar, webcomic guru and creator of the comic Evil, Inc., only recently left his job and began living exclusively off his webcomic income. If you're looking for a quick buck, don't look for it in webcomics.

If this is something you are really passionate about, a day job can feel stifling. A good book to help you know if you're ready to leave is **"Quitter"** by Jon Acuff.

THE VALUE OF THE DAY JOB

There are two things that a day job can help you with: Resources and Skills.

You have to spend money to make money. If you're a business, this can come from investors, loans, or out of your own pocket. To start, you may be the only one willing to invest in your business. Having a source of funds from a day job may make it possible to buy the equipment, merchandise, or advertising needed to get you started.

We've already talked about some of the hats you need to wear as a webcomic business. Many of these rely on skills such as communication, record-keeping, time-management, conflict resolution, etc. You cannot practice these skills in isolation, sitting behind the drawing desk. You CAN learn many of them at MOST day jobs! Make the most of your time, no matter where you are!

E BUILDING A BRAND...

All too often a logo design is thought of the same as branding. Although they go hand-in-hand, they are very different animals. A memorable logo is important; it paves the way for effective branding. However, a brand is more than a logo. It's more than just visual identification. A brand is the emotion behind what someone feels when they interact with your product. At a very basic level, branding is an emotional experience.

Branding is something that is constantly being formed by perception. Readers want to participate, share, and interact with your brand. As a result, your brand becomes your personality. Although you can lay the foundation, the brand's audience is what truly shapes it. Therefore, it is imperative that the foundation is laid correctly by having a clear idea of your desired image and goals. Understanding how your reader's perception of your brand intersects with your goals allows you to make informed branding decisions.

CARTOONIST OR COMIC?

In the world of webcomics, the most important step in building a brand is to decide what you are actually branding: the comic or the cartoonist.

Do you focus your efforts on building that emotional connection with the work or with yourself? There are pros and cons to each of these approaches.

Building that emotional connection to your characters makes it more difficult to change styles or move on to other projects without starting from scratch.

Branding yourself creates the illusion of a personal connection with your readers and can lead to some privacy and boundary issues. Decide which works for you and stay focused on where you are directing your branding efforts.

E BUILDING A BRAND...

IT'S ALL ABOUT TRUST

Whatever path you chose, meaningful and effective branding comes down to creating a positive perception through clear, concise and consistent communication. An awesome logo or a magnetic personality doesn't make a good brand. Communication and a positive experience for your audience is what makes a good brand.

The ultimate goal is to build brand trust and create the conditions so readers can believe in your brand. Brand trust is the feeling of security held by the target audiences in their interaction with the brand — that it will do what it promises it will do. If you promise the reader they will laugh out loud, the comic better be funny every time. This trust allows you to place the emotional anchors in your readers that will keep them coming back.

WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE?

Make sure that every part of the reader's experience - from the first time they visit your site to the 100th - is consistent with your brand's goals. Consumers like predictability. They want expectations to be met or exceeded. Are you meeting those expectations? Are you delivering the product you promised? Are you following through with your delivery schedule? All of these elements are vital to building your brand.

No matter how good your branding, if your comic doesn't connect, it will fail. There is no room for a brand that doesn't deliver what the market wants. Good branding will, however, help build and retain an emotionally connected readership, taking your little-known comic to the next level.

F GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS

SHOJO TIPS FROM *ANGI MAURI* *DEVIL'S CAKE*

DevilsCake.smackjeeves.com

WRITING SUGGESTIONS:

If you are doing a manga style comic, make sure the story is for people in your country. Write about things that matter to your culture. You can still use inspiration from the style of comics you enjoy, but to reach an audience of your peers, write about things that matter to them and you.

PROMOTION SUGGESTIONS:

Make sure people know about you and your work. Comment on other comics you enjoy. Be genuine, you are introducing yourself, as a person, as well as your work. Absolve from throwing links in everyone's face and commanding them to read your comic. Interact with comics of interest to you, not just ones that are popular.

Fanart can be used as a networking device. Only do fanart of things you personally like. This will attract people of similar interests to you, and build your networking circles.

GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS **F**

ART SUGGESTIONS:

Copy from (don't trace) artists who inspire you, and then draw the image again in your own style. This helps you patch together a distinct, personal style. (Technique recommended by Paul Pope)

Tutorial for shoji manga style backgrounds:

One Juicy background shot at the beginning of a scene, and all you have to do is hint at it afterwards. Take your own reference photos for copyright reasons use this tutorial to convert them to line art:

www.photoshopesentials.com/photo-effects/photo-to-sketch/

Make the tracing as clean as possible with thick lines to indicate shadow and thin on sides that face the light.

Do quality work. That you feel excited about in the depths of your soul. If you aren't satisfied with your art, work to improve it through tutorials and life drawing (artsyposes.com) and studying anatomy. Even the most stylized art styles are made more 3-D, convincing, and consistent by knowledge like this.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS:

Chris vogler: a writer's journey
Scott McCloud: making comics
Eisner: sequential art
Bridgeman: life drawing
Loomis drawing books (found online)

F GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS

SUPERHERO TIPS FROM **SHAWN GUSTAFSON** **THE SPECIALISTS**

TheSpecialistsComic.com

CONTENT SUGGESTIONS:

- Evaluate your genre. Straight superhero comics are somewhat out of favor among webcomic readers. This doesn't mean that you can't be successful with a superhero comic, but it may prove to be an extra challenge. Above all, you should create something that you feel passionate about. If the story that you're dying to tell is a superhero story, then go for it! But if your concept doesn't rely on muscles and tights, consider other options.
- If you do decide to do a superhero comic, find a way to make it stand out. Avoid cliches, or at least put a new spin on them. For instance, Wayward Sons weaves science fiction and mythology into its superhero tropes. The Guns of Shadow Valley has a supernatural western setting. And The Specialists is about a super-powered arms race in WWII.
- There are more women reading comics these days than ever before. If you don't want to alienate them, make sure that your female characters are more than simple cleavage delivery devices. Be mindful of the poses you use for male and female characters. If the men tend to

GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS **F**

assume powerful and aggressive poses while the women stand in a way that maximizes exposure of their butts and boobs (while minimizing proper posture), then you might want to take a closer look at your characters.

- Be mindful of pacing. Superhero readers will expect a lot of action, so don't skimp in that department (but make sure you spend enough time on story and character to make your comic more than just a gallery of punches). Unfortunately, the slow release schedule of webcomics doesn't go hand-in-hand with fast-paced action. It may be worthwhile to publish smaller pages in order to be able to publish more frequently.

GENERAL TIPS:

- Update consistently.
- Don't stretch yourself too thin.
- Establish and maintain a buffer.
- Quality counts.
- The website is just as important as your other work.
- Take advantage of free promotion methods (Social media, networking, listing services, etc.)

F GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS

FANTASY TIPS FROM **ROBIN DEMPSEY LEYLINES**

LeyLinesComic.com

OPEN YOUR MIND TO EVERYTHING

An apocryphal tale goes that a young writer asked Neil Gaiman how to write good fantasy. Neil replied, “Read everything that ISN’T fiction.” The more you know about history, physics, sociology, biology, psychology, linguistics, chemistry, mythology, etc, the more sources you will have for both inspiration, and for adding depth to your world.

WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW EMOTIONALLY

The danger of fantasy is that it can become so... well...fantastical that it loses the human element. “Write what you know” for the emotional conflicts to avoid this problem. For example, I’ve never been a princess like Mizha, but I can relate to parents with high expectations, feeling overwhelmed by my responsibilities, and wanting to get lost in a fantasy world (I AM a writer of fiction, after all!). I focus on bringing out the struggles in my characters that I have either experienced personally or observed first-hand.

FIND A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Two of my favorites:
WebcomicAlliance.com
PaperWingsPodcast.com

GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS **F**

WORLD-BUILD TO EFFECTIVENESS, NOT PARALYSIS

World building is exceptionally important for a fantasy writer. Doing work up-front on defining the environment, people, history, and physical rules of your story can ensure consistency & depth. However, many people get caught in world-building forever and never write stories. Eventually, it becomes a crutch. Get the basics clear in your mind, but don't try to nail down every detail. You can always come back and add more! Consider:

WHO - Main characters. --> The people they are directly influenced by --> Heroes, religious figures, authority figures, etc. --> Historic or mythic figures

WHAT - Physics. Technology. Magic. --> Social customs/positions resulting from those unique properties. --> Advancements --> Regions that may have a better understanding of these elements

WHERE - Geography. Weather. Physical resources --> The economics and trade based on resources. --> Level of wealth. Level of sophistication. Governance. --> Customs, superstitions, laws.

WHEN - Basic major events --> Social habits and situations caused by those events. Stereotypes about particular groups due to the actions of their ancestors. Family lines. --> Future events that past events set in motion.

F GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS

HORROR TIPS FROM **KEVIN GENTILCORE** **TEENAGE LOVE ZOMBIES** TeenageLoveZombies.com

There are numerous horror and horror themed webcomics on the internet today. Some really take advantage of the elements the internet provides to try and scare the reader while some stick to a traditional comic style. Either way you chose to do your horror webcomic is up to you but remember that the key to horror is good timing and storytelling. If your storytelling is solid you can scare people or make them laugh it is up to you.

Also take a look around and see what others are doing in your genre. Take note of things they are doing that you like and don't like. All of this can inform your storytelling and help get you moving in a direction to make your own comic.

AWESOME HORROR WEBCOMICS:

Frankenstein Super Star

<http://frankensteinsuperstar.com/>

King of the Unknown

<http://kingoftheunknown.com/>

Zombie Roomie

<http://www.zombieroomie.com/>

The Zombie Years

<http://www.zombieyears.com/>

The Zombz

<http://www.thezombz.com/>

F GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS

COMEDY TIPS FROM **SCOOTER HUGHES** **LIFE UNDER CONSTRUCTION** sites.google.com/site/luccomics

Writing a comedy strip, can be the most un-funny task imaginable. Analyzing why something is funny is like trying to have a conversation while getting a root canal, confusing and painful. Even veteran comedy writers can't always explain why some jokes work and others fall flat. One thing that is very apparent though is that comedy has a cadence.

There is a rhythm and a sound to writing a good joke. One well established convention is the "rule of three," where a series of three beats is often used to create a progression in which the tension is created, then built up, and finally released. Choosing the right words can also make or break a joke. Some words are simply funnier than others, and you know the funny ones when you see them. Words with hard "K" or "C" sound tend to be funny. Also the more specific the word, the more humorous it can be. If a funny sounding word is the last thing the audience/reader hears, it strengthens the joke. Finding the right rhythm and sound of a joke can be difficult, but you will know it when you find it. It will just feel right.

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The most important elements of a funny strip, however, is not the "gag" but how that gag connects with the reader.

GENRE SPECIFIC TIPS **F**

Humor is about people. It's impossible to write humor about a concept, there has to be interaction. The best way to create that interaction is through your subject, or characters.

Bill Watterson said it best: "Any cartoonist ought to be able to come up with funny gags, but the best strips have rounded, complex characters that readers can care about.

WRITING TIPS:

- (1) Write the joke in a lot of different ways - Try different ways of setting up the gag or variant punch lines.
- (2) Rewrite it - Is there another word you can use that that is "more funny"? Can you use fewer words and keep the same idea?
- (3) Sleep on it - Put it aside for a few days. See if it's still funny when you go back to it.
- (4) Read the joke out loud - Is it funny outside of your head?
- (5) Let someone else read it - Watch their reactions and see if they connect.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS:

- (1) "Writing Funny" by Scott Adams
- (2) "And Here's the Kicker: Conversations with 21 Top Humor Writers On Their Craft." by Mike Sacks,
- (3) "The Comic Toolbox: How to Be Funny Even If You're Not" by John Vorhaus
- (4) "The Serious Guide to Joke Writing: How To Say Something Funny About Anything" by Sally Holloway

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR
WOULD LIKE TO TALK SHOP,
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO
CONTACT ANY OF US!

ON TWITTER
[@WebcomicPioneer](#)

ON FACEBOOK
[/webcomic.pioneers](#)

ON OUR WEBSITES:

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