

When to clown for free?

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When to clown for free? When the spirit moves you.

Consider clowning for free (and/or as a donation of your performing services):

1. When you believe in and support the cause (such as a charity, a ministry, a public agency, or a not-for-profit organization).
2. When you are responding to a calling (you'll know).
3. When you want the experience.

Make sure you're real clear on the 'why' part (your motivation and reasons for doing it) before moving onto the 'how' part, which comes down to professionalism and respect – respect for the art, respect for your audience, and respect for yourself and other performers.

Professionalism doesn't apply just to someone earning a living as a professional clown; it also applies to the quality and standards we expect and bring to our performances and craft, whether we're getting paid, rewarded, and/or thanked with a check, heartfelt applause, a warm embrace, a chicken dinner, or just knowing in our clown heart that we did some good. Professionalism should also be part of the ongoing 'audience education' of what to expect from a performance artist, how to work with a performer on the business of arranging a performance, and what to do and how to behave at a live performance.

Paid or not, every performance should be your best performance.

Be careful when taking on a gig where other performers (including clowns) may be getting paid for their services. You may be inadvertently undermining the art and profession, as well as your future earning capabilities.

One question you may want to ask when starting the conversation with the event sponsor or coordinator is, "Is there an entertainment budget for this event?" Even if you don't get (or don't want to get) paid for your performance/appearance, you may want to request reimbursement for materials and travel expenses, such as mileage.

You can also ask for a receipt or letter that acknowledges and thanks you for the contribution of services, which would then allow you to place a value on it for tax documentation purposes.

The bottom line on "when to clown for free?" is that there is no Right Answer, so just make sure you know and can be clear about "why" you're doing it, and "how" you do it should be guided by professionalism and respect.

And always, leave 'em laughing.

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