



“Swimming is a confusing sport, because sometimes you do it for fun, and other times you do it to not die. And when I’m swimming, sometimes I’m not sure which one it is...”

How to Write Comedy like Demitri Martin



Background

He may look young, but his accomplishments are vast.

Demitri Martin - successful stand-up comedian, writer, actor, director, producer, artist. Known for his dry wit and ironic commentary. He reminds me a lot of Steven Wright, Stewart Francis, Mitch Hedberg and George Carlin wrapped into one.

Demitri is an artist. He draws and paints, he plays music and writes jokes, sketches, bits and shows. He’s one of those guys who has a lot of skills in his talent set and is not afraid to add them into his stand-up. And you can see how each of these things add to his evolving and quirky nature of his act.

His material is mostly clean, relatable and family-friendly.



Tour Dates:

2023 The Joke Machine Tour

DEMETRI
MARTIN
THE
JOKE
MACHINE



OCT 27, 2023

Golden State Theatre

Monterey, CA

TICKETS

OCT 28, 2023

Fremont Theater

San Luis Obispo, CA

TICKETS

NOV 11, 2023

The Moore Theatre

Seattle, WA

TICKETS

NOV 11, 2023

The Moore Theatre
Second Show Added

Seattle, WA

TICKETS

JAN 26, 2024

Steelhouse

Omaha, NE

TICKETS

JAN 27, 2024

Hayt Sherman Place

Des Moines, IA

TICKETS

JAN 28, 2024

Englert Civic Theatre

Iowa City, IA

TICKETS

FEB 2, 2024

Tampa Theatre

Tampa, FL

TICKETS

FEB 3, 2024

Hard Rock Live Orlando

Orlando, FL

TICKETS

FEB 4, 2024

Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

TICKETS

MAR 23, 2024

Crest Theatre

Sacramento, CA

TICKETS

MAR 24, 2024

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre

San Francisco, CA

TICKETS

MAR 28, 2024

Lobero Theatre

Santa Barbara, CA

TICKETS

<https://demetrimartin.com/pages/2020-wandering-mind-tour>



[Want to find out more about Demetri Martin? \(Dead-Frog\)](#)

Humor Style

His comedy style frequently uses one-liners, surreal humor, witty wordplay, configurations, paradoxes, 2-way build-ups, etc.

We'll be exploring how to write in a similar comedic voice by deconstructing his approach and trying some ourselves.

Let's look at some of his material:

▶ “The Place Where My Jokes Come From” - Demetri Martin - ...

This is one of Demetri Martin's first comedy specials. He uses quirky wordplay, drawings to enhance his comedy and some music.

What if I did this... what does that look like?

Winner/Loser paradox.

What is a lollipop? Hard candy plus garbage
Very Jim Gaffigan. Break it down to it's simple elements.

▶ Late Night 'Demetri Martin 6/11/04

Early Demetri Martin could've been inspired by Jack Handy's Deep Thoughts.

[Let's go to the Transcript of this special \(temi.com\)](#)

When I first started in comedy, one of my favorite things to do was to take phrases or movie titles and add a different ending.



It's called a reformation, but it teaches you about expectations and endings.

Exercise:

Take any movie title and at the end, add the words: "In the bathroom."

Exercise:

Demitri Martin loves to use nostalgic recognition. In which he takes a common behavior, phrase that's familiar and uses a comparison, analogy or similar trope to mashup ideas. He uses the "If this is true what else could be true." improv device.

So let's try one:

Tesla has become the modern day VW Bug. When we were younger driving in the car with our parents, when we saw a Volkswagen Beetle we would say "Slug-Bug" and punch our sibling in the arm.

Now when you see a Tesla, you say 'Tesla', and..._____.

Extending the Joke Using If this is true what else is true:

If you had a fatal carb crash.... If this is true, what else is true?

If you went to a Tupperware Birthday Party... if this is true what else is true?

What about a Tupperware Bachelor Party?

What about a Tupperware Funeral?

Combining ideas.

I remember the first time I had sex in the back of a car. I was sixteen and she was... the gym teacher. Afterwards, she told me to hit the showers.



Word: Relationship

Open Relationship/Abusive Relationship

Some people have been involved in an open relationship. Other people have been involved in an abusive relationship. I was in an open, abusive relationship.

Paint the picture:

Word: Family

1. Family member
2. Family reunion
3. Family gathering
4. Family history
5. Family tree
6. Family dinner
7. Family outing
8. Family tradition
9. Family values
10. Family portrait
11. Family room
12. Family vacation
13. Family business
14. Family planning
15. Family doctor
16. Family affairs
17. Family dynamics
18. Family support
19. Family-friendly
20. Family heirloom
21. Family ties
22. Family unit
23. Family estate
24. Family size
25. Family secrets



With Family as the Second Word:

1. Nuclear family
2. Extended family
3. Immediate family
4. Adoptive family
5. Biological family
6. Host family
7. Single-parent family
8. Blended family
9. Close-knit family
10. Distant family
11. Royal family
12. Working-class family
13. Wealthy family
14. Disfunctional family
15. Loving family
16. Urban family
17. Rural family
18. Traditional family
19. Modern family
20. Large family
21. Small family
22. Multigenerational family
23. Two-parent family
24. Foster family
25. Joint family



Exercise:

Using Collocations to create Mashups to turn into jokes

Collocations are combinations of words or terms that frequently occur together in a natural and conventional manner.

1. Choose a topic
2. Identify or look up 10-20 collocations related to your topic. Find a mashup that is incongruous, paradoxical, ironic, contrasting then create context for it.
3. Write a joke, bit or observation using that idea using the “if-this-true-what-else-is-true” trope.

Vests:

Safety Vest

Bullet Proof Vest

Life Vest

Sweater Vest.

Suit Vest

Leather Vest

Knowing the structure of the 3-way build-up, write me a 3-way build-up using 3 of the word-pairings above.

HINT: What are each of them used for?

Exercise - Playing with Words:

Pick a word that everyone can relate to: **Food**.

Come up with 5-10 Word pairings that start or end with the chosen word.

Find a humorous collocation adding another word to the new combination of words.

1. Fast Food
2. Junk food
3. Healthy Food



4. Whole Food
5. Organic Food
6. Finger Food
7. Soul Food
8. Street Food
9. Spicy Food
10. Gourmet Food
11. Food Network

Study each of them and see if you could add a word to the beginning of the word pairings or the end that could change the intended meaning of the word pairing into a comedic meaning of the word pairing. Once you have that, put it on the page and build out from there by walking it through the maxim of the 5 Ws “Who? What? Where? Why? When? And How?”

Exercise: Let’s do another set of word pairings

Start with a word: Shower

Write some word pairings using shower

1. Rain shower
2. Hot shower
3. Cold shower
4. Shower stall
5. Shower head
6. Shower massage
7. Baby shower
8. Wedding shower
9. Shower curtain

Find a pairing of words that looks like it might give you some double entendre play or if you could add another word to the pairing to change the intended meaning.

What are some common situations that most people are familiar with?

People buy gym memberships to lift weights, then complain that the groceries are heavy.

