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FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Stand-Up
Comic**



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1. Introduction

“What are you, some kind of comedian or something?”

“Yes officer, I am.”

Admit it, a tiny part of you wants to be a comedian just for the shot at having this exchange while getting a traffic ticket. It shows you’re moving in the right direction. Comics live for ripe opportunities to mouth off like that. We take the very same attitude that we were told would keep us from ever amounting to anything and turn it into a job. All of those hours of detention in high school were actually vocational preparation for a comedy career. Not bad work if you can get it and here is where you will learn how to do just that.

Your motivation for becoming a comic may be strong, and it is certainly necessary, but desire can only get you so far. It helps to have a blueprint. This guide will offer information gained from eighteen-plus years of stand-up experience, the last fourteen of which I have been working full-time in the business. Until the comedy boom that began in the 1980’s there wasn’t much practical information on getting into it as a career. Fortunately, comedians who have come up during this period

have learned a host of dos and don'ts that can provide new comics with time and money saving guidelines.

Benefits of the Job

Doing stand-up for a living can be so fun at times that you will be wracked with guilt at having to refer to it as your job. It ends up being more a calling and a way of life than merely a mundane way to make a living. You see the country (or the world), meet a variety of people, make them laugh and someone pays you for it when it's all over. And you're rarely on the clock for more than two or three hours a night. When people outside the business say, "That's not a real job," they're right!

Travel and Friendships

Working as a comic has plusses that go far beyond the obvious chance to fulfill a dream and get paid for making people laugh. The travel alone makes it worth it. Unlike the average business traveler, comics generally go to a city for at least five days at a time and have their days free to soak up the local flavor. I've seen most of America this way and made lifelong friends all over the country.

The best friend I made became my wife. She was in Florida and I lived in Los Angeles. We had an innocent little meeting in a comedy club in Clearwater right before I went on stage. Had I not been a comic I never would have met her, gotten married and been made presentable for polite society. The list of comics who met their spouses in clubs is lengthy enough that I think it can be mentioned as a legitimate perk.

Helping People

There are some altruistic advantages to this career too. You can help people by making them laugh when they're in the midst of a bad time. On a bigger scale, you can lend your talents to causes that are important to you by doing benefit performances. You don't have to be famous to help out either. I did a benefit auction for Special Olympics when I was just a local open-mic comic. Later, I did an annual performance/auction for a child abuse counseling center in my hometown. There have been countless benefit performances over the years for a wide variety of charities and each of those felt better than the paid shows.

A Stepping-Stone

Everyone knows that stand-up has served as a stepping-stone to several phenomenally successful television careers. What few know is that comedy has launched the careers of even greater numbers of television writers. It can also be an entry into the movie business, corporate speaking and a long list of other professions.

A Fab Job

In the end, however, stand-up comedy is all about doing something you love and have probably been doing since you learned to speak. (I remember my parents waking me up when I was seven to do an impression of Richard Nixon for some friends they had over.) Most of us were the class clowns in varying degrees. We have always been the spark that brought some levity into our regular jobs before we became comics. Very few people get the chance to take what they do naturally and make a living off of it. Even fewer get to do it by saying whatever they want to say. All of those thoughts that the average person in the average job has to keep quiet are what makes a comic money.

Stand-up comedy is a liberating and unique way to make a living that is much more than a job. I don't want to get too "Deepak Chopra" on you here but it really is more a way of life than a career. This guide will not only help you take the plunge but it will point out where to jump in the murky water so you don't hit the shallow stuff and eat a lot of mud.

So run through that list of teachers who told you that your smart mouth would just get you in trouble and think about the look on that cop's face when you tell him you are a comedian (really, it makes the ticket worth it). It is time to learn how to do the one job that didn't send a recruiter to your school. We don't like to actively seek too many new comedians because we're having too much fun. You found your way here on your own and that's the secret to making all of this work.

I think the essence of this job can be found in what I say instead of "break a leg" to comics I'm working with as they walk on stage: "Have fun."