HOW TO MAKE MONEY BY MAGIC

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A COMPLETE COURSE
IN SIMPLE BUT STUNNING MAGIC

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Welcome to Module 6. Now that you have made good progress, we will be focusing on a specific and very popular genre of magic - performing magic for children.

By the way, we acknowledge that there are some people reading this that will have no desire to entertain kids whatsoever. However, this is no reason to 'switch-off', because for one thing, at some point outside of your 'adult' show you will have to perform for kids whether you like it or not (they are unavoidable at times).

Let's give you a living example of that. When Paul first moved from being an amateur into the semi-professional world, he only got his first summer season in the theatre because he told the management that he was able to do a children's show in the afternoon. In Britain, when it rains, there is not a lot to do in a seaside resort! That's when 'Uncle Paul's' magic show was announced up and down the seafront, and as we said, it enabled him to get the main gig in the theatre for the night time shows.

The years go by, and as you know, Paul became a major star on TV and in the theatres. On one occasion, a member of the Royal family asked him to entertain at their children's party! What would you have said? By that time, Paul hadn't performed a children's party show for some twenty years! That didn't stop him however, and it astonished Paul how subsequently, many individuals in the upper society, *and* high profile businessmen in the City of London became aware of Paul's Royal connection, without him ever publicising the fact.

Remember that your livelihood will soon depend upon your income from magic, if it isn't already. If you refuse to consider performing at children's parties you have to remember that you are turning away many thousands of pounds/dollars of income during any given year. Children's parties have a huge advantage over every other kind of magic in that they happen *during the day*, enabling you to still take other bookings for evening shows.

To be frank, if you don't consider children's magic to be a great earning opportunity, you are out of touch! As we've already seen in the last module, there are countless marketing opportunities for you to exploit this market. With that in mind, let's get down to business...

Love them or loathe them, we were all kids at one time, and if you can remember back to your childhood you may remember the first time you were shown a 'magic trick'. Maybe it was an impromptu effect by a friend of the family, or perhaps it was at a party.

Funnily enough, even now I still remember *my* first encounter with a magician. It was at a children's party, there were about 20 other kids there, and even now I still remember some of the tricks the magician performed. The change bag was in there, as was a 'hippity hop' rabbits style routine, even some balloon animals.

Admittedly, the magician was not the most polished performer, but that didn't matter to me, I had a great time.

Why Perform Magic for Kids?

A good question, why would you want to perform magic for kids? Isn't it asking for trouble, because as the old show business adage says: 'never work





Interestingly, there is no doubt that kids' shows are the most widely performed kind of magic out of every genre there is. So, as we've said, the sheer demand for your services is a very good reason to consider it. Incidentally, you will have no problem booking these types of shows using the methods we've already discussed, to which we will add some more details later.

Another good reason for moving into this field would be if you naturally like kids. To see the sheer delight on their faces, their smiles and giggles, can be a fantastic motivation, and gives a sense of fulfilment to a magician (not to mention some extra cash in the bank account).

Also, by considering the contrasts between kids' shows and their adult counterparts, many of the principles contained in this module will help you have a better understanding of what adults like to see in a magic show.

Also in this module, we are bringing to your attention the fact that your *existing* conception of a children's show in someone's house, with no adults present to control the crowd does exist, BUT, it is **NOT** the *only* kind of children's show, and it's not necessarily the most lucrative. We will be reviewing other ways that are *far easier and more lucrative*.

From what we've discussed already in the modules related to marketing yourself and your business, you should have realised that you need to gradually build up experience performing for children. Let's explain what we mean by this.

You may start by performing for your own children, or children in your close circle of friends. Then you might widen out a bit further by performing at kids parties in their private homes.

You might think that there is not much else you can do with children's shows, but there are plenty more opportunities. Once you have learnt the art of entertaining children, you might want to head towards the creation of themed shows in community centres, based on a particular subject or around a character. It is even possible to get a license to use a nationally known character from a cartoon or TV programme. You may even want to create your own character.

You could also offer your service for corporate funded children's events, where companies arrange parties for the children of their employees.

The next step would probably be to perform at local authority arranged public events, fetes, and so on. In some localities there is also a massive Bar Mitzvah market.

Finally, themed school shows can be a very lucrative way of making money from performing for kids as we have already seen in the last module.

Pros and Cons of Performing for Kids

It's true to say that children can be some of the most appreciative audiences, but they can also be some of the most difficult to handle.

We often hear magicians lamenting about terrible experiences they have had during kids shows, and that's sad to hear, but there is no doubt that one of the keys to success in this field is **control**. If you can control the kids *correctly* from the first moment you meet them, you really are half way there. Proper control at the *outset* means that they will normally behave for the duration of the show. More about that in a moment...



(Or they they think they do - stay in control - it's crucial to your success!

So why do some magicians struggle to cope with kids? Usually, there are a number of reasons. Firstly, they don't lay the groundwork before they arrive – they don't state what they need, they don't find out the average ages of the children, and so on.

Secondly, from the moment of their arrival when they meet the parents, they are not positive in their attitude. This does not mean being demanding or conceited, but simply a positive, confident attitude.

Thirdly, they have not taken the trouble to be smart and clean, both in themselves and in the props they are going to use, which should also be suitable and attractive to all ages. If you find that last comment a bit strange, what we mean is that it is no good having items on your performance area if the parents don't understand them, and vice versa.

To be a children's entertainer is a job, and you need to pay as much care and attention to it as if you were the CEO of a major company. Fail in any of the areas we have just stated above, and you WILL be in trouble.

If we were to sum up the main factor to dwell on when preparing and presenting a kids show it would be this:

Have a positive, quietly confident attitude.

Throughout everything that happens, you must be the nice guy! Remember too, as with all magic, the content of your show is nowhere near as important as you are. It's YOU that counts.

Lets now consider: how are children different to adults?

Children often have a short attention span, they tend to fidget and like to shout out when they feel like it. They will also sometimes run up and grab your props if they get the opportunity.



A sample of what you are competing against!

Added to that, they now have so many high-tech distractions in their lives such as video games, the Internet, DVD movies etc, that only a well prepared and structured show, tailored to their age group will capture their interest. Anything else and it's an uphill struggle.

You'll be pleased to know that you are going to discover how to perform for kids in a way that works every time. You'll be 100% in control, you'll get lots of repeat bookings, and even more referrals. Does that sound good? Great! Let's now examine the main elements to include in every kids show you perform...

Control from the Start

Kids are clever. They naturally test the boundaries or limits to see how far they can go. If Dad says 'no' to something they want, what do they normally do? Go to mum, and ask her instead!

However, once parents are wise to this ploy, they normally tell the child up front, not to bother asking the other parent in such situations, because they will find they get the same answer from both parents. This illustrates how important it is to gain the upper hand in controlling children in your shows.



So you think you can control them do you?

If they sense you are a walkover or that they can get away with misbehaving, they *will* jump on the opportunity!

How can you overcome this potential problem? Firstly, ensure you are setup and ready *before* the kids come into the room. Make a point of telling the adult that booked you that you *must* be able to set-up without distraction.

Yes, the children should be kept away until you are ready. Why is this important? Well, the last thing you want is for children to be distracting you, handling props, or asking questions before you are ready, no matter how well behaved or interested they might be.

Also, in your original agreement you should INSIST that at least two adults are in the room with you at all times, and more if the audience is larger. This is for three reasons:

- 1. Some children might need to use the toilet.
- 2. For disciplinary purposes.
- 3. For legal purposes, as sadly we live in an age where litigation can leap upon you at the drop of the hat, and parents will usually prefer to believe the child's story rather than yours.

Now, when the kids enter the room, you are ready to control them straight away. It is usually best to start somewhat strictly with them, to 'lay the ground rules,' and then get friendly and fun as you commence the show. This sets the boundaries, so that the kids know they can't mess around or spoil the enjoyment of the show for other children.

Before the children enter the room, try placing a piece of rope in front of the area where you are going to perform. As soon as the children enter the room, be happy and positive, greeting them and welcoming them, and telling them exactly where to seat. If they protest about where to sit, be firm. In fact, don't stop talking, they won't have a gap to interject an argument!

Note that our advice to be 'strict' in this context is not to be interpreted as 'unkind.' You can be, and should be, **firm but kind** at the same time.

I remember a school teacher who I found quite intimidating on his first lesson with us. He had a commanding voice, and spoke with authority about what he expected in terms of our behaviour. Everyone immediately knew where they stood, that he wouldn't tolerate bad language, excuses for late homework, and so on. Yet interestingly, that class was one of the most enjoyable because the teacher had a good balance. He had a lot of fun with us, joking and being fun where possible and being serious where necessary. And all the time, we knew what the limits were because he had clearly told us at the start. I'm sure all schoolteachers can relate to the importance of not being seen to be a 'walkover.'

Applying this example to your children's' shows, it's always helpful to start by clearly directing the kids as to what you expect of them. As they enter the room, say hello to them, and then direct them to sit quietly in rows, with their legs crossed.

"My name is Paul, and I must first tell you something very important. Down here is a rope, and if anyone crosses the rope, the show will have to stop. Does everyone understand that?"

As you commence, it's a good idea to let the children know that you will need volunteers for various parts of the show, but that you will only select those who are sitting quietly with their legs crossed.

Remember, kids are likely to be excited about the show, and naturally want to talk loudly, race around the room and so on, so it's critical to get this pre-show control established quickly.

During the show, small disturbances can generally be ignored, but don't be afraid to tell a child firmly, "No! Please don't do that!" if they are misbehaving or spoiling the show for other children. They will usually accept your authority. Also, don't be afraid to stop the show (yes, literally) if someone is misbehaving.



If only they were all like this!

Telling them that you can't continue the show until they sit quietly with their legs crossed is another effective technique. You could say, "Oh dear, I can hear people talking, so we'll have to wait until it stops...... (pause) Okay, let's carry on again..."

Probably the best way to prevent minor interruptions is to not allow the children time to create them or even think about doing so. Your show should go at quite a pace and be so full of interest and curiosity that the children's imagination is totally taken up with what you are saying and doing. Get them engrossed!

Generally, you obviously need the kids to listen and pay attention, but when you want them to go wild and crazy, you can simply invite that response directly, for example: "When you see the yellow handkerchief appear again, I want you all to shout out 'There it is' as loud as you can!" When you want them to stop, you go back to asking them to be quiet again. Do you get the point about how control starts from correct 'conditioning' right from the outset?

The Warm Up

Tied in with the need to gain control at the outset is the need to warm-up the audience. Opinions vary as to what is the best way of introducing your show, but the most successful kids performers all agree that some kind of warm up is essential.

This is one area where you will have to find your own style. Some magicians play music that gets kids cheering and clapping, with a voiceover on the soundtrack that introduces the magician on stage.

Another approach is to simply walk on, take a little bow, and introduce yourself using visual and spoken comedy as discussed elsewhere. The combination of seeing a funny looking magician, who says funny things, is another great way to break the ice.

You might like to introduce yourself by saying 'Hello everybody, my name is, what's yours? This of course causes everyone to shout out their names all at once, which can be quite funny when the kids realise what you have done. Remembering this is the first thing in your show, you must take control and immediately calm them, and move on. You don't want a riot.

However you choose to introduce yourself, remember to smile as widely as you can, for as long as you can! This simple act alone goes a long way towards attracting you towards the audience. We would also suggest that you refer to the audience as "young ladies and young gentleman." This is another simple way of endearing yourself to them. Kids know they are kids, but they still appreciate it when someone refers to them in more important sounding language. It's all psychology really isn't it? Never talk down to children.

Keep It Simple

This principle is obvious, but surprisingly overlooked by many. Think about this: why do kids ask so many questions? It's because they are learning. They are constantly lapping up knowledge like it's going out of fashion.

Kids are like knowledge vacuum cleaners, consuming every bit of information they come across. But, and it's a big but, their knowledge is still limited, in fact much more so than we sometimes realise, so you have to adapt accordingly.

Kids don't understand many things adults take for granted, so it follows that a kids show should only consist of tricks that have a simple concept that all the children will easily understand.

Let's take a few examples. A child knows from an early age that if they put an object in a bag, they can go back a few moments later and it will still be there. They know that if they pour out a glass of milk, the milk will transfer from the carton to the glass until the carton is empty or the glass is full. They know that objects don't generally change into something else (apart from perhaps the fad of those plastic 'transformer' toys)! And they know that if they drop an object from their hand it falls to the ground.

These are all basic facts, learnt from an early age.

It follows then that you need to perform magic for kids that uses these kinds of basic principles that you can be sure they will comprehend. Go back to basics and think about the simple laws of physics that are easily understood by all children. Try anything else and you could lose them, yes you'll lose the control that is so important.

There is an associated point about what kids understand. Whilst grasping the basic concepts mentioned above, it's also true that in the eyes of a child, many items *already* appear 'magical' to them as they don't know understand how they work.

To grasp the point, think of someone who was living 200 years ago suddenly being shown a telephone, television, fax machine, mobile-phone etc. Wouldn't those items appear 'magical' to them – an 'impossibility?' Of course they would!



To a young child, many items already seem 'magical'

Imagine trying to explain to a person from that time period that you could switch a box on in the corner of a room, and be instantly able to see and hear events happening many thousands of miles away, as they happen! It would appear to be miraculous to someone who is not familiar with a TV! The same is true of very young children. They see many items that adults view as 'ordinary,' as magical, because the items do seemingly incredible things.

What does this mean to you as the performer? You need to focus more on the *entertainment* rather than the magic. Let's expand on this important point in the next section, with some practical suggestions that will help you.

Focus on the Journey not the Destination

Over the years I have been fortunate to travel widely, particularly to the USA, and if you've travelled across the pond yourself, you'll know that it can be a long flight of about 11 hours if you go to or from the west coast of the States.



The long flight time used to irritate me to begin with, but then on subsequent trips, I started to reason that the flight was actually an ideal opportunity to relax without distractions, enjoy a book or movie, and to spend time thinking about some of the things I would do at the destination.

That change of focus for me proved to be a turning point with regard to my travel experiences. I soon enjoyed the journey as much as the destination. and I had a positive frame of mind when I arrived because I had enjoyed the journey.

The reason for telling you about that experience is because it ties in with a useful technique to help present a successful kids show.

What is the technique? Simply put, many magicians wrongly focus solely on the *culmination of a trick*, the moment when the 'magic' happens. Adults are usually impressed by that magical moment, but with kids **it's far less important**. For them, **it's the build-up that counts**, the 'journey', the part leading up to the culmination of an effect. Sure, kids do enjoy the moment the magic happens, but they appreciate a trick far more *when they have been entertained and have fun along the way*.

Just as I adapted my focus when travelling, enjoying the journey rather than focusing solely on the destination, you should adapt your focus so as not to neglect the 'journey' of each magic effect, that is the build up before the moment the magic' happens, which we might say is the 'destination'.

Think about it, what do you imagine children would prefer: having fun, shouting out loud, getting excited, and laughing, or just watching the few seconds at the conclusion of a trick when a magician does something they consider to be 'a bit out of the ordinary', something that doesn't fit with their knowledge learned so far? Hopefully you get the point. However, you can get the best of both worlds by *focusing on, and making the 'journey' enjoyable*. Do *that* bit right and the 'magical moment' will work for them anyway.

Understandably, you may think that this approach takes away from the skill of being a magician, making you more of an entertainer instead. Well, you shouldn't feel like that because it *does* requires skill to do it properly. And when it's all said and done, surely it's what is best for the kids' that counts! In fact, all magicians should be entertainers anyway!

So how do you focus on the 'journey', the part of the trick before the actual magic happens? There are numerous possibilities (we'll discuss some of these in a moment), but the main principle to keep in mind is to be entertaining. In essence, do what you like, but make it enjoyable to watch!

Specific Techniques for Entertaining Kids

Let's now look at two specific techniques that you can use to achieve the goals we have mentioned so far.

Participation

Children love to join in during a magic show, either directly or from their position in the audience. Generally, their desire to volunteer is much greater than with an adult audience.

Yes, if you ask for a volunteer in a children's show, almost every child's hand will shoot up in the air! So when you plan your show, think ahead about how you can include as much involvement from the children as possible.

Apart from the kids own desire to volunteer, there are other reasons why actively involving the kids is so important. Firstly, merely watching a show from a static position is not involving. Actually, it gets a bit tiresome after awhile, similar to watching the T.V. for hours on end. So that's one reason why participation is important.

The other main reason is that without participation, there can be an invisible 'barrier' between the magician and the children. The magician is on one side (the stage) and the kids are on the other (the audience).

However, as soon as the magician walks into the audience or invites a child up on stage, subconsciously the barrier is broken, and the kids feel more drawn to the magician. He suddenly becomes on the 'same level' as them as opposed to being separated.

So that's why it's important, now, how do we go about it?

A helpful tip to remember for audience participation is not to try and use helpers on your first trick. Why?

The reason is simple. We touched on this subject in an earlier module, but you have to remember that all audiences, whether young or old don't know you at the start of the show. It therefore takes a little time for them to form an opinion of you. So at the start of the show they will naturally be a little suspicious. Not in a bad way, but just in a natural way.

When you use the first few minutes of your show to build a rapport with the crowd, they quickly get to know you, like you, and trust you. Then, you will find volunteers more forthcoming, *and* more cooperative.

As a general guide to managing volunteers, whatever their age, you should always treat them kindly and with respect. They are helping you, never forget that! If a child is shy or wants to leave, let them do so, and show concern for them, perhaps giving them a little prize.

Never make a volunteer feel bad. And as another rule, always initiate a round of applause for any helper, both when they come up on stage, and when they go to sit down at the end, that's a simple courtesy sometimes overlooked.

So in what ways can audience participation be used once you are in to the main part of your show? Maybe you could invite a girl and a boy up to help you, and get the girls to cheer for the girl helper, and the boys cheering for the boy helper - that won't be too hard!

If a particular trick doesn't lend itself to using helpers from the audience, you may often still be able to involve them. For example, you could get them to repeat words after you such as "whenever I say 'what's my name', I want you to shout out as loud as you can: "Billy Bonkers, the magic man."

Another idea is to get the kids to repeat the magic word (whatever that might be) after you, many times throughout the show. If you do this, try and make the magic word(s) funny, anything that makes them laugh. Try variations of regular magic words like Abracadabra, and the more ridiculous sounding the better.

Something else that works well is to get the kids to imitate noises of objects, animals, or activities. They love, for example, making noises of animals, so if you do a trick with a story about pets, get the children to make appropriate noises of cats, dogs, birds, and so on. They will have so much fun for doing something so simple!

As an example you could say, "now my next trick is all about animals. Everyone make a noise like a dog... Everyone make a noise like a cat... Everyone make a noise like a cow... Everyone make a noise like a giraffe!" At that point the kids will go stone dead and give you a puzzled look, but it's very funny, and it amuses the parents greatly.

Another form of useful participation is to get the kids to perform a simple action such as waving their hands in the air, pointing at an object or prop, or performing some other unusual or funny gesture. If the trick lends itself to doing so, get them to pretend they are putting clothes on, washing up, brushing their teeth, or whatever fits in with the story you are telling with each effect. This kind of physical participation lets off some of their boundless energy, and again they feel much more involved in the show.

As an example of a useful combination of these two techniques, you could tell the children in advance that whenever they see a prop or assistant appear, or something changing colour etc, to shout out a phrase that you tell them, *and* perform some action like pointing at the object.

In fact, this idea can be milked for all it's worth, and kids never seem to tire of it especially if you as the magician play dumb and pretend that the kids are making it up. The more you defend yourself and claim that the kids are messing about with you, the more they will shout, wave their hands, and jump up and down. It's a lot of fun!

As a specific example of this, some magicians use a trick called 'The Blooming Bouquet' which takes advantage of this audience participation opportunity. We're not sure where the idea first came from, we think it might have been a kid's performer by the name of Trevor Lewis, but it revolves around a prop which resembles a bouquet of flowers, with just the stems showing.

You might tell the kids that you've recently taken up gardening, but when you take out the 'bouquet' to show them your prize flowers, someone has taken them, and you are left with just stems! You tell the kids that if they happen to see the flowers at anytime during the show, to shout out: "there they are" and point to wherever they are.



The blooming bouquet effect, which you can buy from most magic dealers, has a clever device built in to it that enables you to show or hide the flowers at your command. So every time you turn your back, look away and so on, you naturally make sure the flowers are

showing (some magicians tuck the bouquet under their arm with the flower end towards the audience and pretend they are looking in their case for the next trick).

As soon as the flowers appear, the kids scream and shout and have a ball, but of course as soon as you look or turn around to see what's happening, the flowers 'disappear'. You get the idea, it's a lovely effect, and if you are serious about entertaining kids we highly recommend it. It's also a great ice-breaker for the start of a show because it involves the audience from a distance, without having to bring a single member up on stage.

All in a Name

It's important to use the children's individual names wherever possible. It's been said that a persons name is their most important possession, and this applies equally to kids. Using their name when you call upon them in the audience or when helping you, encourages them to like you, and of course, it's very beneficial and desirable to have the children on your side.



Use name badges if possible

If for some reason you don't know a child's name, it should be the first thing you ask them. Then use it frequently, for example: "So James, I'd like you to hold this box between your hands, and James, whatever you do, don't drop it." You get the idea.

Incidentally, if the child's name is unusual or you can't hear it properly, you might initially have fun by deliberately mispronouncing it as a word that sounds similar, but ultimately you should ask the child to spell it for you so that you can get it right!

Obviously it's not practical to learn all the kids names beforehand, unless you are performing for friends and family, and a clever way of overcoming this problem is to hand out some stickers to the parents before-hand for them to write the name of their child on, and then to stick it on their child's clothes.

You may want to send some stickers with your booking confirmation for this purpose along with a little explanatory note, as follows:

Your address here

Customer address here

Date

Dear Mr and Mrs Smith,

Thank you for booking myself, 'Billy Bonkers the magician' for your child's party on April 12th 2003. Kids love the show, and they'll have lots of fun, laughter, and surprises throughout.

The stickers I have enclosed are for use as name tags to identify the children. I like to call individual children by their name, especially when they help out during the show, and I find that the kids are quite happy to wear the name tags which are very helpful.

If you are aware of all the children's names before-hand, perhaps you could write them out using a marker pen, or alternatively you could write and stick them on as each child arrives. I'll leave it to you to decide.

I would be grateful if the room you have chosen for the show could be kept clear whilst I setup. It does tend to spoil the surprise when children are present watching me setup the show! This should take no longer than 20 minutes, and I find many parents use this time to feed the children, and make sure they have used the bathroom before the show starts! Thank you for your cooperation in this matter, it's greatly appreciated, and it certainly goes towards making the event run smoothly.

I look forward to seeing you on April 12th, and I'm sure we'll all have a great time.

Yours sincerely,

Your name here.

Incidentally, these types of round stickers for the kid's names can be purchased inexpensively from office supply companies such as Staples, Viking Direct, or from your local stationery store. You could even make them.

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As an extension of the sticker idea, we know of some magicians who provide colour coded stickers in order to 'pre-categorise' children before the show. You might like to try this too, so that when the kids enter the room, you can ask for all the children wearing *blue* stickers to sit on one side, and for those wearing *red* to sit on the other side. This helps to control them effectively because they have to focus on a specific task. It can also be beneficial to use the coloured group distinctions during the show. You could call for 'all the reds' to cheer, followed by 'all the blues' as a little 'warm-up' competition. Why not try it and see if it works for you.



Whilst we're on the subject of stickers, another nice idea is to buy or make some stickers to give to kids who come up to assist you during the show. A simple phrase such as 'Magicians Helper' or 'I was a Magicians Assistant' sounds simple but kids love it. They seem proud to wear this kind of little sticker as it makes them feel important. In fact, it's

a very cheap way of acknowledging their help, and if you don't have the means to make them, many magic stores stock these kinds of stickers.

As a little marketing tip, you may want to put your phone number and website address on them too!

We have also seen some magicians who give away mini magic wands to helpers. These are about 4 inches in length, slightly thinner than a pencil, and are another great item to present to a helper as a little reward.

You could also incorporate the mini magic wand into the trick they are helping with, so that the youngster is given the mini-wand early on in the trick. Then, when they go back to their seat you can let them keep the wand as a thank-you. It's a simple gift, but it will make a lasting impression on the youngster. Who knows, it might be their show you are booked for next time!

Now, whilst we are on the subject of using volunteers, what about using adults who are in the audience? Is this a good idea or a bad idea?

Using Adult Volunteers in a Kids Show

There are plus and minus points to using adults as helpers in a kids show. Other adults as well as the kids usually *like* to see an adult volunteer involved, especially if it's a teacher or someone else in authority who they know very well. They tend to see that person as 'more human' in the context of the magic show if they normally only see them as a teacher in the classroom.

Caution is needed however, so as not to embarrass the adult or diminish their authority in front of the children. Additionally, not all adults will feel comfortable about being asked to participate, so it's far better to ask for someone *in advance of the show*, telling them exactly what they will be doing to put them at ease. In fact, get several individuals lined up as you can bet that the moment your one pre-selected adult is needed, they will be caring for a sick child, helping in the kitchen or be otherwise occupied. So ask several people, and assure them that you won't embarrass them in any way.

Dealing with Troublemakers

As the saying goes, 'even the best laid plans...' Yes, you will always come across an occasional youngster who is intent on being uncooperative or disruptive. Fortunately, there is an easy way to deal with such ones.

If a child is disturbing the show, you should simply stop what you are doing, and tell them firmly that you cannot continue with the show until everyone is quiet and sitting calmly. Just wait a moment expectantly, and they will normally do as instructed. If they are really persistent however, you may have to ask one of the parents kindly to take the child outside the room. They should understand why, and cooperate. Again, don't hesitate to stop the show until the matter has been dealt with.

However, if an uncooperative child is being used as a helper on stage, a somewhat different technique is needed. If the routine is almost finished, it's usually best to continue till the end and send the child back to their seat at that time.

If that's not possible because they are spoiling the trick for everyone else, it is preferable to send the child back to their seat as soon as possible.

Please note however, that this still *must be done kindly*. Whatever you do, don't criticize the child, however stupid they may have been. Simply thank them for their help, and ask them to return to their seat, prompting applause where possible. The last thing you want is for the

magician to be viewed as the bad guy!

Don't worry unduly about this kind of occasional occurrence. Remember, audiences are on your side, and they will be sympathetic to the way you deal with any troublemaker, be it adult or child.

As a final thought on participation, try not to neglect minority members of the audience, such as individuals with disabilities etc. It's quite possible that in your audience there might be someone in a wheelchair for example, and it would likely mean the world to

example, and it would likely mean the world to them to be included, even in a simple way.



Look out for opportunities to include audience members with disabilities, as they are often overlooked

Try and consider some simple questions that you could use for such ones, such as "Can I ask the young lady in the wheelchair to choose a colour from these four handkerchiefs I'm holding. Which one is your choice...red, yellow, green or blue?" By doing something like that, you have shown consideration for, and involved an audience member without them having to come up on stage.

Now, another technique that you can use effectively to perform a great kids show is:

Make them Laugh

Children love to laugh, and it really is a delight to see them excited and giggling! But remember that children have a very different sense of humour so you have to try and get tuned in to what makes them laugh.

As a general rule, *visual comedy* tends to work best, however there are some very effective spoken comedy ideas that kids enjoy too. Let's explore a few of these various chuckle inducing ideas...

One thing that never seems to fail in reducing kids to hysterics is when the magician appears to hurt himself! Maybe he trips up, traps his fingers in the top of a box, falls over a prop, has a prop bash him on the nose, or something else along those lines.

One of the USA's foremost children's entertainers who performs under the stage name 'Silly Billy' came up with a great routine using an inflatable magic wand. You may have seen other inflatable 'props' such as bananas, hammers etc but the great thing about this wand is that it is large enough to look funny on it's own anyway, plus it's well known as a standard magicians prop.

Silly Billy (a.k.a. David Kaye) has a hilarious routine that revolves around this prop – it is simple but incredibly funny, and the inflatable wands are highly recommended.

A young volunteer is invited on stage to help with a trick, and a tiny wand is made to transform into a huge inflatable wand, which naturally ends up being bashed over the head of the magician by the child! Adding to the humorous situation, the magician then handles the wand personally, which acts as if it has a life of it's own, attacking the magician!

It's very difficult to describe this routine without seeing it, but it is a great example of a simple prop being used for great comedy magic. You can obtain these inflatable wands from many magic dealers, and they are not expensive. Again, for your convenience they are available for purchase on the internet at *The Magic Store*: www.the-magic-store.com

Why not try something similar yourself, perhaps asking a child helper to hold the wand, and whilst focusing on a prop, use the classic line "when I nod my head you hit it!" See what happens, they just can't resist that kind of invitation!

Whist we're on the subject of the hilarity of watching an entertainer pretending to be hurt, some years ago I saw the British entertainer Brian Conley perform one of his solo shows. He's not known as a magician, but he does a bit of everything in his act including singing, impressions, comedy, magic, and last but not least....fire eating!

This last part of his show was hilarious as he nervously pretended to 'attempt for the first time' a dramatic feat of fire eating. However, in every performance he would hold the flaming torch under his arm in preparation for the event, then 'accidentally' burn his arm-pit with the naked flames! It was extremely funny to watch, and an excellent example of this type of comedy.



Brian Conley

Something else that always makes kids laugh is when the magician is clumsy, and even more so when he makes the same mistakes over and over again. For some reason, in children's eyes that makes it even funnier!

So make a point of dropping props, and ensure things don't *always* go right (although you are still in control). Act disappointed when something goes wrong, and seem slightly offended when the kids laugh. That will all add to the effect!



Don't forget that you can also use many magic props for a comedy effect. Some magic props are particularly suited to children's

shows. We already mentioned the jumbo inflatable wand, and how funny that can be, but another obvious choice is the breakaway wand. If you are not familiar with it, it looks like a normal magic wand except when you hand it to your young helper, it falls into pieces, thus the name, 'breakaway wand.' It can be immediately 'reset' when you take it back from the child, so you can repeat the same effect again and again, and act really frustrated that the young helper keeps breaking your props!

By the way, a great use of the breakaway wand is to claim that you are giving the helper a very special wand, the one that was handed down from your father, and his father, and his fathers father, and his fathers father father, and....well you get the point. Claim it's a priceless antique wand that has never let you down, but it needs looking after as it's a bit fragile. Then hand the breakaway wand over, and of course it looks hilarious as it falls apart in the hand of the young volunteer!

Even non-magic related items too can be used for a funny effect. Have you seen those 'snake cans' which look like a regular can of nuts, or some other tin or jar, but when you open the lid, several spring 'snakes' jump out of the can and land all over the floor? You can have the kids in



hysterics watching you trying to put one snake back in the can, then picking up another, only for the first one to jump right out of the can again!

Some of these ideas might not sound that funny to read, but trust us, they are guaranteed to raise a lot of laughs with both kids and adults.

Don't forget the many possibilities for dressing in a funny manner, such as using oversized or undersized clothes and accessories. You don't necessarily have to look like a clown unless you want to, but even clown like elements can be very effective, such as large floppy shoes, an obvious looking facial disguise, funny glasses, bright coloured clothes and so on.

If kids only have to look at you to laugh, you have an enormous head start because by doing so, they are immediately subconsciously being conditioned to expect comedy and laughter in the show.

Sometimes one or two items are all that are needed for an obvious comic effect. How about walking around with a coat hanger still on the back of your jacket which you are wearing? Or maybe leave a large price tag trailing from a sleeve.

How about wearing some silly glasses or bright colours of clothes that obviously clash? Use your imagination with this, and try and come up with some comedy dress ideas that suit your personality.

Comedy With Words

We mentioned that you can also be funny in what you say, and when you keep it simple, this too can achieve great reactions from the kids.

For example, try wrongly pronouncing words deliberately so that the kids shout out the proper pronunciation. They love doing this, it makes them feel so good correcting an adult on something so 'obvious.' You could say "abracadoobry" for the magic word instead of "abracadabra" for example. Or you could name items incorrectly such as calling a handkerchief a can of soup. Insist that it's a can of soup and see how quickly the kids correct you!

This technique can also work the other way around so that when the kids shout out something, the magician pretends to mishear and then mispronounce the word.

A classic is to invite the kids to shout out a magic word they know, and when they shout 'Abracadabra', pretend they have said 'have a banana!' Pretend that you just can't believe they said 'have a banana' as the magic words, as it's so silly, and then correct them, or ask if anyone else knows any sensible magic words!

If the kids have the name tags on that we referred to earlier, you can say, "What's your name Mary?", "What's your name James?"

Another fun comedy technique is to start a sentence with a phrase that the kids think they know the conclusion to, and change it at the last moment.

For example, "I need a volunteer, so put your hands up if......you've never been told off by your mum and dad before." Or you could try, "I'd like you to put your hands up high in the air......if you're from China!"

You'll find in the examples just mentioned that lots of hands shoot up as soon as you start to say 'put your hands up if.....!' It's a clever technique that is great fun, and it works really well.

Another example might be something like: "As you can see, I'm holding an egg here, and you all know where eggs come from, don't you?" The kids shout out 'Chickens'. You say, "No! – Sainsbury's!" You get the idea.



Another example of comedy in what you say is in responding to what a child volunteer says. You will quickly learn how kids react to certain situations and questions, and this can be used to great effect. For example, "How old are you Peter?"

He replies, "Six."

"You're sick, oh we better see if we can find a doctor for you!"

The child says: "No, I'M SIX!"

"Oh, sorry, I thought you said you were sick."

Another popular question for kids that always produces a laugh is to ask them "Are you married? Have you got a girlfriend (or boyfriend)? Would you like one? I heard that one of the boys (girls) in the front row there really fancies you…" And so on. Kids find that kind of thing really funny.

Remember not to get too personal when you do this, always keep it light and funny, and move on if there is any sign that the child is overly sensitive. A crying child is not the best thing for your show!

Now, let's consider another important aspect of performing for kids that is often forgotten....

Words and Phrases for Kids

If you have ever been to America (or conversely if you have been an American visiting Britain), probably your first visit left you somewhat bemused



about various words and phrases that you heard. They might have sounded familiar, but the meanings weren't clear. For example, to a British person visiting the U.S., words such as trunk, sidewalk, faucet, freeway and soda sound somewhat familiar because they are English words, but they may not understand the meaning.



Interestingly, the same kind of divide exists with adults and kids. The vocabulary of children is far more limited than we realise, and a magician has to be careful not to use words that children do not understand. It would be like talking in a foreign language to them!

Let's list a few examples related to magic, and the alternatives you might use for kids...

Adult version — Kids version

Vanish = Disappear
Levitate = Float in the air

Transform = Change from one thing into another

Penetrate = Make one object go through another

Transpose = Make two objects change places.

Trunk = Box

You get the idea. As you can see, sometimes a single replacement word will not suffice, and a phrase is needed to explain what you are doing.

So try and get tuned into a child's vocabulary, it makes a huge difference when kids understand what you are talking about! Maybe the children have it right, and our language is too complicated.

The Importance of Ages

There are probably three broad groups of children that you are likely to be asked to entertain, divided by approximate age ranges. There are the 3 to 6 year olds. Then the 7 to 9 year olds, and finally the 10 to 15 year olds.

Each of these groups needs somewhat different handling in order to achieve the best show possible, but bear in mind that the following points are generalisations, and you will always find variations according to location, background, education etc.

These divisions also highlight the fact that it is preferable not to mix a wide spread of ages in a single show if possible. Because the age groups often need handling differently, a mixed audience means compromises have to be made. Ideally, try and ensure that just one age group is in the audience at a time.

Dealing with 3 to 6 year old Kids.



This youngest group are unique in that, to them, much of what they see around them seems magical already. Do you remember we touched on this point earlier? They see their parents put some food into a device in the kitchen, and a few minutes later they take it out cooked (microwave). They hear voices and music coming from a box with a long thin piece of metal sticking out the top (radio). They hold a piece of plastic to their ear and hear a voice from it (phone). Their lives are filled with 'magical' occurrences every day because they don't yet understand how things work.

Another important difference is that this age group needs a slower paced and shorter show. There is so much for their little minds to take in that you are in danger of swamping them, and consequently losing their attention. Also, they have a shorter attention span anyway, so your show generally needs to be shorter in length.

If the parents of these kids, or the organiser insists that you perform for a longer time than you would normally like, break the show up by doing different things between each trick. So, for example, after they are settled and after the first trick, you could ask the kids to stand up, stretch their arms in the air, and sit down. It's a physical exercise that helps prolong their attention span. You can get them to sing a little song, do a little dance to some music and so on. The other benefit to all this is that you extend the length of your show!

Kids this age are easily frightened, so you need to speak more slowly and deliberately, with no sudden dramatic productions or loud noises, such as bursting balloons. You'll scare them witless otherwise, and nobody appreciates a roomful of bawling 3 to 6 year olds! Do be careful as it is so easy to forget that you probably already have loud parts in your act. Note that it's not easy to be a clown character for this group either, as they are easily scared, and they don't understand what a clown is.

Try and get on the same level as the kids where possible, quite literally. If it's a small group, try and kneel down or crouch low whenever you can, especially when introducing volunteers. Paul sometimes sits on the floor with them! This psychological move down to their level works wonders for instilling confidence in them – you will no longer look like an imposing giant!

Also with little children, use visual comedy liberally. This kind of comedy will make them laugh more than anything else! Drop things, pronounce words wrongly, and pretend to get hurt! Then repeat the process! You have to be careful because children are not used to seeing adults act in such a way. As a guide, try not to be TOO silly, and at all times you should be the friendliest, nicest 'uncle' (or aunty) they have ever met.

Another notable difference with children in this age range is that they tend to believe whatever they are told.

They are continually discovering new concepts, and they rely on adults to guide them. It's important to recognise this because many kids' tricks rely on the young audience *questioning* what the magician has done.

For example, a magician might say that a bag is empty when it is not, or use a wrong word to describe an object - to provoke a reaction intentionally. Older kids love this and will shout out to contradict the magician because they *know* you are playing with them, but most under fives will just be puzzled or confused that what you said was not true.

Dealing with 7 to 9 year old Kids.

Kids in this age range are more aware of magic, and so can appreciate that when you perform a trick, it is a trick. However, with this knowledge of what magic is, some may think they know how a trick is done, even shouting out that they know, but the reality is that they rarely do know.

At this age range more than others the kids like to participate, so let them! Also, include lots of references to cool, 'in' things, like kids TV programs, pop stars, soap opera personalities and so on. When you show an understanding of these things the kids love it, and their opinion of you will soar. It's as if you've been accepted into their little world – you're not an outsider anymore!

Dealing with 10-14 year olds

This is perhaps the most difficult age range to perform for because they are not adults but tend to think they are! The attitude tends to be an aloof 'You can't fool me, Mr Magish!'

Your magic of course needs to be of an adult quality for this group.

A great way of handling the comment "I know how that's done" is to eliminate all possible explanations before they even have chance to make the comment. For example, "As you can see, there are no magnets, strings, wires, pulleys, or trapdoors in my hands." Say this kind of remark even if you do perform the magic with magnets, strings, or wires etc, because the youngsters will have nothing left to shout out!

Don't be intimidated by this age group. As we said, they are still young but like to think they are mature, and they really don't know how you do the magic, they just want to look good in front of their friends by *claiming* that they know. If the comment "I know how you do that" comes up directly, you could simply say "Okay, I'll do it a *different* way."

If you do get the full age range of kids all in the same room and you are aware of this before you go on, at the beginning of the show you can say, "hands up all those that are over 10 years old? Oh great! I'll need your help. I realise that you'll know how some of this is done, but as the mature members of the audience can you help me by being patient, and I'll put some special tricks in later in the show just for you guys, is that fair?" Keep your promise of course.

Remember the Parents!

On many occasions you will have adult parents, organisers and other adults in the audience of a kids show. Don't neglect these adults, in fact you should try and incorporate a separate line of humour in your tricks just for them if at all possible.

Disney has this idea down to a fine art in their animation movies. The primary audience is of course the children, but Disney knows all too well that it's the adults who get 'dragged along' to the cinema to take their kids! So they always include lots of jokes that go straight over the heads of the kids, but that adults will enjoy. Very clever, and you can do exactly the same with your kids magic shows with a little thought.

As a practical side point, discourage adults from sitting in *amongst* the kids during the show. There are two main reasons for this, firstly, the adults could easily inadvertently block the view of the other children behind, and secondly, the children might feel a bit stifled if adults are amongst them.

The kids need to feel relaxed, rather than feel that their every move is being watched by parents. You might need to tactfully suggest to the adults that you like to keep the front area just for kids, but that they are welcome to stay and watch from the back of the room. The kids will have a much better time when the adults are out of the way!

About Your Props

Despite the thought that some magicians offer, that magic is best when 'ordinary' props are used, the children's show is one area of theatre wherein strange and curious looking props give you an advantage. Bright colours work very well in this environment.

If you are the sort of performer that has quite a few tricks on display, it is best to cover each prop with it's own coloured cloth until you intend to use it.

You can even 'use' this in your act, saying for example, "I wonder what is under this one?" This serves a useful purpose that the children are not distracted by many different props on display, and they will also know when the show is nearly finished, when they see that all the props have been uncovered.

Where you do use an 'ordinary' item, it is helpful to refer to it as something *special*, for example, "this may *look* like a glass to you, and it *is* a glass, but it's actually a very *special*, *magical* glass. Let me show you what I mean..."

More than any other form of magic, remember that you will likely soon be performing for the same audiences, especially as you pick up residual and repeat bookings. You MUST take notes of what you performed and where. Some tricks will stand repeat viewings, some need to be forgotten for awhile before they are seen again.

You need a dedicated room or space in the house in which to keep your props. Each trick should have it's own box, clearly labelled on the outside so that you can pack your show container/box with the minimum of fuss and effort, knowing full well that you left in a 'ready to go' state.

Geoffrey Durham in the U.K. rents a unit in London that is dedicated to his magic business. He stores props there, rehearses there, and has a little office too. You may consider that unnecessary, but it would force you to be professional and treat your magic as a business, and that can't be a bad thing, so think seriously about what you can do along these lines. Is there an area that you can use that is solely for your magic business? It's not essential, but it would help you focus on your business more seriously.

As a final tip about props and your choice of effects, if you are going to do 'sucker' type effects where you lead the children down a certain route, make sure these effects are well separated from each other in the show. Doing sucker tricks one after the other will not leave the audience with a good impression of you, yet many magicians do just that!

Practical Advice about Location

There are some practical considerations to bear in mind, according to whether the show is to be presented outside or inside. Almost always, an inside venue is preferable as you can control more of the variables.

Inside Shows

1. Use the narrow side of the room for your stage. A long, narrow audience is better than a wide but short arrangement. Why? The wider the audience are around you, the more chance they have of picking up on the methods you use. Keep it narrow if you can. The other reason is that when you talk to one side of a wide audience, the other side can feel neglected.

- 2. Don't setup in front of a window because the reflection may cause the audience to see the rear of the apparatus or handling of a prop, thus potentially exposing the secret. If you must be by a window, close the curtains to solve the reflection problem, and it will probably provide a superior and less distracting background anyway.
- 3. If possible, don't setup your performing area next to or near the entrance to the room because late comers will have to enter through that doorway, and they will cause a distraction. It's preferable to have them come in at the opposite end of the room at the rear of the audience.
- 4. Agree with the organiser beforehand to make a rule that no food or drink should be taken into the show area. Bear in mind the simple equation: kids + food/drink = a mess! Say no more.
- 5. Make sure that the organisers do not hand out any whistles, bazookas, party poppers or balloons until after the show. You will have more than enough to contend with without fighting to be heard above the noise these toys create.

Outside Shows

- Plan ahead for wind, rain, noise, and distractions as much as you can.
 For example, eliminate tricks with items that could get blown over or would be easily damaged by rain. There are other distractions that you can't do much about, such as aircraft flying overhead, trains etc.
 Don't try and talk over the top of them, just wait till they pass.
- 2. As an extension of point 1, you may need a P.A. (public address) system to make yourself heard above noise and distractions. If you seldom perform outside shows it would be best to hire a P.A. system from an audio-visual company. Don't forget you will need power for it too, either a long extension lead from inside or a small generator.

3. If the show is part of a larger event such as a fair, festival etc, speak to the organisers well in advance about the specific location. Tell them it is essential you are away from other noisy activities like a live band, or that if that's not possible, ensure that the performances are scheduled not to clash. Also ensure that the location for the show is not by a main pedestrian route, as the continual flow of people walking past will be an annoying distraction to everyone in the audience.

All of these tips of course apply to 'standard' children's performances. For outside venues, where organisers sometimes want you to do shorter shows throughout the day, it is perfectly possible to design some illusions especially for children that can be performed without you saying anything. You can set it to music, and your physical actions enhance the entertainment.

It might seem an unnecessary expense to go to this trouble, but there are not many people doing it, and when you are performing in schools and larger venues, you will still be able to use these illusions effectively.

How to Get More Kids Shows than All Your Competitors Put Together

We have already covered many of the marketing techniques connected with offering kids shows in the last module, including specific guidance about how to market themed shows. It's worth emphasising however that one of the most under exploited areas in the kids show market seems to be performing themed and educational shows at schools.

There is a huge untapped market for you in this field of magic. Let's delve into this area a little more and show you how to offer this kind of show.

For many years of course, magicians have been hired by schools for magic shows, purely for entertainment, no more, no less.

However, there is increasing pressure on school authorities to ensure that special events such as hiring a magican have a lesson incorporated in them, a teaching point or two that 'justifies' having the event. What does this mean to you? Surely, it makes sense to promote your services specifically with that in mind.

Within a reasonable driving distance of where you live (let's say up to two hours away), there are likely to be hundreds of schools, so there is a huge potential market on your doorstep waiting to be tapped. Just as you have learnt to theme a regular show, the same technique can be applied for school shows.

For example, are there any specific issues you know of that are likely to be of concern to teachers and parents in your area of the country? For example, it could be road safety, caring for the environment, making and getting along with friends, promoting reading, staying free from smoking and drugs, and so on. These are just a few ideas to get you thinking along the right lines.

It's not that difficult to build a show around a theme. Once you have decided on a theme, identify and write down the main points that you want to get across, choosing perhaps just three key ones. For example, if your theme is making and getting along with friends your main points might be:

- 1. Don't automatically trust everyone, sometimes you need to say no to strangers.
- 2. Having friend's means having someone who cares about you, looks out for you, and someone to share things with.
- 3. To have a friend, you need to be a friend.

This is just an example to demonstrate the point, I'm not suggesting you use this, but it's a basic plot from which you develop a full show.

Before we go any further, let's just clear something up about these types of themed shows.

Contrary to comments made by some magicians, in no way does a themed show have to be less entertaining than a regular magic show.

Of course, it's down to you to make sure of that, but just because there is a lesson or moral involved, it doesn't mean your presentation becomes staid or boring! Far from it, your show should be even more interesting and enjoyable because it has a useful theme running through it.

So once you have an outline plot, you then need to turn your attention to the magic effects you will use. This is where you can have some fun researching suitable effects.

Your first step should be to look at your existing collection of magic. Are there any effects that you already own that could be adapted to fit the chosen theme?

You may be able to change the look of a prop physically in order for it to become suitable, such as adding other features to it, painting or colouring it differently and so on. Then too, you may be able to rework the way an effect is handled to suit the theme, perhaps changing the sequencing of it etc.

Once you have looked through your existing collection, do a little research of other effects available in catalogues, on the net etc. But wherever the effect comes from, try and look *beyond* the original idea of an effect, because there is a danger of being so fixed on this that your creativity is stunted.

So forget the theme of the trick as it is, and think about the concept of the effect in it's most basic form. For example, 'the professor's nightmare' rope trick is generally presented with the theme of a professor being baffled by the concept of three ropes becoming equal lengths. The science, or physics of that happening doesn't add up, thus it's a professor's nightmare.

However, applying the reasoning just mentioned, (concerning looking at the basic concept of the trick), we realise that the root idea of the professors nightmare effect is of three items all seemingly different, which are then suddenly shown to be the same.

Although the trick uses ropes, what is to stop you *referring* to the ropes as symbols for something else? For example, you might refer to the ropes as



three children, each different: one tall, one fat, one with big ears. With that explanation, the audience sees the different length ropes, but they are subtly directed to imagine the different looking children as described.

Then, the three lengths are transformed and shown to be all the same length. The point could be made that it doesn't matter what we look like on the outside, because we are all effectively the same. This trick could be presented with an anti-bullying slogan. You could ask the young audience, "How do *you* see the rest of the kids in *your* class? Do you see and judge them only by their outward appearance, or do you see what they really are, as people just like us, with feelings. We are all the same really."

What *other* variation could you use for the professors nightmare?

You could show the three ropes as all different, attributing a *character* to each type of rope, saying that the short rope thinks *he* is best because he takes up the least amount of space, costs less, and can be used in smaller spaces. The middle rope thinks *he* is the best because he is not too short and not too long. The longest rope thinks *he* is best because he is more versatile, and that bigger is better!

Then having transformed the ropes to be the same length, you could explain something along the lines that although each rope *thought* they were better than the other because of their differences, really they are all the same, none is superior to another. The obvious lesson to be applied is to ask the children 'do *you* view yourself as superior to others?

As a trained magician, you have looked at the professor's nightmare and seen it through the eyes of those who have performed it before. Now look at it differently, take it apart and analyse it.

You could for example, start with the ropes all the same length, and demonstrate them as three pupils who all started out at the same school, all the same age, but one didn't bother learning very much, one coasted along, and one wanted to learn as much as possible. The more this final student learnt, the more he grew in his knowledge and ability, and he stood out as a success story.



Again, that's just an example of an effect that could be developed, something to show you the process behind adapting tricks for a themed kids show.

So don't be afraid of developing your own special themed shows, and don't stop at just one theme. Think how useful it would be to be able to offer a couple of possibilities to each school.

Bear in mind too, that throughout the year, schools tend to have their own themed weeks or days. There may be a 'read a book' week, or a 'say no to drugs' week. These times are absolutely ideal for offering specific, tailored kids shows with a lesson behind them.

Do you know anyone who is a teacher? Ask around your friends if they know any teachers, and then find out when these themed weeks are. Alternatively, a bit of digging around on search engines on the internet might reveal the same information.

Think about this. If you were a head teacher responsible for arranging an event, would you choose a magician who offers a powerful, specific, *themed* magic show, or the magician who has a general magic show, with no specific benefits other than to entertain? The answer should be obvious to you.

Don't get us wrong about this, there is nothing wrong with having a general magic show, in fact you need to, however, there is a time and place for everything, and the reality is that if you offer a themed magic show where the kids learn as well as have fun, almost 10 times out of 10 you will be selected in preference to a general magician. Let's put it another way, do you want to make *some* money or *lots?* Then start creating a themed show!

Paul has a belief that before you start on such an adventure, you should ask the people who are truly involved and who are possible future customers.

Ask for an appointment with your local head teacher, sit down, and tell them you are a highly successful children's entertainer, and that you are considering putting together an entertaining show that will demonstrate to young people things to avoid, beware of, or cultivate an interest in.

Ask the teacher what they think would be a useful lesson for their students. Explain that you are able to theme magic in lots of different ways, and that the visual experience combines very well with the visual information to be imparted. Tell them that one of the most successful companies of the later 20th century was that owned by John Cleese, who discovered that if the facts of a subject were delivered in normal lecture 'mode', they were not as memorable as those delivered in an entertaining fashion.

The head teachers in your area, by becoming part of what you are planning may also be able to tell you where and how to obtain sponsorship and support, such as education grants, local authority funding, a local business sponsorship, parent/teaching association funding, and so on.

Of course, if the first head teacher you approach does not respond well, just move on and ask the next one. Don't give up, you *will* find support.

You Have A Responsibility!

We would like you to think very carefully about what we are about to say.

As a children's entertainer you have a tremendous responsibility to the world of magic. You are dealing with young minds, and if you let them down they could have a negative view of magic for many years.

Unlike other entertainment fields like pop music, magic does not have a marketing machine constantly encouraging kids to take an interest in it, so it's an uphill struggle anyway. Sadly, far too many magicians do a lot of damage to the field of magic by performing poor shows for children.

In general terms, remember to be positive, upbeat, happy, likeable. Keep the show tight, colourful, and move it along at a good pace. There is no single character or personality that we would recommend in this field, you have to find yourself and see yourself as others see you. Allow yourself to be guided by those factors.

Remember your good ideas book too. When reading magazine articles or books relating to children's magic and you come across a good 'bit of business', *write it down!* Analyse it. What makes it so good? Can it be adapted for your style of performance or character?

As we said at the outset, the rewards of performing for children go far beyond the financial, although that is probably the initial motivation. Enjoy it, have fun, and aim to introduce children to magic in an unforgettably wonderful way.

To round off this section, the following is a collection of witty one-liners and funny comments you are free to use during your own kids shows, or shows where there are a number of kids in the audience:

When introducing a volunteer:

"Now, Rachel, have you and I ever met before?"

"No"

"Well how do you know it's me?!"

"If this tricks works well, I want the whole audience to clap, cheer, and blow kisses at me! No! Not the boys!"

To a child: "I'm going to ask you a question, and if you get it right, you get a prize – do you like prizes? Well, your prize is to kiss all the girls (or boys)! The question is: 'Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of(child says "WATER!")

"Yes that's right, but what colour was the bucket?!"

"Hands up.....(pause)......whose not here yet?"

Hold a blue handkerchief, balloon or prop, and say, "What colour is this?"

The kids all shout: "BLUE!"

"Yes yes, I know they are new, but what colour is it?"

The kids shout: "BLUE!"

"Yes, I know they're new, I just bought them today!

"Now, what colour is this next one?"

The kids shout: "GREEN!"

"Yes yes, I know they're clean!"

"What about this one?"

Kids shout: "PINK!"

"Don't be rude, it doesn't stink!"

"I'm going to ask you a question, and it's a trick question because I'm a magician!"

"Hands up......(pause)......who's been picking their nose?!".

The Last Word...

It might be tempting to read through the following points quickly, almost like a check list. "I've read that, okay, and that point," and so on. Please don't.

Although the four points below are brief and succinct, they are incredibly important to you. Sometimes it's better to state a negative in order to reinforce a positive point, and that's what these are, because they all start with 'don't.' However, view them all as valuable information, like the wise words of a loving grandparent.

The following should give you plenty of food for thought until next time...

4 Things You Should Never Do as a Magician

- Don't tell your audience that you are trying to fool them.
 Audiences resent this, and you risk building a barrier rather than entertaining them.
- Don't present magic as a puzzle, to be figured out. That is not what magic is about. Magic is fun, uplifting, enjoyable and entertaining whereas a puzzle is just frustrating!
- Don't speak in a condescending manner to audiences, as if you are better than them. You are not, and if you do, you will alienate most of them.
- Don't blame an audience for a 'bad' show. There will always be something that you could have done better. Invite constructive comments from anyone, however good you think you are.

Quotes To Ponder On

There are some brilliant minds in the world of magic, and we have assembled a few quotes that we hope will encourage and inspire you to action, or perhaps just ponder on...

"Magic isn't about secrets, it's about mystery. It's the greatest gift we can give."

Harry Anderson

"We went through hell to get to heaven"

Siegfried and Roy

"A show that is scripted to the ninth degree loses it's personality."

Paul Daniels

"Not only do lay people see more than you *think* they do, they do see more than you do."

Max Maven

"Your largest and most visible prop is your body. The audience will spend the whole act confirming or denying their opinion about what they see."

Author unknown

"Secrets aren't so damned valuable. There are few that can't be figured out by logical thinking ability."

Daryl

"Bigger is Better may be fine for bank accounts, but I don't think it should apply to magic clubs."

Paul Gertner

ACTION TASKS MODULE 6

1.	Decide on, and learn six magic tricks that are tailored to kids.
2.	Become familiar with the breakaway wand, the inflatable wand, and the blooming bouquet. Decide whether to incorporate them into a show.
3.	Using the guideline provided, tailor three tricks to the different age groups of kids I will come across.
4.	Develop a simple themed show, using the tips provided, and trial the show informally on a group of kids within your circle of friends and family.
5.	Take the opportunity to see other children's performers whenever I can in your community, and note what works and what doesn't in their show. Half-term and school holidays provide many opportunities.
6.	Learn at least one new comedy line or phrase a week, over the next six weeks that I can use when performing for kids.