

One beat, one laugh

In groups of 3–4, add one humour beat to a game you have already designed this term (your Week 3 reward system, your Week 4 concept, or any mechanic from this term's tasks; no game to hand, use The Last Lighthouse). Perform it for another group without explaining it first, count their reactions, then change one thing.

THE FOUR THEORIES

Theory	Funny because...	Design check
Incongruity	Expectation, then a mismatch you can make sense of (surprise, then resolution).	Is the hidden rule legible? Does it survive a repeat?
Superiority	We feel better off than someone making a mistake.	Who is the target? Punch up, never down.
Relief	Tension or a social rule is released safely.	Is it placed after a peak, not during it?
Benign violation	Something is wrong and harmless at the same time.	Too real: offensive. Too safe: nothing.

YOUR BEAT

Our game _____ The moment _____

1 • The job	Relief, contrast, social, memory? What does the laugh do for the game at this moment?
2 • Theory and form	Which theory? Witty dialogue, situational, slapstick, satire, absurdist or dark? Scripted or systemic?
3 • Trigger	What the player does, or where they are, that sets it off. Never just a timer.
4 • Audience and risk	Who is it for? Who could it hurt? Does it fit the game's tone? What happens on the 2nd and 40th time?

Storyboard: set-up → beat → payoff four boxes: what the player sees, hears and does in each

Test it cold

Perform the beat for another group without explaining it first. One of you plays the game (sounds, reactions, timing); one plays the player. Watch their faces, don't ask "was it funny?". Tally each person's reaction.

Reaction	Test 1 (cold)	Test 2 (after the change)	Notes
Laugh			
Smile			
Groan			
Nothing			

A groan can be a win: it usually means they got it. "Nothing" means the set-up failed or the payoff wasn't legible.

REVISE: CHANGE ONE THING

What we changed	Timing, target, form or theory: one only, so you can see what made the difference.
Why	What in Test 1 told you to change it?
What happened	Compare Test 2 with Test 1.

SHOW AND TELL · 1 MINUTE PER GROUP

1. **The beat:** perform it, as it is now.
2. **The count:** what happened the first time, cold.
3. **The change:** one thing you changed, and why it worked (or didn't).

Audience: name the theory you think each beat uses.

WORKED EXAMPLE (ON THE SLIDES)

The Admiral, The Last Lighthouse: straight after the Act II reveal, a gull steals the keeper's matches twice; the third time it drops a lit match into the lamp. Job: relief. Theory: incongruity (rule of three) and benign violation. Risk: placed after the reveal, never during; happens once per playthrough.