

Clowning

by Karen Saker and Robert Cox, Clowning Enthusiasts

Clowning for many people goes hand-in-hand with happiness and laughter. Clowns add color and enjoyment to parades, community events, and promotional activities. Clowning provides opportunities for individuals to develop physical and performing skills, interpersonal communications, relationships with others, and self-confidence. You have to discover the clown within you. No one else can tell you what that character should be. You will discover it by trial, error, and practice. Every clown in the world is different.

There are three main types of modern-day clowns: white faced, auguste, and tramp. Another style, character clowns, are white face, auguste, or tramp clowns in a character costume. White face clowns are conservative, with an all white face and black and red features. They have bright, fancy costumes and are in command of a situation. Auguste clowns are always neat, but their costumes are either too big or too small with mismatched colors and patterns. They have a skin tone base, with white around the eyes and mouth, and are usually pranksters. Tramp clowns are ragged but clean and usually wear old, torn two- or three-piece suits. They have skin-toned makeup, white around the eyes and mouth, a red mouth and gray/black beard. Character clowns are one of the three types mentioned above but in a character costume, and are often used in skits and productions.

Remember, each clown face and costume must be original. No two clowns are exactly alike. Study pictures of other clowns for ideas. Consider the following after deciding your clown type: study your face; consider the natural lines; use a mirror as you make faces and note what character lines and expressions you emphasize; include glasses in your design if you wear them; practice drawing designs on your prepared face with a grease pencil or draw a design on paper first and copy it to your face; avoid elaborate designs; simple, clean lines are preferred to sharp, angular designs since they can be harsh looking. Continue to experiment until you find the face that is right for you.



PLAN YOUR PROJECT

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as the starting place for your 4-H self-determined project. The *Self-Determined Project Guide* is available from your county OSU Extension office or on the Web at ohio4h.org/selfdetermined. You may choose to do a little or a lot depending on your level of interest. Be sure to register your project with your county OSU Extension office.



Once you have decided on your clown face, you are ready to prepare and apply your clown makeup. The type of clown you have selected will determine the makeup application procedure, equipment, and supplies required. Select the type of makeup to use: grease paint, old-style water-soluble, or the new water-soluble. General equipment and supplies required include the following: hair covering (headband or nylon knee-high stocking tied into a band); self-standing mirror; baby oil, cold cream, or petroleum jelly; paper towels; baby powder (no color or corn starch); blush brush or shaving brush; large powder puff; spray bottle for water; makeup brushes or cotton swabs; clown white; flesh or skin tone makeup; makeup and/or grease pencils; and a variety of grease paint colors. Water-based makeup supplies include makeup colors, brushes, makeup sponges, cotton swabs, small bowl of water, free-standing mirror, and paper towels. Consult appropriate clowning references for step-by-step makeup application.



Your clown costume should fit the clown character you are creating. Costumes should be appealing, clean, roomy, comfortable, practical, and complement the clown face. Also think about having lots of pockets, colorful accessories and trim, appropriate head covering, gloves to match your costume, name tag and comfortable shoes and socks that coordinate with your outfit. When selecting costumes, neatness and cleanliness are critical. Your appearance is the audience's first impression of you. Makeup and costumes alone do not make a clown. You must have a talent, such as balloon making, puppetry, storytelling, juggling, magic, or exaggerated reactions and expressions. Let your imagination help select props that fit your character and clown image.

Being a clown is more than putting on a face and wearing a funny costume. Here are some tips to help you maintain a professional image and make you a better clown:

- Allow sufficient time to apply makeup and costumes, and to mentally become your character.
- Avoid bad language, pretend smoking, and drinking.
- Practice using props, routines, skits, and exaggerations.
- Make others feel good.
- Avoid other's personal space. Leave 18 to 20 inches around them.
- Avoid throwing candy or other items into a crowd. Pass it to others directly.
- Be a good sport and in full control of yourself.
- Be neat, clean, and in good physical and mental condition.



AREAS OF INTEREST AND THINGS TO DO

Every self-determined 4-H project can be broken down into areas of interest. These are the specific things members want to address during their project adventures. Using 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide*, identify at least three areas of interest with at least three activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the list below or make up your own.

Types of Clowns

- Attend an event in which clowns are involved.
- Locate a reference book on clowning to use with this project.
- Identify a knowledgeable person in clowning who is willing to help you.
- Review several pictures of clowns and other resources for ideas on the type of clown you would like to be.
- Join a clowning organization.
- Practice various clown face designs on your face or on paper. Experiment until you find the design that is right for you.

Clown Makeup

- Determine the type of makeup to use.
- Determine the type of clown you want to be and the face you want to use.
- Practice preparing your face for makeup and applying the makeup.
- Compare the advantages and disadvantages of different types of makeup.
- Consult appropriate references for a step-by-step process in makeup application.
- Seek help from a knowledgeable clowning person concerning makeup.

Costumes and Props

- Select a costume to fit the clown character you are creating.
- Determine appropriate accessories to complement your clown face and basic costume.
- Determine props to fit your character and image.
- Practice exaggerated reactions and expressions.
- Attend an event at which clowns perform to study clowns in action and to get ideas about special talents used to enhance their clown characters.
- Select and practice a talent to enhance your role as a clown.

Performing as a Clown

- Learn clown etiquette/code of ethics.
- Talk with other clowns to learn more about performing as a clown.
- Learn appropriate techniques of communicating as a clown.
- Become involved in various community activities or events, school functions, parades, parties, mall shows, fairs, festivals, and others.

RELATED RESOURCES

Clowns of America International, mycoai.com

History of Circus. "History of Clowning—Facts About Clowns." historyofcircus.com/circus-facts/circus-clowns-history-and-facts

Just Clowning Around, justclowningaround.com

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