

HOW TO

Clever cop-outs

Little white lies that don't make a big fuss

The dog ate my report. I'm washing my hair. It's not my style. The devil made me do it. Whatever the problem, there are dozens of excuses to get out of undesirable situations. Yet, what is the polite and courteous way to unstick yourself?



The infamous bad date

It's the first date with Joe Nice, but you are just not interested and try to plan a way to get out of dinner without being rude. What do you do?

- A) Find a cute guy at the bar.
- B) Act sick and delirious.
- C) Hide in the bathroom until he leaves.

Bad dates are inevitable; however, there are common sense tricks to ditch a potential Mr. Wrong.

"A friend of mine told the guy that was bugging her that she was out of town in K.C. and couldn't go out with him," says Abby Medin, a student at MU. "He believed her until later that night when she ran into the guy in their building. She tried to pass it off like she was going to be leaving for K.C., but she was totally busted."

Staying through dinner is OK because it is the first meeting between two strangers. But, if leaving is a must, acting sick is an age-old strategy. A concerned date will then escort you home.

"I've seen it all with this subject," says Greg Klinger, a server at Applebees. "Laryngitis or saying you lost your car keys. Though a family death is always classic."

Another option is the obligatory phone call. Setting up a getaway call beforehand is not always feasible. Fortunately, inventors are here to help. The XCaller, downloaded for a nominal fee, simulates an incoming call so you can politely excuse yourself from a group or person. A timer makes it easy to set a selected period of time, and your date will be none the wiser. The only problems are real incoming calls while "on the phone."

The best way is to be upfront. But be prepared for an adverse reaction — or worse for fragile egos, no response at all.

To work or not to work

When your job is mind-numbing, you always have vacation days to look forward to. But what do you do when all those precious days of rest are gone by March?

- A) Certify yourself mentally insane.
- B) Play the sympathy card.
- C) Be excused due to a mysterious fire by your desk.

People are lazy ... until it comes to getting out of work.

"I really didn't want to work, so one day I put some classical music on my computer, called my boss, and told him I was stuck in an elevator, and then just didn't go into work," says Shaon Ghosh, a student at MU. "The worst part was the next day. Everyone was asking me about my experience. I think I did OK. No one questioned my stories."



According to careerbuilder.com's annual survey of absenteeism at the office, 43 percent of workers said they called in sick when they felt well at least once during the last year. The most popular motivator for missing work was the desire to relax and catch up on sleep as cited by 23 percent of workers while 17 percent said they just didn't feel like going in.

Some of the most unusual excuses that have actually been used: "I'm too fat to get into my work pants," "My house lock jammed, and I'm locked in," and "The cow bit me," according to the Web site.

There are never enough vacation days. Claiming the latest virus works, but that might mean coming up with more excuses while you "recover." Unfortunately, unless creativity hits, there are no easy outs from this obligation. At least your pocket will be full.

The never-ending phone call

You're not sure why you answered, but now the blabbermouth on the phone has been talking for 30 minutes with no end in sight. What to do?

- A) Receive another call.
- B) Set down the phone, and walk away.
- C) Pretend you're going into a tunnel.



"I hate long phone calls, so I usually say my mom is calling in or that I'm driving and about to be hit by a car," says Joe Cook, a student at MU. "That usually scares them off the phone."

Gizmos and gadgets come to the rescue yet again. For \$14.95, purchase a device called Gotta Go, which simulates the click of the call-waiting signal and 14 other simulated sounds such as babies crying, sirens or doorbells. It's the easy, no-hassle way to get off the phone. Or call yourself from a second phone for an easy excuse to get off the first.

In the end, the true test to any excuse is the ability to run with it. Make sure the thrill of a secret outweighs the penalties. And, if you're going to use an excuse, put together an entertaining one.

— LAURA DOTSON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERESA WEAVER



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