



PLAYBOOK: Write Like Dave Chappelle

Word Association Workouts to Build Depth, Truth, and Punch

CORE PRINCIPLE

Chappelle doesn't start with jokes.

He starts with **truth** → **perspective** → **tension** → **THEN humor**.

Your job in these workouts is to **earn the laugh**, not chase it.

EXERCISE 1: The “Simple Truth” Drill

Concept:

Say something *complex or metaphorical*...

Then strip it down to its **brutally simple truth**.

Step-by-Step:

1. Write a statement:
 - Opinion
 - Observation
 - Metaphor
2. Then ask:
 “What is this REALLY saying?”
3. Rewrite it in the **simplest, bluntest terms possible**.



Example:

Statement:

“I think social media is just people curating their lives.”

Simple Truth:

“Social media is just people lying on camera.”

Your Turn:

Fill in 10:

- “Dating apps are really just _____”
- “Going to the gym is basically _____”
- “Politics is really just _____”

Then add a tag:

- “And we all pretend it’s not.”

EXERCISE 2: Fish-Out-of-Water Story Builder

Concept:

Chappelle instantly creates connection by putting himself in an **uncomfortable environment**.



Step-by-Step:

1. Write:
“I was in _____ and I did NOT belong.”



2. Describe:

- What made you different?
- What felt off?

3. Add contrast:

“Even the people who SHOULD belong... didn’t.”

Example:

“I tried hanging out with rich people...

Even THEY looked uncomfortable.

Like nobody trusts anyone with better teeth than them.”

Your Turn:

Create 3 scenarios:

- “I was at a _____”
- “I ended up in a _____”
- “I got invited to a _____”

👉 Add:

- One observation
- One exaggeration
- One punchline

EXERCISE 3: The “Question Hook” Technique

Concept:

Chappelle pulls the audience in by asking questions that **force curiosity**.



Step-by-Step:

1. Write a setup
2. Insert:
👉 “You know why...?”
3. Let the audience mentally answer
4. Hit them with an unexpected truth

Example:

“You ever notice rich people love minimalism?
You know why?

Because they already bought everything else.”

Your Turn:

Write 10 setups using:

- “You know why...?”
- “Ever notice...?”
- “How come...?”

Rule:

The answer must be:

- Unexpected
- Based in Truth
- Slightly uncomfortable

EXERCISE 4: Act-Out Amplifier

Concept:



Chappelle doesn't just tell the joke...
He **shows** it.



Step-by-Step:

1. Write a premise
2. Turn it into a scene:
 👉 Who's talking?
3. Act out:
 - Voice
 - Emotion
 - Attitude

Example:

Premise: Terrorists wouldn't take certain hostages

Act-out:

"Hello... we have your people—
...hello?
HELLO??"

Your Turn:

Write 5 act-outs:

- Customer vs Employee
- Parent vs Kid
- You vs Authority

Add:

- Emotion (angry, confused, confident)
- Heightened reaction



EXERCISE 5: Tension → Release Ladder

Concept:

Comedy = tension + release

Chappelle BUILDS tension before the laugh.

Step-by-Step:

Start with something serious

1. Add tension:
 - Stakes
 - Danger
 - Social discomfort
3. Break it with a twist

Example:

“Airport security is intense...

Everyone’s nervous...

Except me.

Because I already know...

Nobody’s worried about MY bag.”

Your Turn:

Create 5 ladders:

- Serious topic → absurd twist
- Emotional setup → logical punchline
- Tension → ridiculous release



EXERCISE 6: Perspective Flip (Chappelle Signature)

Concept:

Take a common belief...
Flip the perspective.

Step-by-Step:

1. Write a widely accepted idea
2. Ask:
👉 “What’s the opposite angle?”
3. Justify it logically

Example:

“People think money changes you...
No...
Money just lets you be who you REALLY are... faster.”

Your Turn:

Flip these:

- Fame
- Marriage
- Success
- Failure
- Cancel culture



FINAL CHALLENGE: Build a Chappelle-Style Bit

Combine:

- 👉 1 Truth
- 👉 1 Story
- 👉 1 Question
- 👉 1 Act-out

Framework:

“I was in _____ (story)

You know what I realized?

_____ (truth)

You know why?

_____ (twist)

[Act-out]

_____ (punchline)”



CLOSING INSIGHT

Chappelle doesn't chase laughs.

He earns them through honesty.

- 👉 Truth makes them listen
- 👉 Tension makes them lean in
- 👉 Humor makes them release

That's the formula.
