

How To Write a Top 10 List

By Jeff Justice

Right off the bat I'm going to make this process fifty percent easier for you. Never write a Top 10 list. Make it a Top 5 because:

First, it's hard to come up with 10 really funny things. The only reason David Letterman gets laughs all the way through is he has a band punching it up with rim shots and musical cues.

Second, audiences have really short attention spans. When I started customizing Top 10 lists for clients it was apparent from the very first one that 10 was too much of a good thing.

Third, it's much easier!

Jeff's golden rule for Top 5 lists is, "End on the funniest, begin with the second funniest and put the other three in the middle."

How to write it:

Pick a subject (i.e., Rolling Stones) and make a list of everything you can think of regarding this subject, especially nouns or phrases. In this case, that would include song titles.

My list would include the following, plus much more. (The more the better):

Brown Sugar
Jumpin' Jack Flash
Big Lips
Drugs
Can't Get No Satisfaction
Rock and Rollers
Start Me Up
Hey You Get Off Of My Cloud

Now pick an adjective that describes your subject. The first one that comes to mind is old. Now make another list of everything that you can think of that has to do with getting old, such as:

Walker
Bran
Polygrip
Senile
Social Security
Medicare
Viagra
Geritol
Respirator
Catheter

Now choose one item from each group and put them together with a little exaggeration to form your idea. In this case, it will be titles for their 2007 tour.

The Top 5 names for the Rolling Stones 2007 tour are...

5. Big Lips and Polygrip tour.
4. The Brown Sugar and Bran tour.
3. Hey, you get off my Catheter tour.
2. Grumpy Old Men in a Van tour.
1. Start me up with Viagra tour.

In my corporate workshops I teach the group how to write Top 5 Lists on subjects meaningful to them like, "The Top 5 things you'd never hear from a customer."

They come up with, "Could you please keep me on hold longer? I was enjoying the Musak."

The groups must write their own lists and then present them at the end. After the laughter subsides, I point out that if they reverse the Top 5 list they've identified five negative things that they do hear from their customers. Then we spend time developing humorous and appropriate responses for when those situations occur.

Jeff Justice
Corporate Comedy
P. O. Box 52404
Atlanta, GA 30355-0404
404-262-7406 fax: 404-841-9586
Website: www.jeffjustice.com

Jeff@Jeffjustice.com