



university of wisconsin / stevens point
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HOW TO BE A DOG

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WHEN TO USE THE COSTUME

Use of the costume is limited only to your imagination. Remember, the costume is a publicity generator so use it anywhere the public or press is likely to appear. If the former are there but not the latter, then phone for a reporter. Games, malls, store openings, hospitals, parades, eating areas, charity functions, are some good starting points for your thinking. Of course, you can always create an event around the costume. How about a picture taking session with the character for your visitors? The possibilities are indeed endless.

COSTUME CARE

The costume itself is quite rugged, but it takes a real beating every time it is cleaned. The only thing worse than repeated dry cleaning is letting it sit dirty for a long period of time. When trying a cleaner or solvent on the costume, test it in an unseen area first, just in case. The head can be cleaned by using carpet cleaner. Just spray it on, wait, and then vacuum it off. The Mad Dog jumpsuit should be brought to a reputable dry cleaner who will clean it in an otherwise empty vat. There are three times to clean the costume: (1) when it is visibly dirty or is exuding an easily recognizable odor, (2) when a different person is going to wear the costume, and (3) when the costume is to be stored for a long time.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF DOGGING

Do's- Always drink lots of fluids before and during your performance. You should stay away from sugars and/or carbonated drinks. Also, you should avoid alcoholic beverages before getting into the suit. Perspiration from carbonated drinks and alcoholic beverages will not only create additional odor, but will in time subtract life from the suit itself. Use water and fruit juices. It is extremely warm in the suit so fruit juices are recommended to restore needed energy. Eat before putting the costume on, you will need the energy. Take at least one ten minute break per hour (see taking a break).

Don'ts- Once you have the costume on, no smoking, even during breaks. The costume will absorb the smoke odor over a period of time. On the other hand, you might start a fire and there is nothing worse than wearing a burning costume (What, no Richard Pryor jokes?). No talking! Once the head is on, you are simply an illusion. People don't relate to you as a human. Your voice will destroy this illusion so please don't talk even to someone you know. Don't ever appear in public with any portion of your costume off. See the reasoning under "no talking." Wouldn't you just hate yourself knowing that you emotionally upset some child because she/he found out you weren't real. Don't even think of driving with the costume on.

APPROACHING SMALL CHILDREN

Approaching a baby is a very trying task. Of course, everyone is expecting you to play with the rug rat, but the little tyke is very likely to break into tears at the mere sight of you. Here is a suggested line of action. First, while you are about 15 feet away, stoop down so that your form vaguely resembles a ball to the child. From here on, there should be no sudden moves. Now extend your hand and slowly move toward the child. If she/he reaches for you, you've won the little crumb grabber over. If not, stop. Still stooped over, rub your hand on mommy or daddy. This shows the child that you're socially acceptable. Now go for it one more time. If you make it, the audience is sure to be impressed by your patience and your awe inspiring ability to deal with the little sucker. If the child should start crying any time during your approach, turn and run away from the child as if you're scared. This gets you out quickly and gracefully. Don't bother to try again. Once the crying has begun, it will not stop.

CHAPERONES

When possible, try to have a non-costumed person looking out for you. This person can help you cross streets (remember vision is limited) as well as cope with the problems of crowds (head hitting, drunks, and tail pulling just to name a few). The escort will also be useful in communicating your needs.

TAKING A BREAK

At any place you intend to appear, make arrangements in advance for a small enclosed area with access limited to yourself, your chaperone, and no more than one representative of the sponsoring organization. This area will be for the purpose of dressing and taking breaks. In this area, you should keep a towel and your drinks. This sight is the only place that you will take off or put on parts of the costume. Remember to take regular breaks. I would recommend at least ten minutes per hour. During this time unzip and let the heat out. Also, make sure you replenish your fluids. Most of all, rest up. You will need the energy for your next set.



WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

As I mentioned, wearing the costume can be fun and rewarding. It can also be one other thing -- dangerous. Children are brought up watching Wiley Coyote swallow dynamite and Sylvester the Cat fall off of buildings, and if you've done a good job, you are just another cartoon to them. Here are some problems and possible solutions.

- A. Large crowds- back up to a wall or pillar so you don't have to cope with people behind you.
- B. Small children below your line of sight- shuttle walk. Don't make sudden moves.
- C. Crying children- move away as quickly as possible.
- D. People eating food- avoid them.
- E. Drunks- put your hands (paws) up in resignation. Make sure others see you.
- F. Some people just won't appreciate you- if this is the case, walk away.
- G. Hitting on the head or pulling of your tail- do it back to the person (gently). They will get the message. Be firm enough so as not to turn this into a game.

BEFORE YOU PERFORM FOR THE FIRST TIME

Once you've been accepted as a mascot performer, it's important that you do several things. First, you need to watch a 30 minute video tape on mascotting. You can see the dog pack coordinator to make arrangements for viewing. Next, it is important that you become familiar with the various personalities of the mascots used here. While various people may be in one of the costumes, the illusion must remain reasonably similar. That's why we offer you a brief personality sketch on each of the mascots on the next page.

DOG PERSONALITIES

Stevie is a wholesome, humorous guy that is usually with his companion Stephanie. He is protective of her and is also somewhat jealous of her antics. They do many stunts, dances, hand-slaps, etc. together. He cheers for the team in rather traditional ways. He may make jesters of disgust at official's calls, but always in fun or at least in funny ways. He always represents himself as we would want the University to be viewed (good sport, friendly, fun, exciting, good manners, etc.).

Stephanie is an all-american girl that is representative of Stevens Point's finest. She is, however, a bit of a flirt. She plays with Stevie, but she gets out in the crowd often for some lap sitting too. She also gets along famously with the kids. She is a little like Miss Piggy with her flirtation. She is also a devout Point fan, however, and cheers for the team with the rest of the dog pack. She is a little more interested in what's happening in the stands, however, than what's happening on the floor.

Mad Dog is purely and simply a rowdy. He doesn't have the big feet so he can do crazy things and then run. He is the primary mascot of the hockey team, and he leads the team onto the ice (skates and skating ability are a prerequisite). His behavior is not always exemplary, but he is careful not to be gross or tasteless. After all, he still represents the University and there will always be children present. Touting the officials in good fun (offering a pair of glasses, offering play money before the game, showing a sieve to an opposing goalie would be examples of his ornery humor) is appropriate. He will try to excite the crowd, but must be careful not to insight the crowd. Hockey fans can get a little carried away. Mad Dog will also

make special appearances at other important football and basketball games. His costume is extremely warm, however, so indoor and fair weather visits must be short in duration. Mad Dog typically wears a uniform of the sport at which he performs. He loves silly hats and other bizaar attire.

PREPARING FOR A PERFORMANCE

First, make sure you know what nights you'll be performing and who you will be performing with. Check with the dog pack coordinator about keys for the dressing room and/or other logistics. Arrive at the dressing area in plenty of time. Make sure any transportation arrangements have been made in advance. Remember, from the minute you leave the room, you are an illusion so mentally prepare. It's probably good to have a couple of stunts pre-arranged in your mind so if your ad-libs run dry, you will have something to fall back on.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Make notes about stunts or situational gags that seemed effective. If possible, let the rest of the dogs know. The dog personalities need to remain fairly consistent from one performer to the next. If the illusion is to be maintained, communication is important.

Make sure the costume is stored properly and let the dog pack coordinator know if any problems need to be taken care of before the next performance. Mentally get out of character. You're now you again.

LAST ADVICE

Good luck and have fun. If you're having fun performing, your audience will be having fun with you.