HUMOUR

DIY CONSPIRACY THEORIES

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Conspiracy theories are fictitious, but they're called theories because they're based on logic, although mostly dubious, which makes you wonder why they're still called theories. But people dig these '"theories," and here is a formula that'll help cater to people's undying need to be misled.

PICK A TOPIC

What you theorise about is dependent on what you want. You could try and make your conspiracy theory as airtight as possible, and pick a subject you know well. That way, knowing the real story and facts will help you spin the lies in a way that is close to the truth, but just off, yet gravely misleading. You could also not care about it being airtight, as long as you can feed the people what they want to hear, they'll hear it. In this case, your topic should be something everyone's already talking about.

PICKING YOUR CONSPIRATORS

People might tell you that making something up out of thin air is easy, but it's not. You need something to start from, and that's where we can help you. There are some names that'll keep popping up again and again if you check out some well crafted conspiracy theories: the Illuminati, aliens, super intelligent robots from the future,

famous world leaders from the past about whom we know a lot less than we should; basically anything that has an air of mystery about them, things people know little about but almost everyone knows the names of. More often than not, these conspirators are people/groups that are largely hated for a bad trait or some kind of historical affiliation that will lead people to easily believe that they can do questionable things. It always helps if they have some kind of a symbol, or a modus operandi that is recognisable from their past deeds, because when you're trying to make connections out of thin air, these symbols or MOs will appear, or will be easy to fabricate, making the theorising much more straight forward.

CONNECTING THE IMAGINARY DOTS

This is where things get fun, and you get to be creative. You have a topic, an event, a product or the existence of something, and now it's your job to find little details in them that you can connect to the perpetrators you have chosen. Some of them are really easy, like Illuminati theories. You either need to find an eye, a pyramid, or anything remotely triangular (like a *samucha*) and that's that. Sometimes, to make it sound complicated, you can throw in a bunch of unrelated things in the middle, to divert the reader's attention before you can give them the final reveal in a dramatic fashion. For example, you could simply tell people Donald Trump is a Democratic agent

who wants to destroy the Republican Party and they'd believe that, because that's how inexplicable his actions are. But if you took a longer route and brought in stuff he said in interviews 20 years ago, his strong base in a Democratic New York state, that'd make for a better theory.

Conspiracy theories are crazy by nature, and the most important thing needed to be a crafty maker of these theories is a crazy mind. This article only directs you in a certain path, it's up to you to follow it and find out if aliens really are responsible for Dhaka's overpopulation.

When he's not obsessing over football, Azmin spends his time devising ways of not getting mugged, only to fail miserably. Give him advice at fb.com/azminazran

THE ART OF PITCHING IN 50 WORDS

DYUTY AURONEE

Writing clearly and concisely comes with a lot of benefits in a world where nobody has the time or energy to read or write verbose emails, messages and other pieces. At times, it is imperative that you convey your idea within 50 words or so, for example, when you are outlining an essay/article or writing a nano summary that comes with a word limitation. Here's how you can make your writing short and succinct.
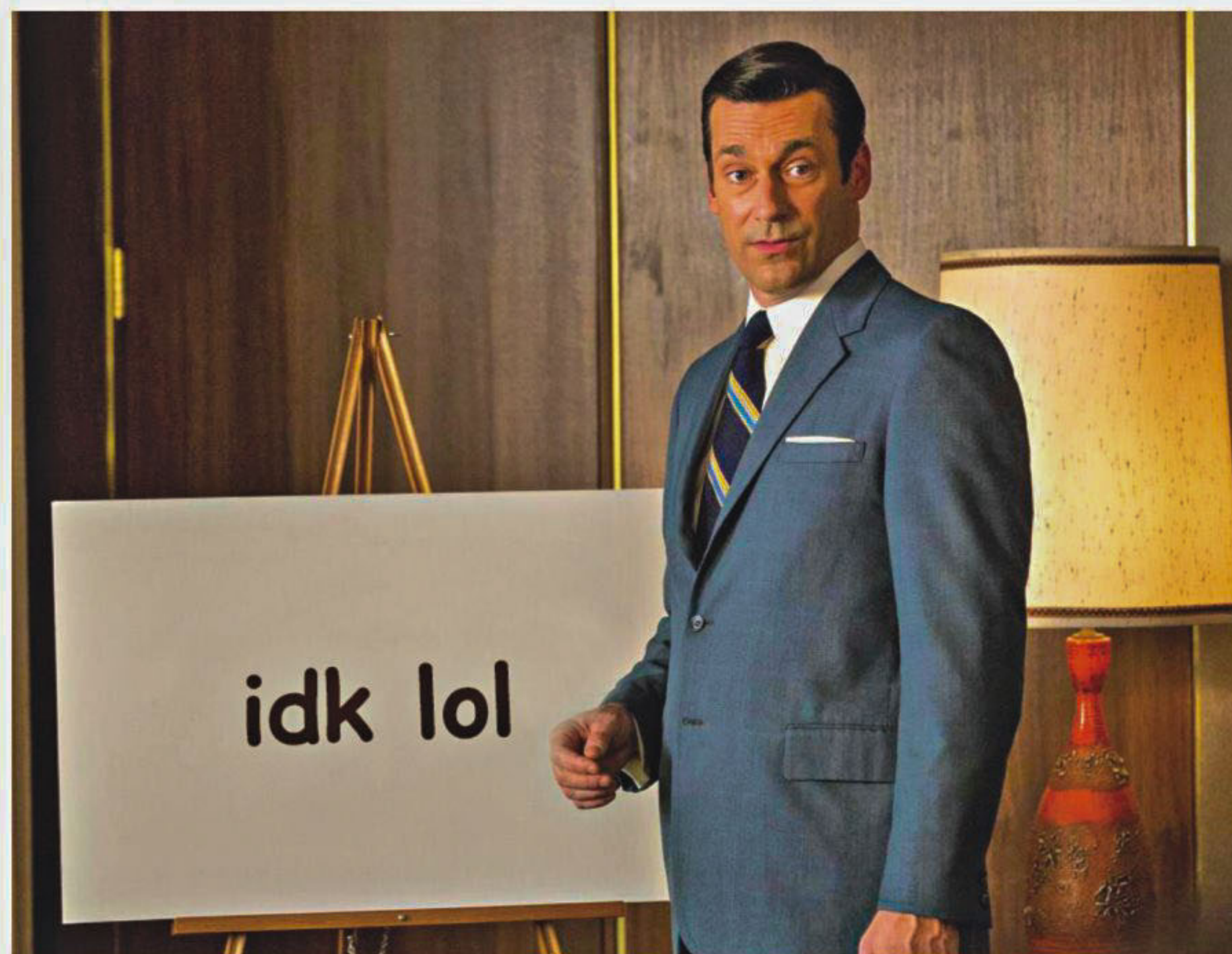
1. CUT DOWN ON DETAILS.

Don't stray away from your central theme and engage in unnecessary details. Nobody would ask for vivid descriptions when you are to prepare something within or around 50 words. State your point straight and refrain from stating any obvious information that does not add value.

2. USE CONCRETE LANGUAGE.

Flowery and eloquent words are better left out in this case. Avoid using metaphors, idioms or other literary tools which distract your reader or make him stop and reach for a dictionary. The 'pomp' writing is not a style you should adopt when conciseness is important.

3. AVOID INTENSIFIERS.

Learn the difference between these valu-

able language elements and the ones that sidetrack your theme. Keep the adjectives and adverbs that give your writing impact and clarity. Carefully cut down on the intensifiers and use expressive nouns and verbs to avoid 'stacking' the sentence with extra words. For example, 'He made a long, high-pitched noise' can be rewritten more concisely as 'He squealed.' This saved 4 words in a single sentence but one

does need a strong vocabulary for this.

4. PHRASE VS. WORD

Single words can replace many commonly used phrases. These phrases often pop up in our writing that requires a formal tone but they hardly add to the meaning. For example, instead of writing 'people who can speak a variety of languages,' you can simply write 'multilingual people.'

5. NO' TO QUALIFIERS.

Often we use qualifiers that really aren't necessary to express our meaning (such as 'really' in this sentence). If you can effectively cut out these 'filler' words, you can often eliminate one or two words per sentence. This may not seem like much, but they can add up. Common qualifiers include: actually, really, basically, probably, very, definitely, somewhat, kind of, extremely, practically.

6. ELIMINATE REDUNDANT PAIRS

When the first word in a pair has roughly the same meaning as the second, choose one. Common examples of redundant pairs include: full and complete, each and every, hopes and dreams, black darkness, first and foremost, true and accurate, always and forever.

7. EDIT

Your first draft will likely have some 'fat,' that is, unnecessary words and phrases that weigh down your text. Remove these useless parts whenever possible. The following words and phrases often constitute 'fat' in writing: very, just, type, due to the fact that, actually, at this moment in time, and so forth. So, edit rigorously if you have to and for long-term benefits, brush up your vocabulary and grammar so that you can write more meaningfully and clearly.