

# Let's Get Personal!

## Tips for Developing Personal Stories

By Craig Harrison  
[www.HackinBoo.com](http://www.HackinBoo.com)

### SOURCING YOUR OWN STORIES

Personal stories come from personal experiences:

- As a child
- In school
- At work
- On vacations
- Overseas
- At holidays
- Public events
- Family situations
- Brush w/fame
- As bystander
- Historic events
- Happenstance

Experiences can be positive or negative!  
(Remember, Tragedy plus Time = Comedy)

What's unique to you...can also be universal to others!

### GETTING STARTED

Start a personal journal or notebook; take note of observations, dialog, quirky news stories, etc. for future use. *Dialog; Bumper-stickers; Scenes.*

Prospect your past with your parents, siblings, schoolmates, friends co-workers and colleagues. (Stories harder to uncover in isolation.)

Attend all reunions to gather snippets and stories!  
(Consult accountant to determine whether expenses are deductible.)



Catalog your stories through the creation of a Story Log or Story Database, whether in PowerPoint, Excel or equivalent:

Log: [www.expressionsofexcellence.com/NSA/storytracker.pdf](http://www.expressionsofexcellence.com/NSA/storytracker.pdf)  
[www.Expressionsofexcellence.com/clients/Story\\_Inventory.ppt](http://www.Expressionsofexcellence.com/clients/Story_Inventory.ppt)



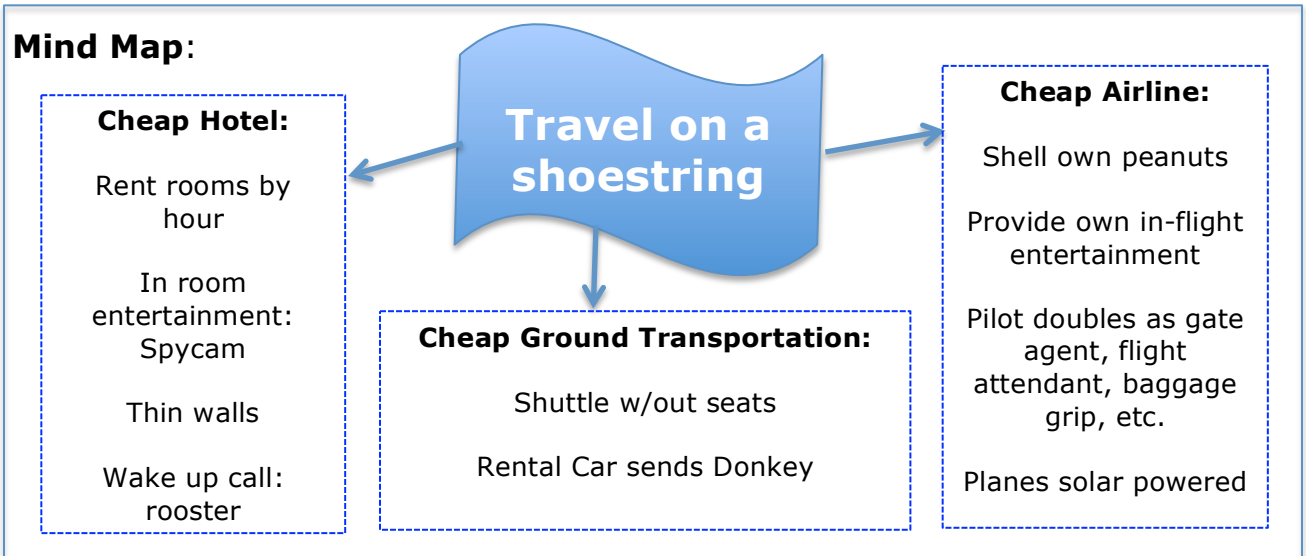
Remember, the same story can be tweaked, shaded or modified to underscore different points for different audiences: sales v. service, leadership v. teamwork, health care v. hospitality, etc.

**COMPOSING & DEVELOPING STORIES**

Take kernel, seed or snippet of a story and “mind map” it for related and/or contrary ideas, threads or themes you can fashion into a story.

**Example:** To save a few dollars for a client I took a discount shuttle to the airport. The van’s sliding door kept opening in transit. Posted sign said, “All passengers must pay in advance!”

**Theme:** *Travel on a shoestring.*



**Finished story** uses embellishment, exaggeration, extremes (see next pg.)

<b>Kernel, snippet or germ of idea</b>	<b>Finished Story</b>
Bad date experience .....	A Date with Destiny
Coach student pres. for high school election.....	A Tale of Two Elections
Summer job calamities.....	Hard Luck as a Hard Hat
Brush with fame w/comedian .....	The Day I Made Sinbad Laugh!
As kid, sold recycled jokes door-to-door .....	Homegrown Humor
As kid, sold Lemonade when riot broke out .....	Growing up in the PRB
The corner bully has four legs! .....	(Great) Dane Eats Boy for Danish!
Caught plagiarizing poem in Jr. High English .....	When Write goes Wrong
Wrong turn led to Yosemite led to Confidence, CA.....	Finding Confidence!*

**Read examples:** [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/articles.html#Storytelling](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/articles.html#Storytelling)

# Speaking on a Shoestring

**M**any speakers can relate to accepting a low-paying engagement at some point during their career. Mine was for an impoverished client that required me to travel from Berkeley, Ca., to Yuma, Ariz.

Unable to drive 13 hours each way, I figured I'd find a discount flight, discount ground transportation and scrimp where I could to help my client stay within budget.

Airport parking was out of the question. A week's parking could feed a family of four for a month. But airport shuttles are pricey, too.

Luckily, I found Semi-Super-Shuttle! Half the price, half the van. The shuttle pulled up, and the side door magically opened. As I boarded, the driver pointed to a sign: All passengers pay in advance. So, I paid the driver, he slammed the door shut and off we went.

The driver sat me in the wheel well. Some drivers spare the air—this driver spares the spare! As the driver sped around the corner, the sliding door flew open. It was no wonder he demanded payment in advance. Suddenly, the term “easy drop-off” took on new meaning.

After a harrowing ride to the airport, I was relieved to fly a puddle jumper to my destination. My air carrier was Fly-By-Night Airline, which needed the daylight hours to solar charge the propellers. If Southwest is a discount airline, Fly-By-Night is a deep discount airline. Critics call it SouthLess Airlines. They also dispense peanuts, but you have to shell your own.



To its credit, SouthLess was very efficient. Everyone multitasks. The man who checked me in also carried my bags to the plane ... on his way to the cockpit.

I don't want to say it was a working-class airline, but when I inquired about the in-flight entertainment, they asked me what I could do. After two sets, I finally returned to my seat and they let me keep the boa.

On the ground in Yuma, the client had promised ground transportation to the hotel. Imagine my surprise when I was met curbside by a sign with my name on it ... hanging from the neck of a burro. To say I felt like a donkey is an understatement. A short gallop later, we trotted into the hotel's parking lot.

There are hotels, motels, no-tells and fleabags. My suspicions about my accommodations were aroused upon check-in when I noticed a lobby sign listing weekly, daily and hourly rates. My fears were confirmed upon passing vending machines in the lobby dispensing bed bug spray. The hotel also boasted free movies. Later, I realized I was to

be the featured entertainment when I noticed a webcam mounted on my TV.

No wakeup call was needed. The sirens of the police paddy-wagon did the trick at 3 a.m. I usually seek a late checkout, but not this time. My program the next day went well, and the planner drove me to the airport by tractor. Fly-By-Night welcomed me like a returning astronaut, if only for two more sets on the return flight.

Speakers constantly tell me “travel ain't what it used to be.” I always reply, “Thank goodness!”



*Craig Harrison, chief expressionist of Expressions of Excellence!™, began his humor career at age 11, selling Used Jokes door to door in*

*Berkeley, Ca. The founder of NSA's Storytellers PEG, Harrison also formed LaughLovers—The Cantu Comedy Club as a joint NSA/NC-Toastmasters venture in the SF Bay Area. For more humor, visit [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/humor](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/humor) or call (510) 547-0664.*



By Craig Harrison, DTM

“Men die of fright and live of confidence.” – Thoreau

## FINDING CONFIDENCE: Toastmasters Can Take You There!

I HEARD THERE WAS A PLACE CALLED CONFIDENCE, AND I SO wanted to find it. Others had been there, and it showed. But I hadn't found Confidence yet for myself.

I set out knowing only its general direction. Mine was to be an uphill journey. I drove and drove with nary a clue. At first the road was long and flat. Slowly it began to rise, and then to twist and turn as it entered the foothills. After an hour, I saw a sign saying I'd reached 3,000 feet. The air seemed thinner and my pace slowed. Yet I pressed on. I wanted to find Confidence. I needed to find Confidence.

I was getting tired. It was getting late. I wondered if I'd ever find it. I knew I was heading in the right direction. But then discouragement began to overtake me. I reached 4,000 feet. And then I saw it. It wasn't the sign I had expected. This sign said I was now approaching... Turnback Creek!

The thoughts of quitting I had been ignoring hit me with the force of a grizzly bear. Confidence seemed so elusive. Should I turn back? Was I hopelessly lost? Would I ever find Confidence? Indeed this was my moment of truth! I thought to myself, If I quit, would my effort be in vain? What if I was actually close to my goal? Just how important was it for me to find Confidence? Would I forever look at myself in the mirror and see a quitter? It was decision time.

I wavered for what seemed like an hour. It was probably only five to seven minutes. I was giving a speech to myself. Could I convince my audience of one that I should persevere?

I remember having similar doubts when I first joined Toastmasters. After visiting a club for the first time, I pondered not going back. After my first Table Topic – 57 seconds of terror – I wanted to hide under the table and never resurface. And after my Ice Breaker, I questioned whether I'd ever overcome my fear of public speaking. It took three weeks for me to return to my second meeting. Yet in each case I con-

tinued on my journey. However daunting, I persisted in my quest to find Confidence as a communicator.

And as I hung my head and saw a stick at my feet, I took it as a sign. I would stick to it! Now I had renewed vigor, stronger resolve, and a clearer vision of my journey. I felt an inner confidence that my objective would be met.

It's true; it's darkest just before dawn. And wouldn't you know it? Just a few miles past Turnback Creek, I actually found Confidence!

The sign welcomed me: “Confidence, California. Altitude: 4,200.” I felt sky high. I had finally found Confidence. It was here all along. I learned that day that you don't just stumble onto Confidence. You don't just reach Confidence. You experience it!

- What a feeling to find what you set out to find.
- How rewarding to know that one's toil is ultimately rewarded.
- How fulfilling to finally grasp the elusive.

And having now experienced Confidence, I knew I could help others discover it too.

The sign said “population: 50.” Surely, more than 50 people had found Confidence! The locals in the Confidence Café explained that once people found their town, they could go anywhere, do anything and be whoever they wanted to be. Many former residents were sharing the spirit of Confidence with others worldwide; one of the ways they did so was through Toastmasters.

Fellow Toastmasters, Confidence beckons. She awaits you. Embrace her and all things are possible. Let Toastmasters be your guide to finding Confidence. **T**

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# Universal Truths and Themes



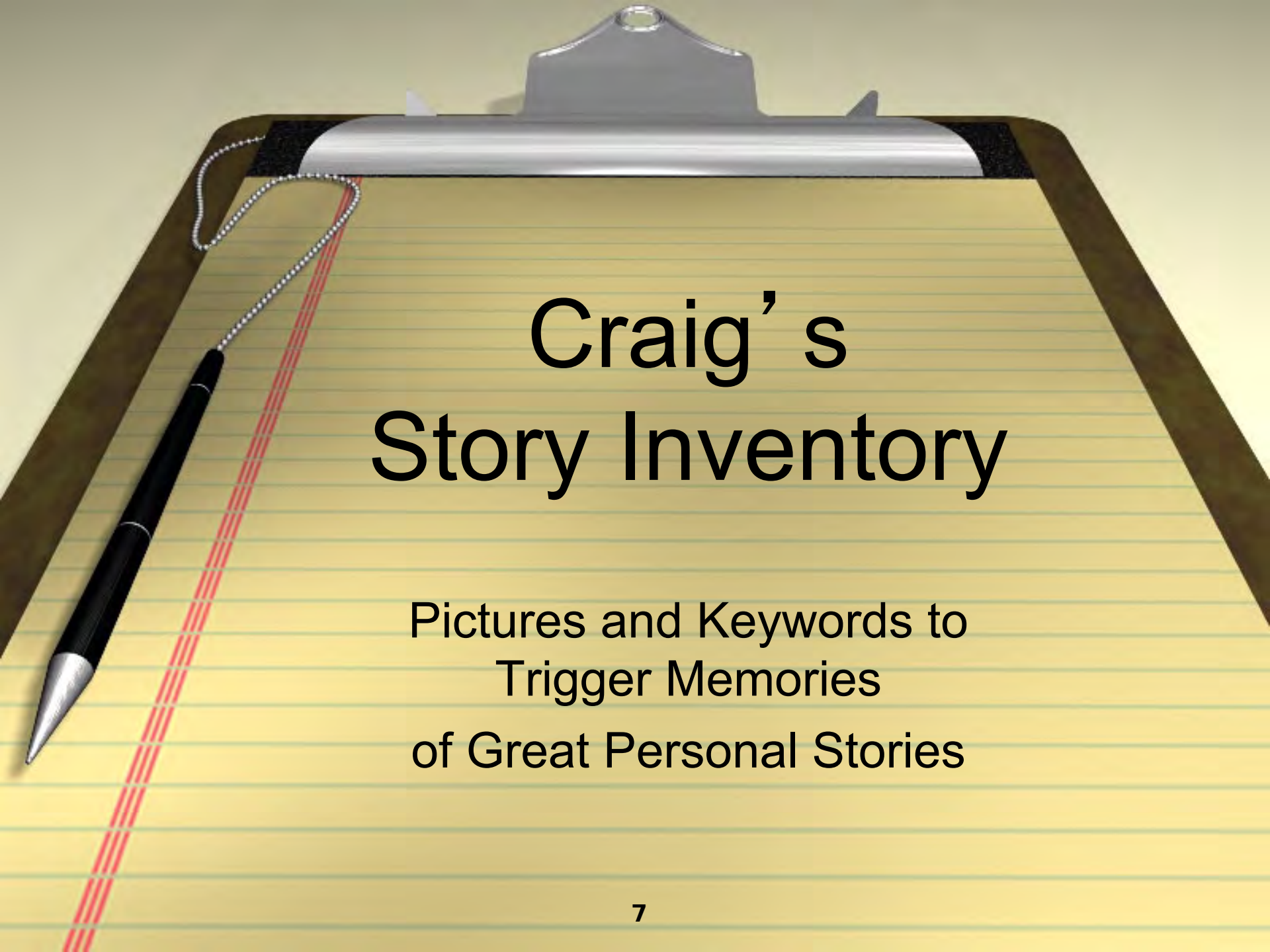
Universal Truth	Story
Risk leads to Reward	Used Jokes
The Golden Rule	
Perseverance	Confidence CA
Honesty: Though Shall not Steal/Lie Integrity	Plagiarizing songs in High School Poetry. Lyrical deception. When Write was Wrong.
Quality Matters	Washing Whitewalls...the Tip
Responsibility	Englebert Humperdink. Follow rules.
Have Faith	Confidence & Turnback Creek
Honor the Process / Honesty	Reading the Map at Wilderness Press
Seek to Understand, then Be Understood	"PIG" on narrow mountain road
Themes / Topics	Story
It Takes Two to Communicate	Communication is a Two-Way Street (directions)
Listening through Lenses	Here come the Fillies!
Customer Service	Chinese Wetting Party
Always at choice / naked truth	Getting HAI in Harbin...clothing optional
Language, Self-image	Firestorm: victim vs. survivor
Recognition	Give to get: The clueless self-pitying manager
Doing what we don't want to do	How to Eat Peas (one at a time)
Rapport	Two physicians' contrasting styles
Diversity	My friend and colleague Heilee O'Quinn
Procrastination	Avishai: "just put off procrastination"
Inquisitive by Nature	Girls on BART asking 20 questions
Ripple Effect	Attitude good and bad (Gas v USPS)
Working together / not working together	Marketing v. Anti-Marketing (Legal); editorial v. production, sales v. training Offense v. defense, etc.
Language informs; spin	Database co. markets Sushi as Raw Fish!
Coming on too strong	New IT director alienated Mac users. Sent virus, spoke out of both sides of mouth.
Leading without title	Anthem mic failure. Child leads.
Fitting In vs. Standing Out	The long awaited IT Manager arrives w/ fanfare

Create your own list of universal truths or core messages and analogous stories that reinforce those points. Download a form for tracking said stories here:

[www.eexpressionsofexcellence.com/NSA/storytracker.pdf](http://www.eexpressionsofexcellence.com/NSA/storytracker.pdf)

Excerpts from Craig's Master Story List

<b>Story</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Universal Truth</b>
Getting HAI on life		Always at choice
Recognition	Give to Get	
Getting Directions	Story v. steps	Language
Winning 5,000 Bucks	Misunderstanding	don't count chickens...
Eggs Visits the Cat House	Fresh off boat	Coming of Age
Rammed a CHP Cruiser	THC + PCH = CHP	Following Instructions
Made Sinbad Laugh	Brush With Fame	Fame;common language of humor
Lisa next door	First time = #1 with neighbor @ age 'naivity; doing what you think you should	
Controlled Substance	Out of control	Paranoia
Firestorm	Victim v. Survivor; dealing with change	Language
Selling Used Jokes	peddling humor to buy bicycle	connecting thru humor
Lemonade Stand	climate/timing.diversified prod line	Initiative, making lemonade out of lemons
Zig Ziglar - elevator	reverses elevator	Power of attitude



# Craig's Story Inventory

Pictures and Keywords to  
Trigger Memories  
of Great Personal Stories

# Tale of Two Doctors: *Ever Been Probed?*



- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Bedside Manner
- ✓ Customer Care





# Finding Confidence

- ✓ Just past Turnback Creek
- ✓ Elusive
- ✓ [www.expressionsofexcellence.com/ARTICLES/finding\\_confidence.html](http://www.expressionsofexcellence.com/ARTICLES/finding_confidence.html)



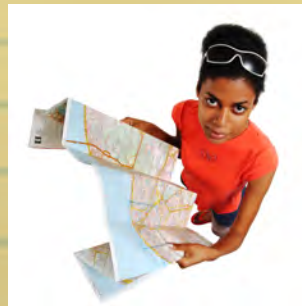
# Washing Whitewalls



- ✓ Quality Matters
- ✓ Premium paid for completing work
- ✓ WORK not a 4-letter word
- ✓ Details
- ✓ Rewards

# Which Way A River Flows

- ✓ Wilderness Press interview
- ✓ Right answer, wrong thinking



# How I Learned to Love White Collar Work

- ✓ Boom
- ✓ Running on Empty (Fill 'er Up!)
- ✓ Loaded for scare
- ✓ EACO
- ✓ [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/ARTICLES/HardLuckAsAHardHat.htm](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/ARTICLES/HardLuckAsAHardHat.htm)



# Chinese Wetting Banquet

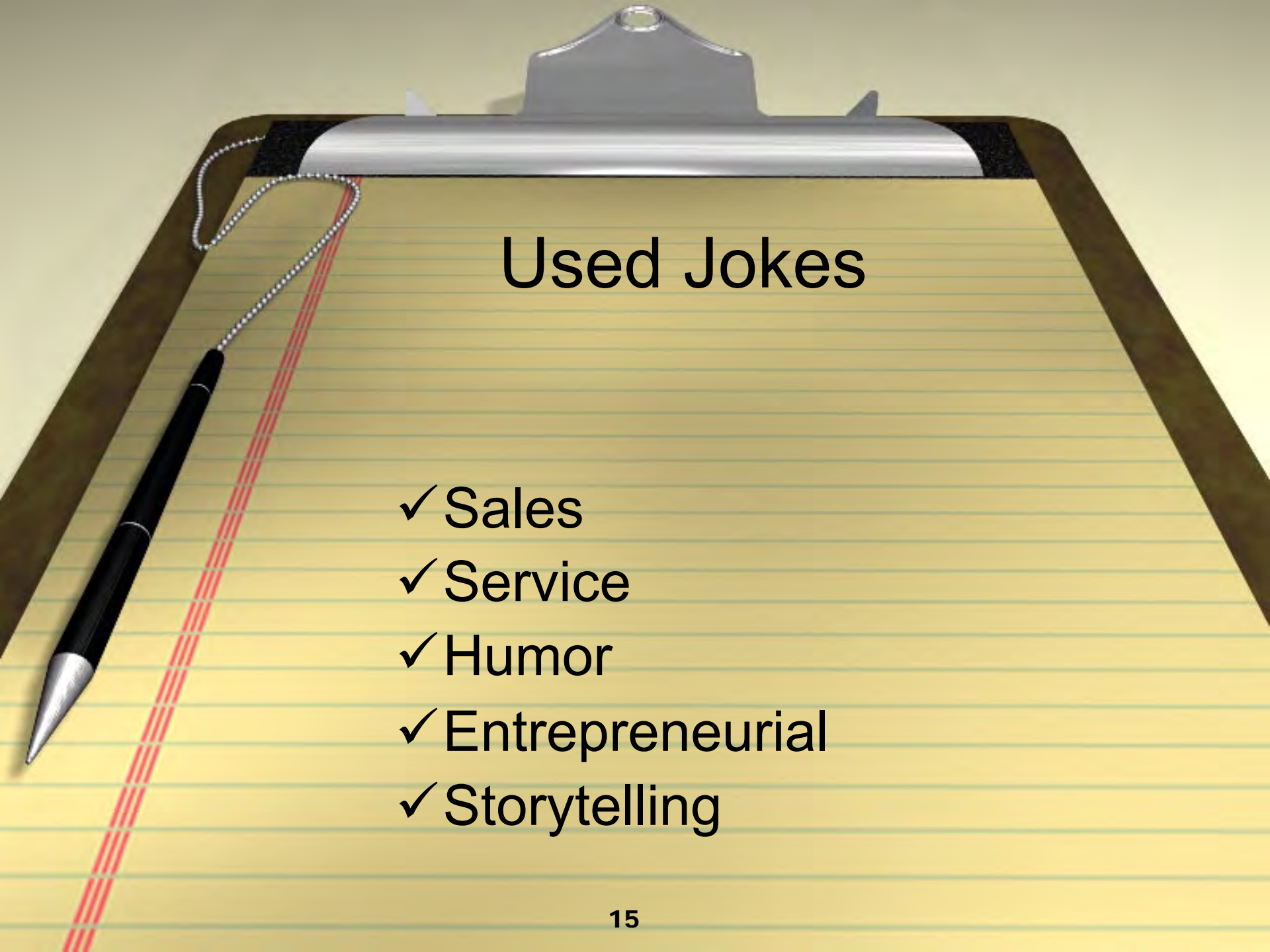


- ✓ Customer Service: Too Much
- ✓ Acquit self for mistake
- ✓ Team approach

# Oh Say: Can You Lead?

- ✓ Lead from where you sit,  
stand or speak
- ✓ And a child shall lead them!





# Used Jokes

- ✓ Sales
- ✓ Service
- ✓ Humor
- ✓ Entrepreneurial
- ✓ Storytelling

# Selling Lemonade During 60's Riots

- ✓ Timing
- ✓ Adapt
- ✓ Diversify







# The New Hire: IT Manager

- ✓ Speak first, listen second
- ✓ Shoot self in foot
- ✓ Alienate others
- ✓ Shoot first...
- ✓ Lose credibility

# To Be or The Bee?

- ✓ Confessions of a beginning mediator
- ✓ Mt. Shasta





# A Blind Date with Destiny

✓ Date - speech - paid -  
videotaped - pro speaking

# A Tale of Two Elections

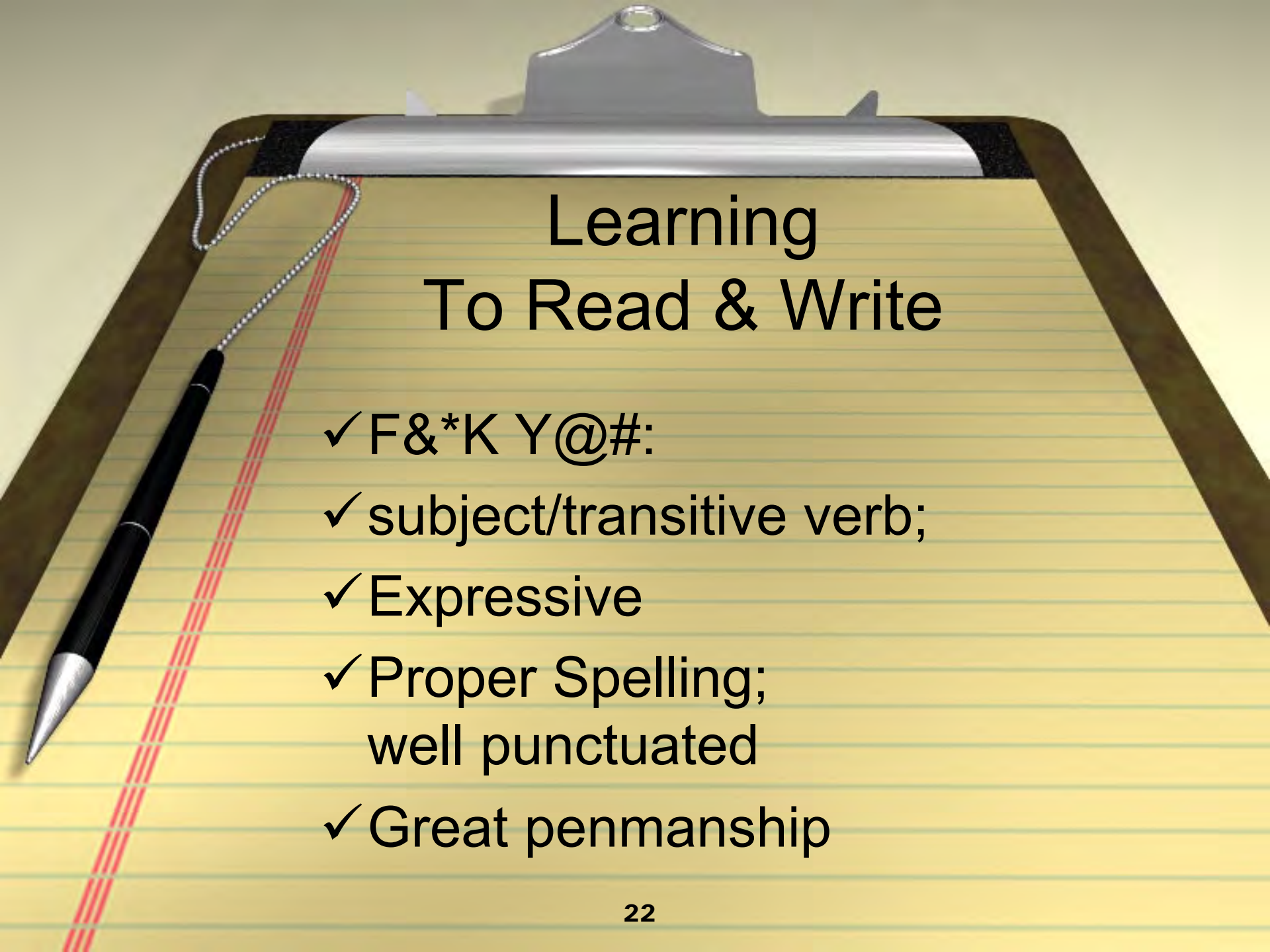
- ✓ Coaching by phone
- ✓ Helping a father out
- ✓ Civic Pride
- ✓ Elections
- ✓ Arh-nold!
- ✓ Confidence



# Coming Out On Top Down Under!

- ✓ Sportsmanship
- ✓ Gamesmanship: hymns
- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Creativity
- ✓ Keeping one's cool
- ✓ Rematch
- ✓ Lions beat the Christians





# Learning To Read & Write

- ✓ F&\*K Y@#:
- ✓ subject/transitive verb;
- ✓ Expressive
- ✓ Proper Spelling;  
well punctuated
- ✓ Great penmanship

# Winning 5,000 Bucks @ Bobbie McGee's

Page 23

- ✓ Don't count your chickens before they're hatched
- ✓ Listen closely

