Find The Funny: Comedy Archetypes Funsheet

Comedic characters are built on archetypes. While there are many archetypes in comedy, below are the most commonly used archetypes in today's comedic scripts.

Use them to help you identify the archetypes of all the character's in your audition scenes, especially your character. Use this knowledge to create a powerful audition in alignment with the writer's intention.

The Straight Man/Woman - Intelligent, responsible, and grounded. Sometimes considered the logical "sane" one. This character is often central protagonist, or pillar of the group. A large portion of the comedy comes from his/her reactions to the situation or other characters. Uses sarcasm as a shield.

Examples: Marge on *The Simpsons*, Leonard on *Big Bang Theory*, Michael Bluth on *Arrested Development*.

The Bitch/Jerk - Mean, clever, and condescending. They think they know better than everyone else, and therefore have the right to do whatever they want. They use sarcasm as a weapon to insult and put down others. They have little patience and usually don't feel the need to apologize.

Examples: Red on *That 70's Show*, Sue Sylvester on *Glee*, Jack on *30 Rock*

The Casanova/The Player - This character lives in pursuit of just one thing: sex with no strings attached. They're fun, bold, and sexually charged, but sometimes lack substance. Charming & seductive. Key characteristics include: swagger, confidence, and killer good looks.

Examples: Samantha on *Sex & The City*, Joey on *Friends*, Charlie on *Two And A Half Men*

The Wisecracker - Witty, observant, and sarcastic. This character that delivers the most one-liners and uses humor to shield their emotions. His/her role is to poke fun at other characters and bring comedic relief in serious situations.

Examples: Chandler on *Friends*, Hyde on *That 70's Show*, Sophia on *The Golden Girls*

The Dork - The dork/nerd is *usually** the smartest of the bunch and tries to distance himself from the goofiness of the other characters. Insecure, awkward, and nervous, they do better with computers or books than people. Tend to have poor social skills, especially romantically.

*Doesn't have to be smart - can just be socially awkward OR have strange interests.

Examples: Alex Dunphy on *Modern Family*, Ross Gellar on *Friends*, Burski on *Undateable*

The Stick - Controlling, worried, and a stickler for the rules. A "stick in the mud" so to speak. The humor from The Stick generally results from his/her dismay or outright horror at the antics of the others, and s/he may frequently insist (usually to no avail) that everyone should adhere to his/her rules or standards. The stick is often OCD, intelligent, perfectionist, and rigid.

Examples: Monica on *Friends*, Jane on *Happy Endings*, Sheldon on *Big Bang Theory*

The Airhead - Oblivious, friendly, and gullible. The airhead is not necessarily dumb, but their naivete lends itself to a childlike quality and/or understanding of the world.
They're often sincere, have a sunny disposition, and sarcasm is lost on them.

Examples: Joey on *Friends*, Kelso on *That 70's Show*, Rose on *The Golden Girls* (Betty White)

The Eccentric - In their own universe (sometimes literally). Far from spacey, this character is hyper-connected to the world, invested, and curious. However, while their logic makes sense in their own head, it seems illogical to everyone around them.
They are unpredictable, and are the wildcard in the cast.

Examples: Kramer on *Seinfeld*, Phoebe on *Friends*, Jess on *New Girl*.

The Lovable Loser - There are two types for this character: The one that is optimistic in a childlike way, and the one that has an awareness of their loser status.

Both of these types act in the same way - they are dreamers, chasing after something they can't have, but that never stops them from trying. The lovable loser has an endless capacity to screw things up, which is only matched by his/her determination to try again.

Examples: Lucy on *I Love Lucy*, Peter Griffin on *Family Guy*, George Costanza on *Seinfeld*

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Variation of the Lovable Loser Archetype:

- **The Goofball** - When a lovable loser wins... half the time. They always try to do things the "fun" way even when they know better. A charming and hopeful jokesters with a Peter Pan complex. **Example:** Jake Peralta on *Brooklyn 99*

Important character trait that can enhance any archetype (but isn't a stand-alone archetype):

- **Neurotic** - Can enhance any character to create comic conflict. Almost every character will have a scene or episode where they become neurotic about something. Examples: George Costanza is a Neurotic Loveable Loser. Sheldon Cooper is a Neurotic Stick. Chandler Bing is a Neurotic Wisecracker.