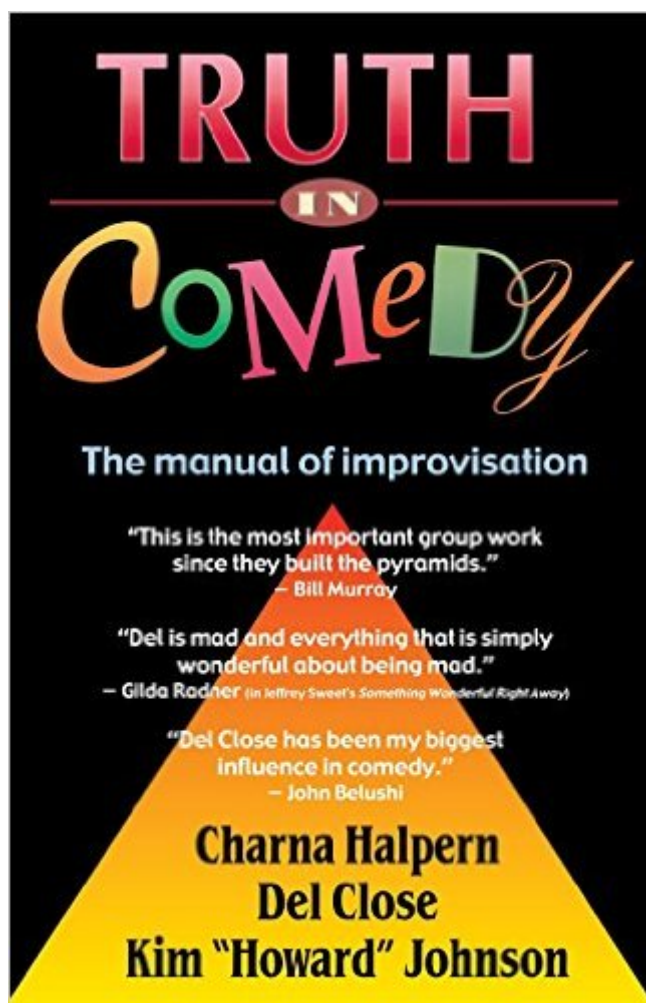


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# Truth In Comedy: The Manual For Improvisation



## Synopsis

Want to learn the improv techniques that helped Mike Myers, Chris Farley, John Belushi, and many others along the road to TV and film stardom? Then let two esteemed founders of long-form improvisational theatre, Del Close and Charna Halpern, teach you the "Harold." This groundbreaking acting exercise emphasizes pattern recognition and subversion of the audience's expectations, which are important factors for making people laugh without ever telling a joke. It involves six to seven players and many kinds of scenes: games, monologues, songs, skits and more, all of which are bound to keep both actors and audience members guessing. The Harold is non-linear entertainment that remembers everything and wastes nothing the key to successful improvising and has become a standard in comedy clubs and improv theatres around the globe.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Who would have ever thought that learning the finer points of improvisation could be such fun? The "Harold," an innovative improvisational tool, helped Saturday Night Live's Mike Myers and Chris Farley, George Wendt (Norm on "Cheers") and many other actors on the road to TV and film stardom. Now it is described fully in this new book for the benefit of other would-be actors and comics. The "Harold" is a form of competitive improv involving six or seven players. They take a theme suggestion from the audience and free-associate on the theme, creating a series of rapid-fire one-liners that build into totally unpredictable skits with hilarious results. The teams compete with scoring based on applause. The "Harold" is a fun way to "loosen up" and learn to think quickly, build continuity, develop characterizations and sharpen humor.

The brain wave of three improv gurus, this book is a complete guide to improvisation for both novice and professional actors and comics. An outgrowth of the successful curriculum initiated by two of the authors at the ImprovOlympic, it describes improvisational tools and techniques, from the "Pattern Game" and "The Hot Spot" to the innovative and sophisticated "Harold." Far from an ordinary how-to handbook, this clearly composed authority on comedic improvisation stresses intuitive thinking, listening skills, continuity, characterization, and, most important, teamwork. Numerous testimonials from reputed actors strengthen the text's credibility, already secured by the expertise of its authorship. Sample scenes and games take hilarious twists while illustrating the inevitability of connections and the importance of justification among team members. The authors' primary focus is the achievement of the group mind, and the book's chapter construction necessarily culminates with that creative misnomer known as the Harold. The manual is flexibly designed to allow for easy performance in both acting classes and professional settings and will prove a valuable reference source to actors and directors alike. Kathleen Chrysler

I've taken two improv classes and I really enjoyed it! The problem is that sometimes you might not understand what an instructor is trying to get across to you because you are so nervous. The class environment is high-energy and if you have anxiety in this kind of a situation, like I do sometimes, then this book is a must when you are away from the class. I have the UCB comedy workbook, which I highly recommend. I would recommend getting this manual, if you buy nothing else. 'Truth in Comedy' simply, and clearly, heads you in the right direction right away; at least it did for me. Actually you are probably better off in buying whatever combination of improv guides which you choose. If you are planning on taking an improv class; get this book and read it first or in conjunction with the class. The more of the book that you get through while you are in the early stages of the class, the better. I had an "idea" of what improv was before I took the class, and I ended up being wrong about what I thought. This will act as a kind of compass for you; so that if you have an instructor who is not so good, or she or he is simply working against the time constraints of the class, you can get the most out of it. Believe me, I am a somewhat introverted person, and I thoroughly enjoy improv. I can't explain why I would like being up on a stage making an ass out of myself in a fun way, more than I would having attention paid to me in any other situation. Give improv a shot, it is exhilarating and rewarding!

I enjoyed this book so much. I find truth very important, there will never be enough honesty in the

world, taking life too seriously will often mislead you, but you can always find truth in comedy. I'm new to comedy and improvising, but this book was an amazing introduction, in a way it shaped my perspective on how I see the world and social interactions. I recommend it even if you don't care much about comedy or improvisation, it is a short light read, pleasant writing and various improv techniques exemplified within. I found it so interesting, and I'm so glad I read it.

This is the best book for learning comedy, which I know sounds kind of weird. I don't do improv anymore, I work in a corporate setting and I honestly still use these tools everyday.

This book was a quick, entertaining and interesting read. Lots of interesting vignettes, perhaps too many name-dropping anecdotes. It is well written section by section, but not well organized, the flow of argument is not so clear. Perhaps it is deliberately written in the style of a Harold? I did not read it to learn how to do improv comedy, I read it for insights into group improvisation that might transfer to playing music. In this it was somewhat disappointing. Compare to say, *Zen and the Art of Archery*, which is a book about archery the lessons of which transfer to other activities. Improv games contained therein may be good fodder for amusement on long car journeys - better than "I spy".

A very serious approach to a laughable matter. The author aims to developing your own persona at the scene. The most successful comedies are done by actors focused on what they say, not how they say it.

Easy and fun read!

Good - easy read. Well written and funny content.

This book is co-written by two of the founders of improv in America, Del Close and Chana Halpern and a student of Del's Kim Johnson. I've just started improv over the last few months and this book has explained the basics in a deeper way than I have yet heard. Additionally, they accompany the explanations with short form games to help you and your group experience the meanings for yourself. Throughout, the book builds the improv basics into the expert level of the long form game The Harold. It is very simply written and easy to understand. It's only 150 pages, but packed with invaluable insight and experience.

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