

After telling a joke, stay quiet and don't move.

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When I first started out I wasn't comfortable with humour. I was afraid of not being funny, and even more afraid that it would show. When I'd tell a joke and the audience wouldn't react right away, I'd quickly go on with my lines so no one would notice that my joke had backfired. If this happens to you, here's a tip. After telling your joke, stay quiet and don't move.

When you look at professional comics, you'll notice that after telling a joke, they usually go silent and don't move.

What are they doing? By remaining still and quiet they're sending a non-verbal message to the audience that might translate as, *³Pay attention! I just said something important, and I want you to think about it.²*

Without even realizing it, the audience obeys that silent command. Everyone stops and thinks.

After a silence of barely a second or two, a wave of laughter begins, building into a crescendo as everyone gets the joke.

Why is it so important for a comic to stand still at that point? So that nothing distracts the audience as it ponders on the joke. If the comic moves, the public's attention reverts to him, and the joke no longer occupies their thoughts.

But what happens if no one reacts when you go quiet? Continue giving your lines, that's all. In the audience's mind you simply made a pause. You'll be the only one to know that the audience should have laughed during that part of the act.

Whether your joke works or not, it's important to stack all the cards in your favour.

Try it. After telling the joke, stop talking and don't move. The outcome may surprise you!

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