



"If someone is paying me to write jokes, I'm writing jokes."

"Writing is a muscle."

-- Joan Rivers

Working with Ghostwriters in Comedy



Working With Ghostwriters in Comedy

How to Collaborate Without Losing Your Voice or Imposing Your Personal Voice into the Material of a Client / Comedian.



Course Overview

Some comedians quietly collaborate with ghostwriters to sharpen material. This course shows how the process works—sharing ideas, protecting your voice, structuring sessions, and turning outside perspectives into stronger jokes without losing authenticity on stage.

This course is both for the person looking to write for other comics and comedians with busy schedules who are looking for writers for their acts.

Whether you're a newer comic looking to accelerate your writing or a seasoned performer who wants fresh angles on existing material, learning how to work with writers can dramatically increase your output while preserving your unique comedic identity.

The goal is not to become dependent on writers.

The goal is to become better at recognizing great material.

What You'll Learn

Objective #1

Understand the different types of comedy writing relationships and when each is appropriate.

Objective #2

Learn how to communicate your voice, perspective, and stage persona to a writer.

Objective #3

Discover where comedians find ghostwriters and where writers find comedians.

Objective #4



Create a repeatable system for collaborating, testing, revising, and **owning the material**.

Lesson 1:

The Myth of the Lone Genius

Many comedians believe every joke must originate entirely from their own brain. In fact when I first watched Late Night TV hosts I used to think they wrote all the jokes night after night. In fact, I didn't even think they wrote. I thought they were riffing each night.

In reality, comedy has always been collaborative.

Late-night hosts have staffs.

Roasts have staffs.

Award shows have staffs.

Many headliners have trusted joke contributors.

Even comics who write 90% of their material often bring in other minds to punch up wording, add tags, suggest reverses, strengthen act-outs, or identify blind spots.

Read: Podcast bros. These guys are always doing podcasts with other comedians. Those sessions are collaborative and ideas are flying back and forth. You'll often hear comics talking together and hear one of them say, "Can I use that?" "I'm gonna use that."

The audience doesn't care who suggested a punchline.

The audience cares whether it's funny.

Discussion:

When does collaboration become ghostwriting?



When does ghostwriting become co-writing?

When does co-writing become writing staff?

If you're talking about Carlos Mencia; NEVER. He just openly stole jokes.

Robin Williams used to get accused of stealing jokes. But in Robin's process, he would hear jokes, (often from other comedians performing at the Comedy Store or in conversation) then when he was on stage he was so in the moment, (or coked out), that he didn't even realize that he would use another comedian's joke(s).

In more than one interview Robin talked about walking with \$100 bills in his pocket and if anyone said he stole a joke, he would just give them \$100. So if he paid for the joke, who's joke is it?

It's Robin's. He bought the joke.

Lesson 2:

What A Ghostwriter Actually Does

A ghostwriter may:

- Generate new premises
- Add punchlines
- Write tags
- Create callbacks
- Punch up wording
- Rewrite setups
- Improve transitions
- Build act-outs
- Expand stories
- Organize specials
- Create roast material
- Write topical material



Many comedians don't hire writers because they can't write.

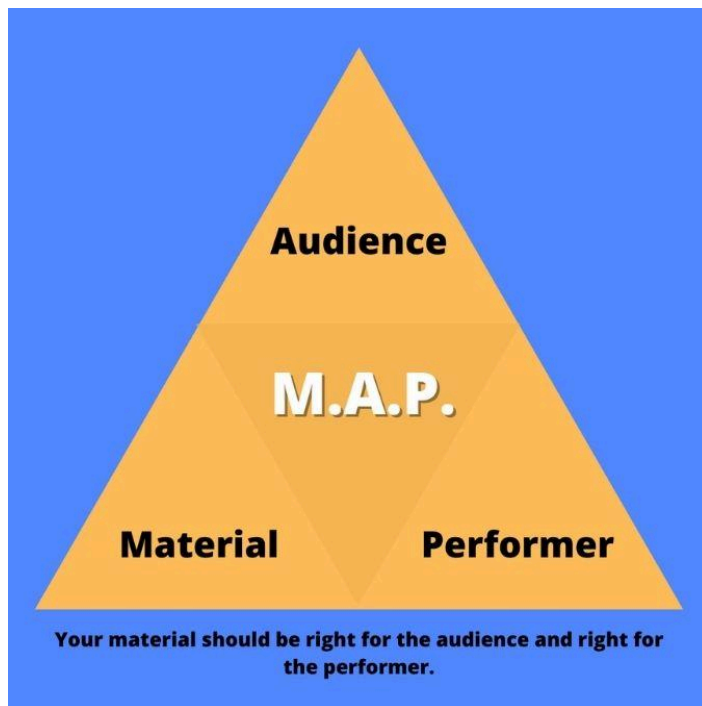
They hire writers because they don't have enough perspectives.

I call it third-eye perspective some of my predecessors referred to it as “First Brain” / “Second Brain”

A second brain often sees what the first brain misses.

Lesson 3:

M.A.P.



Protecting Your Voice

This is where most collaborations fail.

The writer starts writing jokes THEY would tell.



Instead of jokes YOU would tell.

Ask:

Would I actually say this?

Would I use these words?

Would I have this opinion?

Would my audience believe this came from me?

The best ghostwriter disappears.

The audience should never hear the writer.

They should hear YOU.

Voice Exercise - Creating a Voice Profile.

Write:

- 10 opinions you strongly believe
- 10 phrases you often use
- 10 subjects you frequently discuss
- 10 things only you could say

This becomes your Voice Profile.

Share it with potential writers.

Lesson 4:

Where Comedians Find Writers

Professional Sources



- Comedy clubs
- Open mics
- Writing classes
- Comedy festivals
- Roast battles
- Late-night writing programs
- Comedy workshops
- Screenwriting groups

Online Sources

- Reddit comedy communities
- Facebook comedy groups
- LinkedIn
- Discord comedy servers
- Comedy writing forums
- Stand-Up Comedy Clinic community
- Dead-Frog.com
- Writer's Digest.com
- Upwork
- Fiverr
- Adweek

The Best Source

Other comedians.

Most writing relationships begin through referrals.

Lesson 5:

Where Writers Find Comedians

Many aspiring writers don't realize there is a market for joke writing.



Places to advertise:

Industry Publications

- Writers Guild of America job boards
- [Backstage](#)
- [Entertainment Careers](#)
- [Mandy Network](#)
- [Staff Me Up](#)

Comedy Communities

- Comedy Facebook groups
- Stand-up forums
- Local comedy scenes
- Comedy schools
- Comedy conferences

Modern Strategy

The fastest path today:

1. Post jokes online
2. Build a reputation
3. Write for free for a few comics
4. Generate testimonials
5. Become known as "the punch-up person"

Many professional comedy writing careers began exactly this way.

Lesson 6:

How To Structure A Writing Session

Step 1



Comic brings topic.

Step 2

Writer lists associations.

Step 3

Writer identifies assumptions.

Step 4

Generate reverses.

Step 5

Generate tags.

Step 6

Build act-outs.

Step 7

Test live.

Step 8

Rewrite.

Step 9

Keep only what works.



Exercise #1



Ghostwriter For A Day

Pair up.

Exchange premises.

You are not allowed to write for yourself.

Write:

- 5 punchlines
- 5 tags
- 3 reverses

for your partner's premise.

Discuss which jokes feel authentic.



Exercise #2

Protect The Voice

Take a joke from another comedian.

Rewrite it so it sounds like:

- Brian Regan
- Nikki Glaser
- Bill Burr
- Nate Bargatze
- Your own voice

Notice how the same idea changes.



Exercise #3



The Writer's Room

Create a room of four.

One person presents a premise.

Everyone has:

- 5 minutes to list
- 5 minutes to write
- 5 minutes to pitch

The comic selects only the ideas that fit their voice.



Exercise #4

The Ghostwriter Audit

Review 20 of your jokes.

Mark:

- Entirely mine
- Inspired by feedback
- Punch-up assisted
- Co-written

The goal is not judgment.

The goal is understanding how collaborative your process already is.

Key Takeaways

Most comedians already collaborate more than they admit.



Great ghostwriters amplify your voice rather than replace it.

The best writing relationships are built on trust, clarity, and mutual respect.

A ghostwriter should never make you sound different.

A ghostwriter should make you sound more like yourself.

"Who Owns The Laugh?"

Questions I've received:

- Is buying jokes cheating?
- Why is it accepted in late night, roasts, and award shows?
- Why do audiences judge stand-up differently than music?
- If a comedian rewrites a purchased joke 80%, whose joke is it?
- Should writers receive public credit?
- Does the audience deserve to know?

Get personal 1 on 1 Coaching with Jerry just follow [this link](#) to learn more!

