

## CREATING A COMIC STRIP

**Ages:**

15 to 18

**Description:**

Hello, young authors! It's time to use your writing skills to create a comic strip. During this activity, you will develop a theme for your comic strip, invent original characters and come up with your own gag-a-day comic. So, grab a pencil and paper and let's get started!

**Time:**

60 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

- Pencil
- Paper
- Colored pencils, markers, crayons (optional)

**Instructions:**

Before we begin, take a minute to clear your mind. Does your space inspire you? Do you have all of the supplies you will need? Keep your workspace clutter free and organized. This will help think clearly while you create.

During this activity, you will design your own comic. You will use story panels, create a theme, write a gag-a-day joke, you will also learn about comic strip authors. So, relax, sharpen your pencil, and let's create.

Want to learn more about comics? Check out these websites to find some inspiration and examine different styles. [Denver Post](#), [Comics Kingdom](#), or [Garfield](#).



Example: Mutts, a daily newspaper comic strip, created by Patrick McDonnell in 1994 has been recognized for its distinctive style, heartwarming humor and compassionate advocacy for animal issues.

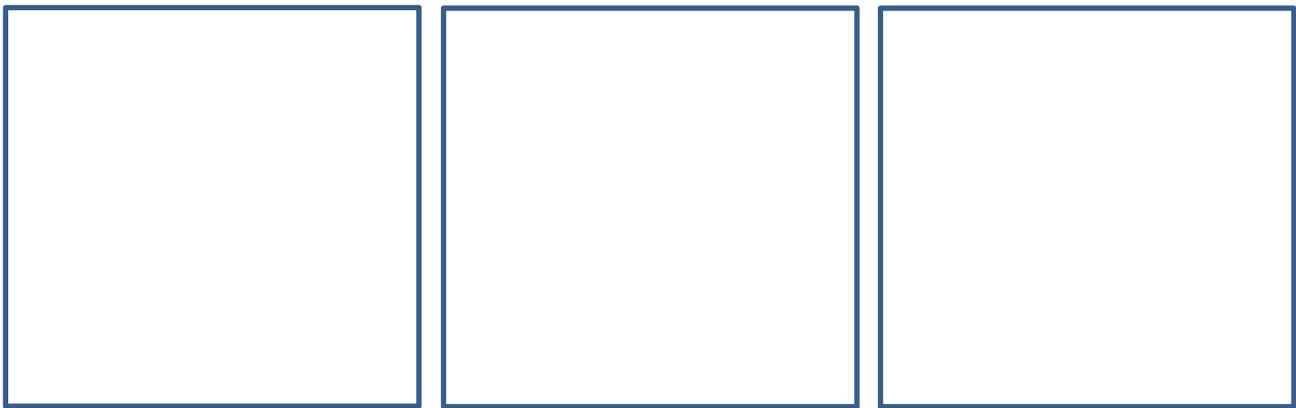
## Let's get started:

There are four elements to creating a successful comic strip, story panels, simplicity, theme, and gag-a-day joke. Follow the instructions below to learn about each element.. Once you are finished you will be ready to create your own 3-panel gag-a-day comic strip.

Have several sheets of paper handy for these next steps. Use the examples below as a guide for your 3-panel comic. Once you have a fully developed idea for your own comic, you can transfer your work to a clean paper using these as your reference.

### 1. Story Panels

Sketch 3-4 boxes an even width apart. That space that is left in-between is called the gutter.



Buckles, a comic strip by David Gilbert illustrates how a subtle perspective change can tell a story. Notice how the first and last panel are zoomed out and the second and third zoomed in. What effect does that have? Do you imagine Arden is smelling? What other way can you frame your subject to help tell your story? Use the story panel frames to amplify your story and to give your comic strip an expert look

## 2. Simplicity

Use simple drawings for your comics. You will be making a copy of your character for each panel. The simple drawing allows you to move your characters into many different scenes as well physical positions.

**TODD THE  
DINOSAUR**  
BY PATRICK ROBERTS



Take a look at this example of Todd the Dinosaur, a comic by Patrick Roberts. Notice the simplicity of the drawings. There is little detail, unrealistic, and very basic. That is perfect for a comic. Todd doesn't change much from scene to scene. The background is simple and clean. The artist uses color, text, & lines to create texture, illustrate motion, show personality and communicate a storyline between characters. What is a simple character that you can draw? What shapes can you put together? What is easy to draw over and over?

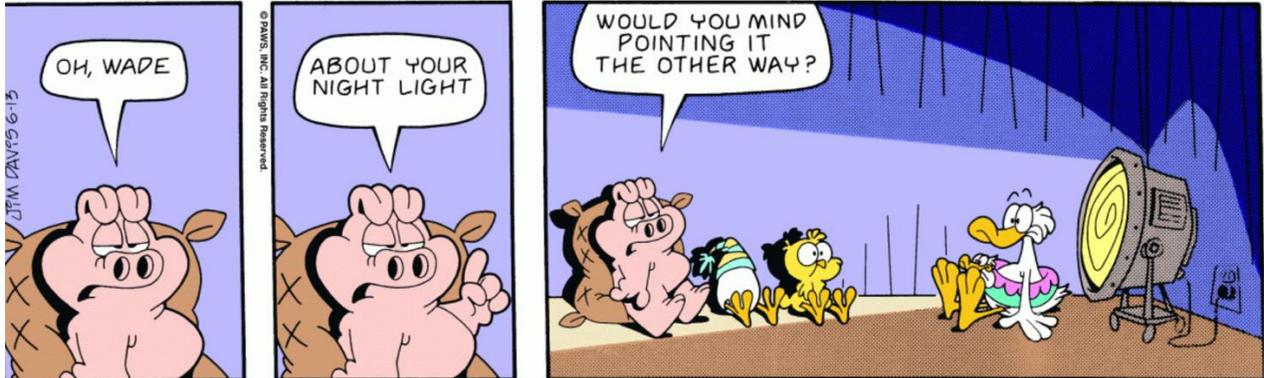
## 3. Theme

Establishing a theme will guide your comic design. Examine these comics by popular artist Jim Davis, most known as the author of Garfield but also creator of U.S. Acres, published from 1986-1989. U.S. Acres featured barnyard animals. So, one theme Davis uses is barnyard animals.

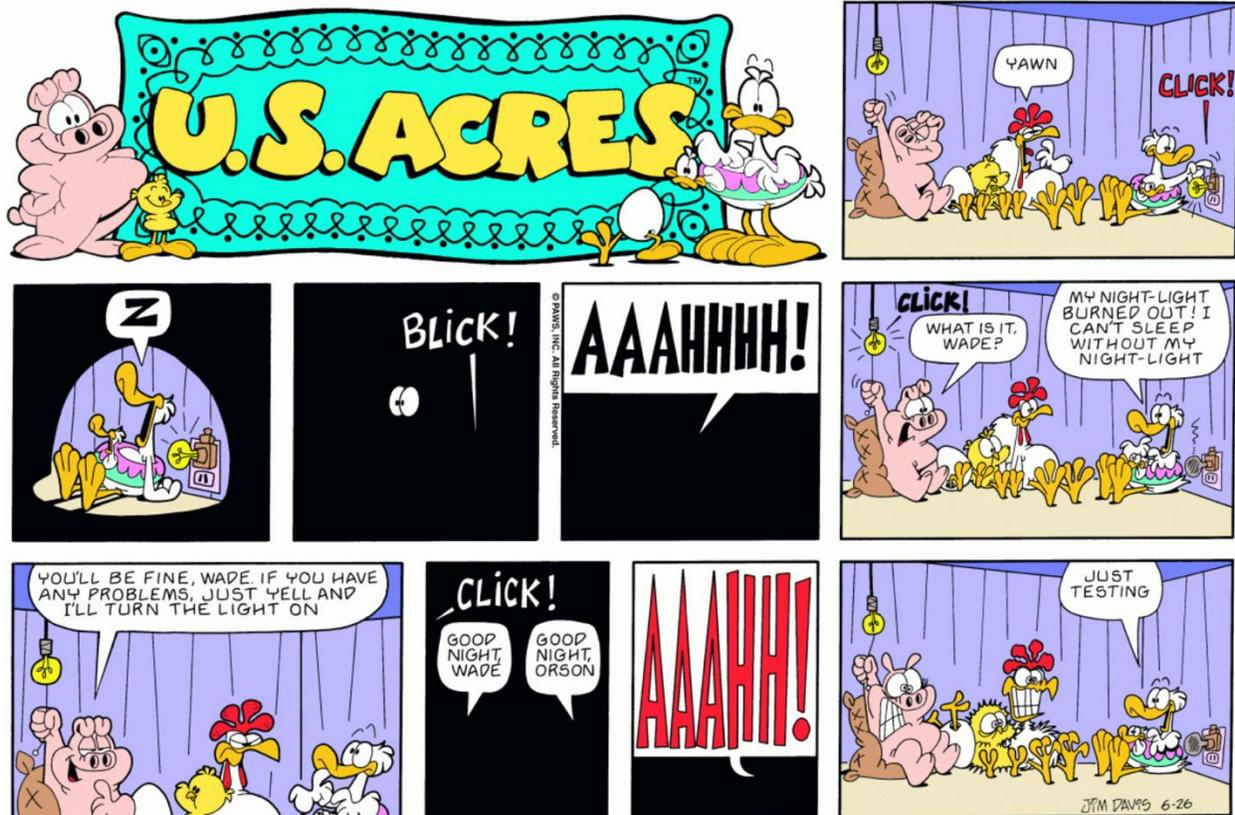
Look around you. What is happening in the world that could create an interesting comic strip? Imagine that world, the characters, and the setting they are in. Use the following categories to get you started. Don't be afraid to bend the rules, though keeping it simple and understandable will be more interesting for your audience.

- Outer space
- Under the ocean
- Sports
- Hamsters in a cage
- Spiders in a web
- Science lab

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What can you learn about the characters in these three panels? How did the author show personality? What themes do you expect to see from these characters in the future?



Another theme that is established is that one character uses a nightlight and you could infer Wade is afraid of the dark. Wade is beginning to have a personality. Can you infer anything about any of the other characters? How will you give clues about your characters personality?

#### 4. Gag-a-Day

Finally, we are going to learn the gag-a-day comic strip style. Most gag-a-days are made up of three panels: Introduction, Build up, Punchline. It is a very basic formula that starts by introducing us to the subject, the buildup provides a bit more information and sets up the joke, and finally the punchline brings it all home in the last panel. Check out how expert at the gag-a-day comic Jim Davis does it.



Introduction

Build Up

Punchline

The gag-a-day comic keeps your comic fresh while still staying true to the themes that you have established.



Introduction

Build Up

Punchline

Do you enjoy the themes associated with Garfield? What themes will you use? Do you see how once you establish themes, characters, and practice your comic you will be able to re-create them in new settings over and over?

Now that you know some comic strip basics it's time for you to create your own. Using the gag-a-day method create a three-panel comic strip establishing at least two characters and a theme.

Don't forget to place the title of your comic on the outside top of the first panel & your signature inside of the third panel somewhere.

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## ACTIVITY RECAP

### Discovery Questions:

- What did it feel like to create a comic strip? Was it easier or harder than you expected?
- What makes comic strips unique? Do you think they can be incorporated in social media?
- Do you see yourself using comic strips to communicate in the future? Why or why not?
- With a parent/guardian's permission, share with us your story on our Instagram page with the tag @girlsincindy.

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