

Tips for Doing Well in Humorous Interpretation (HI)

Competing in HI is a fun but challenging event. It's not just about being funny—it's about telling a story that makes people laugh while also leaving them with something to think about. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare:

1. It's Not Just About Jokes

Comedy with a point: The best HI pieces use humor to highlight something deeper, like the struggles of growing up, social anxieties, or the silly parts of everyday life.

Make it relatable: The audience should recognize themselves (or someone they know) in your characters. That's what makes the laughter real.

Find the heart: Great HIs always have a brief serious or emotional moment. That little touch of honesty makes your performance more powerful.

2. Choosing the Right Piece is Everything

Avoid overdone material: Judges see the same pieces over and over. Try to find something fresh and unique that will stand out.

Pick variety: A strong HI usually has several characters, each with a distinct voice and body style.

Know the rules: You can cut from plays, short stories, or novels—but your final script should tell a complete story on its own.

3. Master the Technical Skills

“Pops” and transitions: Work on snapping quickly between characters with clear changes in stance, voice, and expression.

Use your body: HI is physical! Think about how each character moves differently and use your whole body to show it. Mime objects or spaces to create a world on stage.

Vocal variety and timing: Play with pitch, rhythm, and tone. Pause at the right moment to land a joke, and pay attention to audience laughter so you know when to keep going.

4. Performance & Delivery

Strong introduction: Keep your intro short, witty, and clear (include the title and author). Deliver it as yourself but with the same energy as your piece.

Start with a “teaser”: Many strong HIs open with a funny scene before the intro to grab the audience right away.

Energy & stamina: HI takes a lot of energy—warm up before you perform and practice holding high energy for the full 10 minutes.

Practice with people: Perform in front of teammates, friends, or family. Their laughter will help you practice timing and delivery.

5. Attitude & Growth

Be creative and bold: Don't be afraid to try big choices. Even if something doesn't work, experimenting will help you find what does.

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Accept feedback: If a joke doesn't land, ask why. Was the timing off? Did the audience not get the character? Use feedback to make your piece stronger.

Watch the pros: Check out recordings of past HI finalists (NSDA has a library online). Watching others can spark ideas and show you what works at a high level.

Remember: HI is about entertaining, but also about connecting with your audience. Make them laugh, but also make them care.