

Sketch Idea Generator

This is a guide you can use to generate sketch ideas. Keep in mind that out of 10 ideas in comedy, maybe 1 is going to turn out great. But, using these methods you can pump out ideas very quickly and get to that 1 really great idea faster. Enjoy!

Adjective/ Profession/ Location - Mis/Matching

This one is all about pumping out ideas quickly. Make 3 lists. First a list of adjectives. Second a list of professions. Third a list of locations. Then you just connect them in a way that makes sense or in a way that makes no sense at all. Here's an example:

<u>Adjectives</u>	<u>Professions</u>	<u>Locations</u>
Loud - A	Barista	Office
Quiet - B	Librarian - A	Art Museum -A
Brave	Actor - B	Truck Stop - C
Scared - C	Trash Collector	Library
Childish	Singer	Restaurant
Smart	Mechanic - C	Home
Responsible	Pope	Grocery Store - B

If this were on sheet paper by hand I would just draw arrows (i suggest doing it that way). But, for the sake of keeping this digitally coherent, here are some connections I could make:

- A) Loud ---> Librarian ----> Art Museum
- B) Quiet ---> Actor ---> Grocery Store
- C) Scared ---> Mechanic ---> Truck Stop

And so on...

Then you look at your connections and you try to think of some situation that those make sense. Or you go the complete opposite and connect ones that are total rubbish to put together.

For example, what if a librarian, who is forced to stay quiet in her natural environment (the library) made up for it by being loud everywhere else?

Next, you would brainstorm that scenario.

Sketch Idea Generator

Here is another example, A mechanic is very comfortable working on cars, but we find out at a truck stop that he is deathly afraid of trucks. How would that play out?

If you need help flushing out the idea you can check out our [Sketch Writing Cheat sheet](#) (<--- click there to go to the website where you can download it for free) or you can “Sketch Story Board” it.

The main point of this particular idea generating exercise is **Don't Overthink It**. Go with whatever comes to you and whatever sounds fun to create. With this exercise you can pump out really quick sketch ideas really quickly and it's all about getting that initial idea. Don't go past those ideas until you're ready.

Use Music

Another great way to generate ideas that maybe you haven't thought of is to listen to music. Hit random on Spotify or even pull up one of your favorite songs. Close your eyes and then picture in your head whatever that music inspires you to think of.

This exercise was taught at a workshop from Andel Sudik of *The Second City* and it sparked in me an idea of a guy who goes through a party high fiving, joking around with people and just going through the entire house.

It then lead to this sketch:

On stage we see a bunch of people just standing around lethargic. One guy knocks on the door, it's opened but the lethargic states continue with everyone on stage. There's a guy pumping beer out of a keg slowly. There's another person playing chess by himself. No music is on.

Enter our hero. He knocks on the door and when it opens the door person comes to life with a high five. Music starts playing. The hero passes through the stage bringing everyone to life with high fives, belly rubs, some type of handshake. Once he does that with everyone they all start dancing and having a good time.

Then, hero leaves the room to go to the bathroom. Music stops immediately. Everyone goes back to their starting positions and continue their zombie like states. Hero re-enters and the music starts again, high fives ensue and dancing/energy from everyone.

Sketch Idea Generator

Hero takes a phone call, steps outside. Music stops. Everyone back to starting position and no energy again.

Hero comes back in - music starts, energy - everyone is alive. But, the hero announces he is leaving and then leaves. They're all sad and shocked and back in their starting positions.

Hero jumps back on stage and proclaims "Ah, I'm just kidding! Come on everyone" Then hero leads everyone off stage and around the theater while the music plays and everyone dances.

Blackout.

It was fun, simple and a great way to get everyone on stage together for the final sketch of the night.

Music can be great inspiration. It's a great go-to when you feel like you've exhausted your options or you want a very visual sketch idea.

Theme of the Day

The Theme of the Day is all about thinking about the hot topics or themes that are going on lately in the world, in your office, in your house - wherever.

How are people acting about this? How does what's going on make you feel? How can you represent it in a different/interesting way? Here are some examples of themes that you could pull ideas from:

- Big games in sports - ie, Superbowl, March Madness, fantasy sports, etc
- Weather - ie, snowstorm, rain, tornado, etc
- Politics going on -ie, Trump (obviously), presidential elections, News shows
- Something happens at your work - ie, guy making copies (that's been done, though)

Just think about whatever is going on in the world that seems important or affects the people around you

For generating ideas off of themes, it's all about using what information you have around you and being topical. If you are leading up to a show, it's a great way to generate a quick sketch idea that you can use to relate to your audience and be topical and fresh. Just keep it simple and come out looking like geniuses for being so "cutting edge."

Sketch Idea Generator

So, there are three great ways to generate ideas for sketches. I hope this helps you and if you found it useful, let us know. Email me at Jason@sketchpadcomedy.com or go to our [Facebook page](#).

The Character Sketch Idea

Developing a character sketch can seem really tough. But, it doesn't have to be. Whether you have an idea for a character already or not, you can do a few things that will help you develop the character first and then we will develop the sketch around that character second.

Develop the Character

One of my favorite ways to develop characters is through human interaction with real people. Ever meet someone who has an odd tick, speech pattern or interesting mannerisms? Maybe it's a subtle thing, but you noticed it about them once and now every time you talk to them all you can do is pay attention to it?

Or what about cashiers that you've run into at the grocery store. They seem to be an odd bunch at times, right?

Ever watch people at the mall food court?

Essentially, this one is all about observation. It usually begins with a physical movement that then turns into the sound of their voice, followed by weird things they say or do.

For Bill Hader's character *Stefon* on Saturday Night Live, him and John Mulaney combined a couple of characters based on people they knew. Mulaney's inspiration came from a guy he knew who would suggest parties and interesting things around the city to him. Hader's guy was a barista who looked and talked like the character Stefon, that they would create.

Inspiration for characters can come from anything. Some people just start walking around funny in rehearsal and develop characters for themselves that way.

Add Life to the Character

Once your character starts to take on some personality and flair, then it's time to develop it further. You can do this by having a partner interview you as that character. All of a sudden you are answering questions no longer as yourself, but instead as this made-up character. It's a great way to learn about the character and figure out what drives them in life.

Sketch Idea Generator

Questions like:

- Where do you work?
- How old are you?
- What do you do for fun?
- What drives you crazy?
- What's your family life like?
- Who are you voting for?
- Why did you... [fill in the blank]?
- Tell us about the last time someone was nice or mean to you.
- And so on and on...

The point of this exercise is to get as much information about this character out as possible. It's to help the actor really dig deep into what it's like to be them. There are no wrong answers and you are just making things up as you go along. But, once those specifics are determined, you begin thinking about what that means to that character.

Add the Environment

In a way we are all characters in our own rights and we play those characters out depending upon what environment we are in. At work, I'm an employee and my boss controls what I can/can't do. At home, maybe I have children and I get to control (or at least try to) what they do. At a formal dinner I'll act a different way than I would at The Cracker Barrel.

We all play characters in our lives. Therefore, it makes sense that your characters would act differently in their different settings as well.

Your first task for figuring out the environment to place the sketch is thinking about 3 things: Home, Work, at Play.

What is this character like at Home? At work? And at Play?

Then it's a matter of going through those three things and figuring out what is most fun. You can try each of them out to figure out the final direction you want to take your character sketch into.

Developing Sketch Ideas Through Improv Comedy

All of these ways for generating sketch ideas can be placed into an improvised scene to help you figure out what's working and what's not. Ideas generated from characters are especially great for doing this. Essentially, to flush out a sketch idea using improv you just place your character in a scene with a partner and let them go at it.

Sketch Idea Generator

For example, a director might tell two actors:

“Target Lady you are behind the counter at Target and your customer brings a random assortment of merchandise for you to check out. Go!”

You do this type of thing a few times and talk about what worked, what dialogue was the funniest, what mannerisms drew laughter and you scrap the rest. Then you write it down, expound upon and present it as a sketch.

Improv to sketch is a really great way to generate dialogue, sketch ideas and it helps the actors to memorize lines because they made them up themselves anyways.

If you are doing an improv scene (for a show, in rehearsal, whatever) you can also find characters or scenes that you’d like to flush out more. You just take note of something fun that happened and tell those actors to go off to the side and develop that scene even further. Write down the beats (you can use our cheat sheet if it helps) of what a sketch with those characters would look like and then have them present it after they put pen to paper. Give them some notes and then have them rewrite it.

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There are lots of ways to generate sketch ideas. It’s really about using what inspires you at the time. When you have to develop a bunch of sketches for an upcoming show, some of these may be more useful than others. But, it’s important to have a big tool belt of idea generators in times of need. When you’ve done a lot of shows in your career you’ll need them and when you are helping others develop their sketch comedy skills it’s nice to have concrete ways that have helped you develop ideas that you can pass along to them.

What’s your favorite way to generate sketch ideas?