

*Another Compendium*  
*of*  
*Wit and Wisdom*

This One Compiled

by

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as of

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# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Introduction

Who can resist the temptation to write an introduction? Surely not me. So, I hereby introduce yet another compendium of wit and wisdom. There are dozens of them already, so why do another one? Because it's fun. That's also why I'm writing this introduction, and why I'll keep messing with the compendium. It's fun, and it'll never be finished.

One of the fun things about a collection like this is to figure out just what it is that's being collected. Some of these things are laws, some are axioms, some are theories, some are opinions, or warnings, or observations, or merely comments. I'll just call them *old sayings*.

There are hundreds of old sayings that I could have included in this compendium, but didn't. Why? Beats me. If you're into quantity, go read John Bartlett's book. The next question is, where'd I get them? They came from all over. I read them somewhere. I heard them somewhere. People gave them to me. I even made up a few of my own. Some are credited, and some aren't. The ones that aren't came to me that way, and I wasn't able to discover the authors (although I tried). The others might or might not be credited correctly. Who knows? The most reliable credits are the ones I copied down myself, usually from fiction that I was reading. Which brings me to an interesting point. I haven't made any distinction whatsoever between sayings by fictional characters and sayings by historical characters. In either case, their old sayings are equally true.

I've arranged these old sayings alphabetically, but I didn't use the first word of the title. I used whatever word seemed important, and gave that word a bold initial, so you'd know it was the key word. It still usually doesn't help to find the old saying for which you're looking, because the titles don't always match the content. Sometimes they don't seem to match anything at all. I debated for a while if these old sayings should even have titles. I finally decided the compendium would be more fun if they did. So they do. And here they are.

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~ A ~

### the Aaron's Philosophy

Man shares certain significant characteristics with the rat and cockroach: He will eat almost anything. He is fiercely adaptable to a wide variety of conditions. He can survive as an individual but is at his best in swarms. He prefers to live, whenever possible, on what other creatures store or biologically manufacture. The conclusion is inescapable that he was designed by nature as a most superior sort of vermin - and that only the absence, in his early environment, of a sufficiently wealthy host prevented him from assuming the role of eternal guest and forced him to live hungrily, and more than a little irritably, by his own wits alone.

—The Aaron, in *Of Men and Monsters*, Chapter 24  
by William Tenn

### Acheson's Rule of the Bureaucracy

A memorandum is written to protect the writer, not to inform the reader.

—Dean Acheson

Also see  
Bureaucracy Laws

### the Airplane Law

When the plane you are on is late, the plane you want to transfer to is on time.

### Allen's Law

Almost anything is easier to get into than out of.

—Agnes Allen

### Allen's Prediction

The lion and the lamb shall lie down together, but the lamb won't get much sleep.

—from *Without Feathers*, Random House, 1977  
by Woody Allen

### Allports' Law of Mistakes

It's impossible to make a single mistake. Single mistakes become multiple mistakes.

—Milton Dickens, Professor of Speech, U.S.C.

Also see  
the Laws of Connections

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### Anderson's Laws

1. I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which when looked at the right way, did not become still more complicated.

Also see  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

2. The aspect of having “worked out for the best” is the inescapable consequence of the viewpoint of the people who descended from the victors.

—Poul Anderson

### the Expected Answer Principle

When solving a problem, it helps if you already know the answer.

Also see  
Guidelines for **L**aboratory Workers  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

### Arthur's Prayer

May God grant us the wisdom to discover the right, the will to choose it, and the strength to make it endure.

—King Arthur speaking at the Round Table in the movie *First Knight*

the Laws of **B**ackpacking

1. Any stone in your boot migrates against the pressure gradient to the point of most pressure.
2. The number of stones in your boot is directly proportional to the number of hours you have been on the trail.
3. The size of each of the stones in your boot is directly proportional to the number of hours you have been on the trail.
4. The weight of your boots is proportional to the cube of the number of hours you have been on the trail.
5. If you take your boots off, you'll never get them back on again.
6. The weight of your pack increases as you consume food from it. If you run out of food, the pack weight increases anyway.
7. The difficulty of finding any given trail marker is directly proportional to the importance of finding it.
8. The remaining distance to your chosen campsite remains constant as twilight approaches.
9. When you arrive at your chosen campsite, it will be full.
10. The local density of mosquitoes is inversely proportional to your remaining repellent.

**B**aer's Quartet

1. Good politics is bad economics.
2. Bad politics is good economics.
3. Good economics is bad politics.
4. Bad economics is good politics.

—Eugene W. Baer, Middletown, Rhode Island

Also see

**L**ani's Principles of Economics

**B**ambi's Comment

Eat, sleep, defecate, procreate. That's all they [the insects] do. That's all we do, but at least insects don't kid themselves that it's anything more than that.

—Dr. Bambi Barenbaum, USDA, Agricultural Research Service, from the *X-Files*

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### **Bannerman's Principle**

One who can define kindness only as the absence of cruelty has surely not begun to understand the nature of either.

—from the Journal of David Bannerman in *Angel's Egg*  
in the anthology *Good Neighbors and Other Strangers*  
by Edgar Pangborn

### **Barth's Distinction**

There are two types of people: those who divide people into two types, and those who don't.

### **Beifeld's Principle**

The chance of meeting a desirable and receptive young female becomes increasingly probable when you are already in the company of

1. a date
2. your wife
3. a better-looking and richer male friend.

—Ronald H. Beifeld

Also see  
Guidelines on **W**omen

### **from the Bene Gesserit Philosophy**

A world is supported by four things: The learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the righteous and the valor of the brave. But all these are as nothing without a ruler who knows the art of ruling.

—the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam  
Proctor Superior of the Bene Gesserit school on Wallach IX in *Dune*  
by Frank Herbert

### Berkeley's Laws

1. Most problems have either many answers or no answer. Only a few problems have a single answer.

Also see  
the Laws of **C**onnections

2. The moment you have worked out an answer, start checking it. It probably isn't right.
3. Check the answer you have worked out once more - before you tell it to anybody.  
—from the article *Right Answers: A Short Guide for Obtaining Them*  
by Edmund C. Berkeley in *Computers and Automation*, September, 1969

Also see  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

### Berra's Law

You can observe a lot just by watching.

—Yogi Berra

### the Bicycle Law

All bicycles weigh 30 pounds:

1. A 20 pound bicycle needs a 10 pound lock and chain.
2. A 25 pound bicycle needs a 5 pound lock and chain.
3. A 30 pound bicycle doesn't need a lock or chain.

### Bierce's Lament

Woman would be more charming if one could fall into her arms without falling into her hands.  
—from *Epigrams*  
by Ambrose Bierce

### Billings' Advice

Live within your income, even if you have to borrow to do it.

—Josh Billings

### Blake's Observation

Nothing is quite so convincing as a threat with teeth in it.

—Joel Blake, in *Whisper from the Stars*  
by Jeff Sutton

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### **Bok's Warning**

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

—attributed to Derek Bok  
quoted by Ann Landers

### **Bolton's Law**

Under current practices, both expenditures and revenues rise to meet each other, no matter which one may be in excess.

—Joe Bolton

### **Bombeck's Rule of Medicine**

Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died.

—Erma Bombeck

### **Boren's Guidelines for Bureaucracy**

1. When in doubt, mumble.
2. When in trouble, delegate.
3. When in charge, ponder.

—James H. Boren

Also see

**Bureaucracy Laws**

Guidelines for **Laboratory Workers**

### **the Nonchalance Rule of Borrowing**

In order to get a loan you must first prove you don't need it.

### **Boyle's Laws of Experimentation**

1. When things are going well, someone will inevitably experiment detrimentally.
2. Deficiencies never appear during dry runs.

—Charles P. Boyle, Goddard Space Flight Center

Also see

Guidelines for **Laboratory Workers**

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**Boyle's Laws of Bureaucracy**

1. An original idea can never emerge from committee in the original.
2. Information travels more surely to those with a lesser need to know.
3. If not controlled, work will flow to the competent man until he submerges.
4. The crucial memorandum will be snared in the out-basket by the paper clip of the overlying correspondence, and go to file.
5. Clearly stated instructions will produce multiple interpretations.
6. When the product is destined to fail, the delivery system will perform perfectly.
7. The lagging activity in a project will invariably be found in the area with the highest overtime rates.
8. Talent in staff work or sales will be interpreted as managerial ability.
9. The "think positive" leader tends to listen to his subordinates' premonitions only during the postmortems.
10. On successive charts of the same organization, the number of boxes will never decrease.

—Charles P. Boyle, Goddard Space Flight Center

Also see

**Bureaucracy Laws**

**Braggs' Assertion**

Nations are like people. When they grow old and rich and fat they get conservative. They exhaust their energy trying to keep things the way they are — and that's against nature.

—Mark Braggs, in *Alas, Babylon*  
by Pat Frank

Also see

**Maud'dib's Lesson**

**Brandeis' Warning**

Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficial. Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by evil-minded rulers. The greater dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding.

—Justice Louis Brandeis, *Olmstead v. United States*, 277 U.S. 479 (1928)

Also see

**Some Considerations Regarding Liberty**

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### **Brien's First Law**

At some time in the life of every organization, its ability to succeed in spite of itself runs out.  
—*The Managerialization of Higher Education*, from *Educational Record*, Summer, 1970  
by Richard H. Brien

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

### **Brooks' Law**

Adding manpower to a late project makes it later.  
—from *the Mythical Man-Month: Essays on Software Engineering*,  
by Frederick P. Brooks, Jr. S.T.L., Addison-Wesley, 1974

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

### **Brozik's Advice**

Never ask a question unless you want to know the answer.  
—Dallas Brozik, Braidwood, Illinois

**Bureaucracy Laws**

Acheson's Rule of the Bureaucracy

Boren's Guidelines for Bureaucracy

Boyle's Laws of Bureaucracy

Brien's First Law

Brooks' Law

Second Order Rule of Bureaucracy

Cheop's Law

Cohen's Laws

Dyer's Law

Hendrickson's Law

Guidelines for Laboratory Workers

Principles of Management by Crisis

Meskimen's Law

Milam's Observations

Mobil's Maxim

the Peter Principle

Peter's Inversion

Peter's Paradox

Vail's Axiom

Zimmerman's Law

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**Second Order Rule of Bureaucracy**

The more directives you issue to solve a problem, the worse it gets.

—in *New Engineer*, November, 1976  
by Jack Robertson

Also see

**Bureaucracy Laws**

the General Principles of **Problem Solving**

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**Butler's Law of Progress**

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All progress is based upon a universal innate desire on the part of every organism to live beyond its income.

—*Notebooks*  
by Samuel Butler

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### Cahn's Axiom

When all else fails, read the instructions.

### Calhoun's Observations

1. Human progress does not involve anything really new in kind, but only increased convenience and availability of highly primitive comforts.  
—in *The Mutant Weapon*, Chapter 2  
by Murray Leinster
2. A plague kills off those who are susceptible to it, leaving immunes to build up a world again. But immunes are the first to be killed when a mass neurosis sweeps a population.  
—in *This World is Taboo*, Chapter 2  
by Murray Leinster
3. Generally speaking, facts are hidden only from people whose job it would be to act on them.  
—by Murray Leinster

### Capp's Complaint

The only thing worse than being wrong is being right with nobody listening.  
—Florence Capp, from the Andy Capp comic strip

### Carnot's Advice

Speak little of what you know and not at all of what you do not know.  
—Nicholas Leonard Sadi Carnot

### Carow's Observation

Precedent is no substitute for logic.  
—Don Carow, General Electric Company, San Jose, California, April 12, 1979

(When I asked him if I should use “Don” or “Donald” in the credit, he said “However you’ve done it before.”)

### Carson's Consolation

No experiment is ever a complete failure. It can always be used as a bad example.

Also see  
Guidelines for Laboratory Workers

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### Caesar's Reply

Pardon him Theodotus: he is a barbarian and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature.

—Caesar, in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Act II  
by George Bernard Shaw

Also see  
**Gordon's Observation**

### Charle's Assertion

No human condition endures forever, with the corollary that the more complicated such a condition, the greater its susceptibility to change.

—O. C. Charle, Claghorn of the Overwheles, Castle Hagedorn, in *the Last Castle*  
by Jack Vance

### Cheop's Law

Nothing ever gets built on schedule or within budget.

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

### Churchill's Comment on Man

Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on.

—Winston Churchill

Also see  
**Katz's Law**

### the First Law of Civil Liberties

The defense of civil liberties, by definition, involves the defense of persons who are most despised by the public.

—Aryeh Neier, American Civil Liberties Union

### Clark's Laws

1. When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is probably wrong.
2. The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.
3. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.
4. Every revolutionary idea passes through three stages of reaction:
  1. It is completely impossible. Don't waste my time.
  2. It is possible, but not worth doing.
  3. I said it was a good idea all along.

### Clark's Prediction About Fanatics

Fanatics are always followed by fools, of which there is an inexhaustible supply.

—in *Minus Planet*  
by John D. Clark

### Clopton's Law

For every credibility gap there is a gullibility fill.

—Richard Clopton, quoted in *Peter's Quotations*, William Morrow & Coby  
by Laurence J. Peter

### Cohen's Laws

1. The more time you spend in reporting on what you are doing, the less time you have to do anything. Stability is achieved when you spend all your time doing nothing but reporting on the nothing you are doing.
2. What really matters is not the facts themselves, but the name you succeed in imposing upon them.

Also see

**B**ureaucracy Laws

### Cole's Law

Thinly chopped cabbage.

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## Comins' Law

People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.

—David H. Comins, Manchester, Connecticut

## Committee Rules

1. Never arrive on time, or you will be stamped a beginner.
2. Don't say anything until the meeting is half over. This stamps you as being wise.
3. Be as vague as possible. This prevents irritating the others.
4. When in doubt, suggest that a subcommittee be appointed.
5. Be the first to move for adjournment. This will make you popular. It's what everyone is waiting for.

—Harry Chapman

Also see

Parker's Rule of **Parliamentary Procedure**

## Commoner's Laws

1. Nothing is free.
2. Everything effects everything else.
3. Nothing ever goes away.

Also see

the Laws of **Connections**

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## the Laws of Connections

Allports' Law of Mistakes

Berkeley's Laws

Commoner's Laws

Ged's Clarification

Hardin's Law

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## First Law of Contracts

Anything that is unenforceable is not contractual.

—Evelyn Cyril (Oscar) Gordon, in *Glory Road*  
by Robert A. Heinlein

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### Duncan Idaho's Principle of Control

Good subjects must feel guilty. The guilt begins as a feeling of failure. The good autocrat provides many opportunities for failure in the populace.

—Duncan Idaho, in *the Children of Dune*  
by Frank Herbert

### Coolidge's Immutable Observation

When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results.

—Calvin Coolidge, in *Treasury of American Political Humor*, Dial, 1964  
by Leonard C. Lewin

### Cormier's Notes

1. Half a loaf is better than none, but half a bridge is not.

—July 18, 1989

2. It's easier to get forgiveness than it is to get permission.

—July 26, 1989

3. Equality? Ants are equal.

—date unknown

—Donald Joseph Raymond Cormier Jr.  
San Jose, California

### Correspondence Corollary

An experiment may be considered successful if no more than half of the data must be discarded to obtain correspondence with your pet theory.

Also see

Guidelines for **Laboratory Workers**

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**Davis' Dictum**

Problems that go away by themselves come back by themselves.

—Marcy E. Davis, Philadelphia

Also see  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

**DeAmicis' Observation**

Bad “lines” work with desperate women.

—Dante DeAmicis; San Jose, California, August 24, 1996

Also see  
Guidelines on **W**omen

**First Law of Debate**

Never argue with a fool. People might not notice the difference.

**the Rules of Decision Making**

1. Good decisions come from experience.
2. Experience comes from bad decisions.

Also see  
the First Rule of **E**xperience

**Decker's Prayer**

Dear Father, we are Thy servants in an unknown land and there is a deadly pride upon us. Teach us humility and lead us to the knowledge, before it is too late, that men, despite their far traveling and their mighty works, are still as children in Thy sight. Bless the bread we are about to break, we beg Thee, and keep us forever in Thy compassion. Amen.

—Commandant Tom Decker, in *Beachhead*, in the collection *Strangers in the Universe*  
by Clifford D. Simak

**the Delusion Principle**

Some people have delusions of grandeur. Others have delusions of adequacy.

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## Biggle's Laws of Democracy

1. Democracy imposed from without is the severest form of tyranny.
2. Democracy is not a form of government. It is a state of mind. People cannot arbitrarily be placed in a state of mind.
3. One measure of the urgency of revolution is the freedom the people have, compared with the freedom they want.
4. Fundamental to any democracy is the people's right to be wrong. No democracy has ever survived the abolishment of this principle.

—from IPR Manual 1048-K in *The World Menders*  
by Lloyd Biggle, Jr.

Also see

Some Considerations Regarding **D**emocracy

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## Some Considerations Regarding Democracy

Biggle's Laws of **D**emocracy

Some Perils of **D**emocracy

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## Some Perils of Democracy

Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote.

—Author Unknown

A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising them the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over a loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's great civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through this sequence: From bondage to spiritual faith; From spiritual faith to great courage; From courage to liberty; From liberty to abundance; From abundance to selfishness; From selfishness to complacency; From complacency to apathy; From apathy to dependence; From dependence back into bondage.

—Alexander Fraser Tytler, Scottish economist, 1776

Also see

Some Considerations Regarding **D**emocracy

**Donohue's Law**

What's worth doing is worth doing for money.

—Joseph Donohue

Also see  
**Gordon's Law**

**Douglas' Law of Practical Aeronautics**

When the weight of the paperwork equals the weight of the plane, the plane will fly.

—Donald Douglas

**Dress Code**

A woman's costume is a failure unless it makes men want to tear it off.

—Star, Empress of the Twenty Universes, in *Glory Road*  
by Robert A. Heinlein

**Drucker's Observation**

Strong people always have strong weaknesses.

—Chairman Peter Drucker

**Lord Durslan's Precaution**

When one lies, it's well to have a record of what one said.

—Melsa Ostrak Gouer, Lord Durslan, in *The Regiment*, chapter 44  
by John Dalmás

**Duty versus Choice**

And the truth is that as a man's real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower: until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he *must do*....

—a statement by the Master Summoner in *A Wizard of Earthsea*  
Chapter 4, *The Loosing of the Shadow*  
by Ursula K. LeGuin

Also see  
**Mollari's Lament**

**Dyer's Law**

A continuing flow of paper is sufficient to continue the flow of paper.

—Professor John M. Dyer, University of Miami

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

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### Economists' Indictment

Economists, like all pseudoscientific charlatans, know that they can hold onto their high-paying jobs only as long as they can keep the common people convinced that money matters are so mysterious that only economists can understand them.

—Juan Orfo in *The Way to Dawnworld*  
by Bill Starr

### Edwards' Observations

1. Many UFO sightings are almost as strange as their official explanations.
2. The bitterest skeptics are the uninformed.

—Frank Edwards

### Elaine's Advice

If you get a job with a company and then decide you don't like the company, you should try to ruin it from within by stealing all the pencils and screwing all the secretaries. If, on the other hand, you decide you LIKE the company, there's no reason to steal any pencils.

—Glenna Elaine Milam, San Jose, California

### Elaine's Observation

I stink. Therefore I am.

—Glenna Elaine Milam, San Jose, California

### Eleson's Observation

God gave man free will — not Limited Liability!

—Eric Richard Eleson, P.O.W. J-59564

### Eliot's Observation

Nothing is so good as it seems beforehand.

—*Silas Marner*, chapter 18  
by George Eliot (Marian Evans Cross)

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### Enemy's Legacy

I am your enemy, the first one you've ever had who was smarter than you. There is no teacher but the enemy. No one but the enemy will ever tell you what the enemy is going to do. No one but the enemy will ever teach you how to destroy and conquer. Only the enemy shows you where you are weak. Only the enemy tells you where he is strong. And the only rules of the game are what you can do to him and what you can stop him from doing to you. I am your enemy from now on. From now on I am your teacher.

I will devise the strategy of your enemy, and you will learn to be quick and discover what tricks the enemy has for you. Remember, boy. From now on the enemy is more clever than you. From now on the enemy is stronger than you. From now on you are always about to lose.

—Mazer Rackham, in *Ender's Game*, Chapter 14,  
by Orson Scott Card

Also see  
The First Rule of **W**ar

### Engineering Objective

One of the primary activities of the engineer is directing the inevitable degradation of energy so that in the process some useful result is obtained.

—*Circuits, Devices, and Systems: A First Course in Electrical Engineering*  
by Ralph J. Smith

### Erhard's Observation

If you stand in the rain you get wet, whether you understand water or not.

— Werner Erhard

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

### the First Rule of **E**xperience

Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Also see  
the Rules of **D**ecision Making



### **Falkland's Rule**

When it is not necessary to make a decision, it is necessary to not make a decision.

—Lucius, Second Lord Falkland

Also see

**Milam's Restatement of Falkland's Rule**

### **Fiedler's Forecasting Rules**

1. It is very difficult to forecast, especially about the future.
2. He who lives by the crystal ball soon learns to eat ground glass.
3. The moment you forecast, you know you're going to be wrong, you just don't know when and in which direction.
4. If you're ever right, never let them forget it.

—Edgar R. Fiedler

### **Ford's Admission**

A government big enough to give us everything we want is also a government big enough to take from us everything we have.

—Gerald Ford in the closing statement of the Presidential Debate  
September 23, 1976

### **Forsh's Warning**

The one must be sacrificed for the good of the many, until the many are all sacrificed, one by one.

—Martha Forsh, in *Joyleg*  
by Ward Moore and Avram Davidson

### **Frankel's Laws**

1. Whatever happens in government could have happened differently and it usually would have been better if it had.
2. Once things have happened, no matter how accidentally, they will be regarded as manifestations of an unchangeable Higher Reason.

—from *High on Foggy Bottom*, by Professor Charles Frankel  
Harper and Row, 1969

Also see

**Historian's Rule**

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### **Fuchs' Warning**

If you actually look like your passport photo, you aren't well enough to travel.

—Sir Vivian Fuchs

### **Fudd's First Law of Opposition**

If you push something hard enough it will fall over.

Also see

a Few of **M**urphy's Laws

~ G ~

Law of Gardening

You get the most of what you need the least.

—Jane Bryant Quinn

Gandhi's Observation

There's more to life than increasing its speed.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Ged's Clarification

Do you see, Arren, how an act is not, as young men think, like a rock that one picks up and throws, and it hits or misses, and that's the end of it? When a rock is lifted, the earth is lighter; and the hand that bears it heavier. When it is thrown, the circuits of the stars respond, and where it strikes or falls the universe is changed. On every act the balance of the whole depends.

—Ged, in *the Farthest Shore*  
by Ursula K. LeGuin

Also see  
the Laws of Connections

Reflection on Genius

A genius is someone who travels to truth by an unexpected path.

—from *The Men Who Murdered Mohammed*  
by Alfred Bester  
in *The Best From Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 8th Series  
edited by Anthony Boucher

Gerrold's Laws

1. Understanding the laws of nature does not mean we are free from obeying them.

Also see  
the Limitations of Understanding

2. Hell hath no fury like a pacifist.

—David Gerrold, in *Starlog*

Gilmore's Regret

Sick minds will find encouragement, no matter what.

—Gary Gilmore, prior to his execution for murder

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## Ginsbert's Theorem

1. You can't win.
2. You can't break even.
3. You can't even quit the game.

## A Speculation About God

God is subtle, but he is not malicious.

—Albert Einstein

## Goedel's Axiom

In any closed mathematical system there are an infinite number of true theorems which, though contained within the original system, cannot be deduced from it.

—Goedel

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

## the Golden Principle

Nothing will be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.

Also see  
a Few of **M**urphy's Laws

## The Wisdom of Gor

1. Beware of a silent enemy.
2. Invisible chains are those which weigh the most heavily.

—Samos

—Tarl Cabot  
—from *Tribesmen of Gor*  
by John Norman

## Gordon's Law

Anything not worth doing at all is not worth doing well.

Also see  
**D**onohue's Law

**Gordon's Observation**

All freedoms arise from cultural conflicts because a custom which is not opposed by its negative is mandatory and always regarded as a "law of nature."

—Evelyn Cyril (Oscar) Gordon, in *Glory Road*  
by Robert A. Heinlein

Also see  
**Caesar's Reply**

**Gross's Law**

When two people meet to decide how to spend a third person's money, fraud will result.

—Herman Gross, Great Neck, New York

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### Hagerty's Law

If you lose your temper at a newspaper columnist, he'll get rich or famous or both.

### Haldane's Law

Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose.... I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of, in any philosophy.

—*Possible Worlds*  
John Burdon Sanderson Haldane

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

### Hale's Rule

The sumptuousness of a company's annual report is in inverse proportion to its profitability that year.

—Irving Hale, of the Sarvis Group Inc., Denver

### Hamlet's Assertion

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.  
—Hamlet, act I, sc. v, l. 166,  
by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

### Hardin's Law

You can never do merely one thing.

—Biologist Garrett Hardin

Also see  
the Laws of **C**onnections

### Hardin's Advice

1. It pays to be obvious, especially if you have a reputation for subtlety.
2. Never let your sense of morals prevent you from doing what's right.

—Salvor Hardin, in *Foundation*  
by Isaac Asimov

# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Hartley's Prediction

You can lead a horse to water, but if you can get him to float on his back you've got something.

## Harvard Law

Under the most carefully controlled conditions of pressure, temperature, volume, humidity, and other variables, the organism will do as it damn well pleases.

## Hawking's Postulate

Given infinity, all things are equally probable.

—Stephen Hawking, Cambridge University

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

## Heller's Advice for Managers

1. Think before you act; it's not your money.
2. Cash in must exceed cash out.
3. The easiest way of making money is to stop losing it.
4. If sophisticated calculations are needed to justify an action, don't do it.
5. If you are doing something wrong, you will do it badly.
6. If you are attempting the impossible, you will fail.

—from *The Great Executive Dream*, Delacorte, 1972  
by Robert Heller

## Heller's Myths of Management

1. The first myth of management is that it exists.
2. The second myth of management is that success equals skill.

—from *The Great Executive Dream*  
by Robert Heller, Delacorte, 1972

## Heller's Truths of Management

1. No executive devotes effort to proving himself wrong.
2. Either an executive can do his job or he can't.

—from *The Great Executive Dream*, Delacorte, 1972  
by Robert Heller

**Hendrickson's Law**

If a problem causes many meetings, the meetings will become more important than the problem.

Also see

**B**ureaucracy Laws  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

**Herbig's Advice**

Never do anything for the first time.

—Paul Herbig, Chicago, Illinois

**Historian's Rule**

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian.

—from *The Public Speaker's Treasure Chest*, (Harper & Row)  
by Lee Simonson and Herbert V. Prochnow

Also see

**F**rankel's Laws

**Howe's Observation**

Every man has a scheme that won't work.

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~ I ~

the First Law of Ignorance

There is nothing more frightful than ignorance in action.

Milam's First Corporate Corollary to the First Law of Ignorance

There is nothing more frightful than ignorant management in action.

Italian Proverb

She who is silent consents.

Also see  
Guidelines on **Women**

Invisibility

So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.  
—John 8:59, Revised Standard Version

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~ J ~

**Jacquin's Postulate**

No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session.

**Jones' Laws**

1. The man who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone to blame it on.
2. Friends may come and friends may go, but enemies accumulate.  
—Thomas Jones, former president, University of South Carolina

**Jones' Rule of the Road**

The easiest way to refold a road map is differently.  
—Franklin P. Jones, in *The Wall Street Journal*

**Jude's Observation**

The true point of entry into an alien land is when you can no longer read the road signs.  
—Jude Rowe in *A Rumor of Angels*, Chapter 20  
by M. Bradley Kellogg

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~ K ~

### **Katz's Law**

Men and nations will act rationally when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

Also see

**Churchill's Comment on Man**

**Milam's Response to Katz's Law**

### **Kelso's Doctrine**

I believe in my own instincts and my own wits, and both say to be distrustful of all authority. There are laws that I respect because I recognize those laws as serving a common good. There are laws that I break because I see them as serving private interests. But in no case will I bow to any dictum that says I must obey or serve, in ignorance or faith, some so-called higher order because those who tell me I must do so are better or higher than myself and understand things I don't. Human history has proved that to be a colossal (sic) crock. *Nobody* is higher than anybody else in that sense, and the moment some fool or collusion of fools begins to think he — or they — *are*, then in my book they've joined the worms and should be promptly and categorically squashed.

—Mad Jack Kelso, speaking in *Under The City of Angels*, chapter 18. Acceptance  
by Jerry Earl Brown

### **Klipstein's Observations**

#### **Design**

1. The more innocuous a design change appears, the further its influence will extend.
2. The necessity of making a major design change increases as the fabrication of the system approaches completion.

#### **Servicing Equipment**

1. After all mounting screws have been removed from an access cover, it will be discovered that the wrong access cover has been removed.
2. After all access cover screws have been re-installed, it will be discovered that the gasket has been omitted.
3. After an instrument has been fully assembled, extra components will be found on the bench.

—D L. Klipstein

Also see

**Poppa's Pronouncements**

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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### **Knower's Ratio**

If the proposed problem is big enough to be significant, it cannot be solved. If it is delimited enough to be solvable, it is not worth solving.

—Milton Dickens, Professor of Speech, U.S.C.

Also see  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

### **Kristol's Law**

Being frustrated is disagreeable, but the real disasters in life begin when you get what you want.

—Irving Kristol

### **Kuiper's Assertion**

It is not a foregone conclusion . . . that the problem [of understanding the origin of the solar system] has a scientific solution. For instance, an enclosure in which the air has been stirred gives, after some delay, no clue on the nature or the time of the stirring. All memory of the event within the system has been lost.

—Gerard P. Kuiper, astronomer, University of Arizona

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

### **Kynes' Warning**

Beyond a critical point within a finite space, freedom diminishes as numbers increase. This is as true of humans in the finite space of a planetary ecosystem as it is of gas molecules in a sealed flask. The human question is not how many can possibly survive within the system but what kind of existence is possible for those who do survive.

—Pardot Kynes, First Planetologist of Arrakis in *Dune*  
by Frank Herbert

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### **La Rochefoucauld's Warning**

It is more ignominious to mistrust our friends than to be deceived by them.

—La Rochefoucauld

### **Laboratory Procedures**

1. When you don't know what you are doing, do it neatly.
2. Experiments must be reproducible. They should all fail the same way.
3. First draw your curves, then plot the data.
4. A record of data is essential. It indicates you've been working.
5. To study a subject best, understand it thoroughly before you start.
6. In case of doubt, make it sound convincing. Talk loudly and authoritatively.
7. Do not merely believe in miracles. Rely on them.
8. Teamwork is essential in the laboratory. It allows you to blame someone else.

Also see

Guidelines for **Laboratory Workers**

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### **Guidelines for Laboratory Workers**

the Expected **Answer Principle**

**Boren's Guidelines for Bureaucracy**

**Boyle's Laws of Experimentation**

**Bureaucracy Laws**

**Carson's Consolation**

**Correspondence Corollary**

**Laboratory Procedures**

**Murphy's Laws on Technology**

**Patrick's Theorem**

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# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Lady Jan's Pronouncements

Life's a virgin. If it was a bitch, it'd be easier.

Computers have spooks in 'em.

—Lady Jan the Voluptuous  
Firth, Idaho

## Lafferty's Reflection

You think people are silly to believe in ghosts? You should hear some of the silly things ghosts believe in!

—in *Fourth Mansions*  
by R. A. Lafferty

## Lani's Principles of Economics

1. Taxes are not levied for the benefit of the taxed.
2. One hundred dollars placed at 7% interest compounded quarterly for 200 years will increase to more than \$100,000,000, by which time it will be worth nothing.
3. In God we trust, all others pay cash.

Also see  
Baer's Quartet

## Lawyer's Obligation

He [the lawyer] is, however, in a sense an officer of the state, with an obligation to the courts and to the public no less significant than his obligation to his clients. Thus, an attorney occupies a dual position which imposes dual obligations. His first duty is to the courts and the public, not to the client, and wherever the duties to his client conflict with those he owes as an officer of the court in the administration of justice, the former must yield to the latter.

—7 C.J.S. Attorney & Client § 4

## Lawyer's Rules

When the law is against you, argue the facts. When the facts are against you, argue the law. When both are against you, call the other lawyer names.

## Lewis' Observation

The approval of one's own conscience is a very heady draught; and specially for those who are not accustomed to it.

—from *That Hideous Strength*, chapter 12  
by C. S. Lewis

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Some Considerations Regarding Liberty

Brandeis' Warning

Lyle's Objection

Thoreau's Advice

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Lincoln's Objective

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.

—Abraham Lincoln  
in a Letter to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862

Lippmann's Thought

When we all think alike, no one is thinking very much.

—Walter Lippmann

Locke's Axiom

The greatest error of legal theory in the entire history of law is the idea that just because a thing is bad, that thing should also be illegal.

—Warrick Merrill Locke

Also see  
Sin Syndrome

Locke's Conjecture

Logic is a device whereby people find excuses for getting the right answers.

—Warrick Merrill Locke

Lord Jeffrey's Observations About Computers

1. If you don't have at least one crash per day, then you're not **really** using your computer.
2. If it happens once, then it's a glitch. If it happens twice, then it's a problem.
3. A restart will cure many problems.

—Lord Jeffrey the Studious of Lystra

Lowery's Law

If it jams, force it. If it breaks, it needed replacing anyway.

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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### Luce's Law

No good deed ever goes unpunished.

—Clare Boothe Luce

### Luck Defined

Luck is a tag given by the mediocre to account for the accomplishments of genius.

—Elihu Nivens' father, "the Old Man"  
in *The Puppet Masters*, by Robert A. Heinlein

### Lyle's Objection

When any government, or any church for that matter, undertakes to say to its subjects, "This you may not read, this you must not see, this you are forbidden to know," the end result is tyranny and oppression, no matter how holy the motives.

—John Lyle  
in *If this Goes On-*, by Robert A. Heinlein

Also see  
Some Considerations Regarding Liberty

the Wisdom of Mahasamatman, Sam Kalkin

...A thing happens once that has never happened before. Seeing it, a man looks upon reality. He cannot tell others what he has seen. Others wish to know, however, so they question him saying, 'What is it like, this thing you have seen?' So he tries to tell them. Perhaps he has seen the very first fire in the world. He tells them, 'It is red, like a poppy, but through it dance other colors. It has no form, like water, flowing everywhere. It is warm, like the sun of summer, only warmer. It exists for a time upon a piece of wood, and then the wood is gone, as though it were eaten, leaving behind that which is black and can be sifted like sand. When the wood is gone, it too is gone.' Therefore, the hearers must think reality is like a poppy, like water, like the sun, like that which eats and excretes. They think it is like to anything that they are told it is like by the man who has known it. But they have not looked upon fire. They cannot really know it. They can only know of it. But fire comes again into the world, many times. More men look upon fire. After a time, fire is as common as grass and clouds and the air they breathe. They see that, while it is like a poppy, it is not a poppy, while it is like water, it is not water, while it is like the sun, it is not the sun, and while it is like that which eats and passes wastes, it is not that which eats and passes wastes, but something different from each of these apart or all of these together. So they look upon this new thing and they make a new word to call it. They call it 'fire.'

If they come upon one who still has not seen it and they speak to him of fire, he does not know what they mean. So they, in turn, fall back upon telling him what fire is like. As they do so, they know from their own experience that what they are telling him is not the truth, but only a part of it. They know that this man will never know reality from their words, though all the words in the world are theirs to use. He must look upon the fire, smell of it, warm his hands by it, stare into its heart, or remain forever ignorant....

—from section i, pages 43-44

Also see

The Limitations of Understanding

It is difficult to stir rebellion among those to whom all things are good.

—from section i, page 48

The personal strengths and weaknesses of a leader are no true indication of the merits of his cause.

—from section iii, page 136  
—in *Lord of Light*  
by Roger Zelazny

the Laws of Maintenance

1. If it ain't broken, don't fix it. (Sleeping Dog Rule)
2. If it's broken, fix it.

# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Majeski's Observation

A teacher should be a leader who doesn't require anyone to follow him.

—James Majeski; Milpitas, California

## Principles of Management by Crisis

1. To get action out of management, it is necessary to create the illusion of a crisis.
2. When it perceives a crisis, management will over-react.
3. Management is incapable of recognizing a true crisis.

—from *Computers and Automation*  
by Gene Franklin

Also see

**Bureaucracy Laws**

## Marshall's Generalized Iceberg Theorem

Seven-eighths of *everything* can't be seen.

Also see

the Limitations of **Understanding**

## Marshall's Warning

The power to tax involves the power to destroy.

—John Marshall, in *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 4 Wheaton 316, 407 (1819)

## Maslow's Maxim

If the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat everything like it was a nail.

## Biggle's Conjecture Concerning Matrimony

Matrimony has two basic flaws: husbands and wives. Every male has an innate talent for being a deplorable husband. Females match this with a truly astonishing aptitude for being wretched wives. What the human race needs is a third sex, neuter, with a boundless domestic capacity. Then either of the present sexes could marry it and be happy.

—Jan Darzek, in *Watchers of the Dark*, chapter 1  
by Lloyd Biggle, Jr.

### Maud'dib's Lesson

Empires do not suffer emptiness of purpose at the time of their creation. It is when they have become established that aims are lost and replaced by vague ritual.

—Maud'dib, in *Dune Messiah*  
by Frank Herbert

Also see  
**Braggs' Assertion**

### McMillan's Plan

I only have two things to do today, but one of them is to get through the day.

—Kathy McMillan, Advanced Micro Devices, Sunnyvale, California  
Monday, July 28, 1986, 7:55 AM

### Mencken's Observation

A puritan is a person who is terribly afraid that someone, somewhere is having a good time.

—H. L. Mencken

### Mercy Lesson

They always cry first to receive mercy who would be the last to bestow it.

—The Black Panther, comic book hero

### Meskimen's Law

There's never time to do it right but always time to do it over.

—John K. Meskimen, Fall Church, Virginia

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

### Milam's Observations

1. Within any bureaucracy, it's safer to be consistently wrong than to be right some of the time.

Also see  
**Peter's Inversion**

2. Within any bureaucracy, it's safer to appear competent than to be competent.  
—Sam Aurelius Milam III

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**  
**Peter's Paradox**

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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### Milam's Response to Katz's Law

Katz was an optimist.

—Sam Aurelius Milam III

Also see  
**Katz's Law**

### Milam's Restatement of Falkland's Rule

When it isn't necessary to pass a law, it's necessary to not pass a law.

—Sam Aurelius Milam III

Also see  
**Falkland's Rule**

### Mill's Theory of Cause and Effect

We know nothing of cause except as an antecedent-nothing of effect except as a consequent. Of certain phenomena, one never occurs without another, which is dissimilar: the first in point of time we call cause, the second, effect. One who had many times seen a rabbit pursued by a dog, and had never seen rabbits and dogs otherwise, would think the rabbit the cause of the dog.

—Quoted by Moxon, attributed to Mill in *Moxon's Master*  
by Ambrose Bierce

in *The Pocket Book of Science-Fiction*  
edited by Donald A. Wollheim

Also see  
the Limitations of **Understanding**

### Miller's Law

You can't tell how deep a puddle is until you step into it.

Also see  
the Limitations of **Understanding**

### Mobil's Maxim

Bad regulation begets worse regulation.

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

**Modeski's Law**

No matter how paranoid you are, you're not paranoid enough.

—Susanne Modeski, X-Files

Also see

**Shevek's Observations**

**Shirley's Law**

**Mollari's Lament**

It is a terrible truth that as one accumulates power, one loses friends.

—Londo Mollari, Babylon 5

Also see

**Duty versus Choice**

**Moltke's Observation**

No plan of battle ever survives contact with the enemy.

—Helmuth von Moltke

**a Few of Murphy's Laws**

1. If anything can go wrong, it will.
2. Nothing is ever as simple as it seems.
3. If you play with something long enough, you will surely break it.

Also see

**Fudd's First Law of Opposition**

4. Whenever you set out to do something, something else must be done first.

Also see

the **Golden Principle**

5. If you make things absolutely clear, you will confuse people.
6. The more urgent the need for a decision, the less apparent becomes the identity of the decision maker.
7. After all is said and done, a lot more is said than done.
8. Blame will never be placed if enough people are involved.

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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### Murphy's Laws on Technology

1. Any circuit design must contain at least one part which is obsolete, two parts which are unobtainable and three parts which are still under development.

Also see  
the Laws of **P**rogramming

2. If an experiment works, something has gone wrong.

Also see  
Guidelines for **L**aboratory Workers

3. A failure will not appear until a unit has passed final inspection.
4. New systems generate new problems.

~ N ~

**Newton's Little-known Seventh Law**

A bird in the hand is safer than one overhead.

**Ningauble's Truth**

He who lies artistically, treads closer to the truth than ever he knows.

—Ningauble of the Seven Eyes from *Swords in the Mist*, chapter VI  
by Fritz Leiber

Also see  
the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

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~ O ~

**Oppression Principle**

The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

—South African activist Steve Biko

**Orben's Packaging Discovery**

Today, one bag of groceries produces two bags of trash.

—Robert Orben

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~ P ~

### **Paige's Sixth Rule**

Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you.

—*How to Keep Young*  
by Satchel Paige

### **Pangborn's Laws**

1. A crisis passed usually means another one approached.
2. Of the many ways of persuading a woman to change her mind, sitting on your butt thinking sad thoughts is not one.  
—in *Maxwell's Monkey* in the anthology *Good Neighbors and Other Strangers*  
by Edgar Pangborn

### **Parker's Law of Rhetoric**

The truth of a proposition has nothing to do with its credibility, and vice versa.

### **Parkinson's Law**

Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.

—*Parkinson's Law*  
by C. Northcote Parkinson

### **Parker's Rule of Parliamentary Procedure**

A motion to adjourn is always in order.

Also see  
**Committee Rules**

### **Pastore's Truth**

Even paranoids have enemies.

### **Patrick's Theorem**

If an experiment works, you must be using the wrong equipment or you left something out.

Also see  
**Guidelines for Laboratory Workers**

# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Peckham's Law

Beauty times brains equals a constant.

Also see  
Guidelines on **Women**

## Peers' Law

The solution to a problem changes the problem.

—John Peers

Also see  
the General Principles of **Problem Solving**

## the Peter Principle

In a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence.

—*The Peter Principle*  
by Dr. Laurence J. Peter

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**  
**Weiss' Instructions**

## Peter's Inversion

Internal consistency is valued more highly than efficiency.

—Dr. Laurence J. Peter

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**  
**Milam's Observations**

## Peter's Paradox

Employees in a hierarchy don't really object to incompetence in their colleagues.

—Dr. Laurence J. Peter

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**  
**Milam's Observations**

## Pierce's Law of Inevitability

Everybody's a turkey to somebody.

—Gerald A. Pierce  
General Electric Company, San Jose, California, July 12, 1976

## Playboy's Observation

Nothing is more wasted than a smile on the face of a girl with a forty-inch bust.

—More Playboy's Party Jokes  
Playboy Magazine

Also see  
Guidelines on **W**omen

## Poppa's Pronouncements

### 1. Rules for Successful Public Speaking

1. Be sincere.
2. Be brief.
3. Be seated.

### 2. (During reassembly) Son, get all them sonsabitches started before ya tighten any of 'em!

Also see  
**K**lipstein's Observations

3. It's the days that seem long. The years fly by!
4. Indian build small fire. Keep warm by sittin' close. White man build big fire. Keep warm by carryin' wood.
5. A diplomat is a man who can remember a woman's birthday, and forget her age.
6. When they said "Two can live as cheaply as one." what they really meant was, "A man and his wife can live as cheaply as their teenage daughter."
7. Son, nine times outa ten, the problem ain't the bolts in the engine, it's the nut behind the wheel.
8. Son, don't ever take off on a cold engine.
9. Don't ever tell anybody everything you know.
10. Son, if ya lose your brakes, aim for somethin' cheap.

—Sam Aurelius Milam, Jr.

## The Poverty Credo

The best thing you can do for poor people is not to be one of them.

—Rev. Ike

# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## **Prince Johar's Advice**

Make your choice not upon that which is offered you but upon that which you may offer others.

—Prince Johar  
in *the Night Train to Kathmandu*

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## **the General Principles of Problem Solving**

### **Anderson's Laws**

the Expected Answer Principle

**Berkeley's Laws**

Second Order Rule of **B**ureaucracy

**Davis' Dictum**

**Hendrickson's Law**

**Knower's Ratio**

**Peers' Law**

**Scully's Observations**

**Sevareid's Law**

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## **the Laws of Programming**

1. A working program is one that has only unobserved bugs.

Also see

**Murphy's Laws on Technology**

2. Every non-trivial program has at least one bug.

Corollaries:

1. A sufficient condition for program triviality is that it have no bugs.
2. At least one bug will be observed after the author leaves the organization.
3. The subtlest bugs cause the greatest damage or problems.

Corollary:

A subtle bug will modify storage, thereby masquerading as some other problem.

4. Bugs will appear in one part of a working program when another unrelated part is modified.

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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5. A debugged program that crashes will wipe out source files on storage devices when there is the least available back-up.
6. A hardware failure will cause system software to crash, and the CE will blame the programmers.
7. A system software crash will cause hardware to act strangely, and the programmers will blame the CE.
8. The documented interfaces between standard software modules will have undocumented quirks.

### the Progress Prognosis

Progress is our most important problem.

—Bob Donselman, Redwood City, California

### Putnam's Assertion

You can trace the history of every piece of land back to the guy who stole it.

—Harlan Ray Putnam  
Department of Economics, Texas A&M University

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~ *R* ~

**Raskin's Zero Law**

The more zeroes found in the price tag for a government program, the less Congressional scrutiny it will receive.

—Marcus Raskin, the Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.

**Ray's Exclamation**

Come on! You know better! Does the contract have to say "think"?

—Linda Ray speaking on the telephone to a subcontractor  
General Electric Company, San Jose, California  
April 15, 1981

**First Law of Religious Freedom**

Religious freedom in a cultural complex is inversely proportional to the strength of the strongest religion.

—Evelyn Cyril (Oscar) Gordon in *Glory Road*,  
by Robert A. Heinlein

**Roger's Rule**

If a woman is available, there's a reason.

—Roger Hopkins, San Jose, California

Also see  
Guidelines on **Women**

**Runyon's Law**

The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that's the way to bet.

—Damon Runyon in *Peter's Quotations*, William Morrow & Co.  
by Laurence J. Peter

Also see  
Formulae for **Success**

**Russell's Comment on Jealousy**

Jealousy must not be regarded as a justifiable insistence upon rights, but as a misfortune to the one who feels it and a wrong toward its object. Those who shut love in a cage destroy the beauty and joy that it can display only while it is free and spontaneous. He who fears to lose his love has already lost it.

—Bertrand Russell

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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### **Rutherford's Rule**

The more you don't know how to do, the less you have to do.

—Larry Rutherford, Virginia Military Institute

### **Ryan's Law**

Make three correct guesses consecutively and you will establish yourself as an expert.

~ S ~

### Schnebly's Apology

We don't supply answers around here, just excuses.

—Larry E. Schnebly, General Electric Company

Also see

**Stramback's Response**

### Schnebly's Quote

Never tell the truth if you can think of a lie that sounds better.

—attributed to a previous acquaintance by Larry E. Schnebly, General Electric Company

### Schnebly's Reply

We don't have any hard limits on that, just different degrees of nervousness.

—Larry E. Schnebly, General Electric Company, April 21, 1976

### Schnebly's Speculation

I expect they will find a cure for cancer long before they find a cure for government.

—Larry E. Schnebly, General Electric Company, November 10, 1976

### Scully's Observations

1. Nothing happens in contradiction to nature, only in contradiction to what we know of it.
2. It is my experience that lawyers ask the wrong question only when they don't want the right answer.
3. A dream is the answer to a question that we haven't yet learned how to ask.  
(attributed to Fox Moulder)

—Dana Scully, X-Files

Also see

the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

the Limitations of **U**nderstanding

### Scytale's Warning

Reason is the first victim of strong emotion.

—Scytale the Face Dancer in *Dune Messiah*  
by Frank Herbert

## *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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### Selassie's Command

Everyone will now be mobilized, and all boys old enough to carry a spear will be sent to Addis Ababa. Married men will take their wives to carry food and cook. Those without wives will take any woman without a husband.... Anyone found at home after the receipt of this order will be hanged.

—Emperor Haile Selassie as Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1935

### Selkas' Observation

A civilized culture plumbs depths of depravity unknown to a genuine primitive.

—Selkas in *Veruchia*,  
by E. C. Tubb

### Sevareid's Law

The chief cause of problems is solutions.

Also see  
the General Principles of **P**roblem Solving

### Sharif's Entreatment

Doubtless you know better, O my beloved, than to try and make me jealous of a rival. The world holds too few intelligent lovely girls. I'd feel it selfish to keep one all to myself. Do, though, choose for lovers men I can respect. Otherwise, I shall lose all respect for you.

—Mustapha Sharif in *Web of Everywhere*  
by John Brunner

### Sharif's Regret

Once a fool who loved gold killed his rival to possess a lovely golden statue of a god. Afraid of being caught, he melted the statue down, saying fire could not destroy its worth. They found him starved to death in a waterless valley, his bare fingerbones clutching the gold. I do not call him foolish because he could not eat gold, but because beauty is the food of the soul.

—Mustapha Sharif in *Web of Everywhere*  
by John Brunner

### Sheckley's Law

In order to ask a question you must already know most of the answer.

—Answerer, in *Ask a Foolish Question* in the anthology *Citizen in Space*  
by Robert Sheckley

**Shevek's Observations**

If you can see a thing whole, it seems that it's always beautiful. Planets, lives... But close up, a world's all dirt and rocks. And day to day, life's a hard job, you get tired, you lose the pattern. You need distance, interval. The way to see how beautiful the earth is, is to see it as the moon. The way to see how beautiful life is, is from the vantage point of death.

—chapter 6

The individual cannot bargain with the State. The State recognizes no coinage but power: and it issues the coins itself.

—chapter 9

Also see

**Modeski's Law**

**Shirley's Law**

You cannot buy the Revolution. You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the Revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.

—chapter 9

Sacrifice might be demanded of the individual, but never compromise: for though only the society can give security and stability, only the individual, the person, has the power of moral choice.

—chapter 10

We are not subjects of a State founded upon law, but members of a society founded upon revolution. Revolution is our obligation: our hope of evolution. "The revolution is in the individual spirit, or it is nowhere. It is for all, or it is nothing. If it is seen as having any end, it will never truly begin." We can't stop here. We must go on. We must take the risks.

—chapter 12

—all from *The Dispossessed*  
by Ursula K. LeGuin

**Shirley's Law**

When dealing with government, you cannot be too paranoid.

—Daniel Torrence (Hard Eyes) from *Eclipse*  
by John Shirley

Also see

**Modeski's Law**

**Shevek's Observations**

**Simon's Law**

Everything put together sooner or later falls apart.

# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Sin Syndrome

One of this country's historic problems has been the inability of its lawmakers to distinguish between crime and sin.

—Playboy Forum, September 1978

Also see  
Locke's Axiom

## Skar's Observation

Worship arises from ignorance.

—Datnil Skar in *Helliconia Spring*, chapter 8  
by Brian W. Aldiss

## Smart's Reassurance

Don't worry Chief, I can stand the torture if they can stand the screaming.

—Maxwell Smart, Secret Agent 86

## Spacer's Philosophy

A test of any kind of gear proves only that the gear was working at the time of the test. Furthermore, such a test may well be the penultimate straw, the straw just before the last one that breaks the camel's back.

—an unknown Rim Runner in *Rendezvous on a Lost World*,  
by A. Bertram Chandler

## Specht's Metalaw

Under any conditions, anywhere, whatever you are doing, there is some ordinance under which you can be booked.

—Robert D. Specht, the Rand Corporation

## Star's Observation

Good intentions are the source of more folly than all other causes put together.

—Star, Empress of the Twenty Universes in *Glory Road*, Chapter 19  
by Robert A. Heinlein

## Storm's Challenge

Go big or go home.

—Kyler Storm  
performing in the American Gladiators competition, 1995

### Stramback's Response

We don't answer customer questions. We respond to them.

—George Stramback, Manager, Technical Licensing Support  
General Electric Company, San Jose, California

Also see

**S**chnebly's Apology

### the Stupidity Warning

Never underestimate the power of human stupidity.

### The Subversion Principle

Patience is the greatest of virtues if you're going to subvert a society, and there's no substitute for preparation.

—Qwin Zhang in *Cerberus: A Wolf in the Fold*, chapter 4  
by Jack L. Chalker

Also see

**Y**ama's Declaration

### Formulae for Success

1. Rise early, work late, strike oil.

—J. Paul Getty

2. Buy low, sell high.

—anonymous

3. Don't bet on the ponies.

—Poppa

Also see

**R**unyon's Law

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**Taubman's Principle**

The first principle of the design of high-density accommodation is that you design it for somebody else.

—Dr. Gordon Taubman in *Horizon Alpha*  
by Douglas R. Mason

**Terman's Law of Innovation**

If you want a track team to win the high jump, you find one person who can jump seven feet, not seven people who can jump one foot.

**Thoreau's Advice**

If you see a man approaching with the obvious intent of doing you good, run for your life.

Also see  
Some Considerations Regarding Liberty

**Thurber's Conclusion**

There is no safety in numbers, or in anything else.

—*Fables for Our Time*,  
by James Thurber, Harper & Brothers

**Comment on Time**

Time is just nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once.  
—graffito, men's room of the Liberal Arts Building, University of Arizona

**Traveler's Consolation**

It's not where you are that counts, but how far you've traveled from where you started.  
—Dell and Tracy Ford, Seattle, Washington

**Trischmann's Observation**

A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool something to stick in his mouth.

**First Law of Truth**

We must face the truth, however great the cost.  
—Kui Chang Caine, in the T.V. series Kung Fu

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## **U Thant's Warning**

I do not wish to seem overly dramatic, but I can only conclude from the information that is available to me as Secretary-General that the members of the United Nations have perhaps ten years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion and to supply the required momentum to development efforts. If such a global partnership is not forged within the next decade, then I very much fear that the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control.

—U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, 1969

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## **the Limitations of Understanding**

**Erhard's Observation**

**Gerrold's Laws**

**Goedel's Axiom**

**Haldane's Law**

**Hamlet's Assertion**

**Hawking's Postulate**

**Kuiper's Assertion**

the Wisdom of **Mahasamatman**

**Marshall's Generalized Iceberg Theorem**

**Miller's Law**

**Mill's Theory of Cause and Effect**

**Ningauble's Truth**

**Scully's Observations**

**Unnamed Law**

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## **Unnamed Law**

If it happens, it must be possible.

Also see  
the Limitations of **Understanding**

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**Vail's Axiom**

In any human enterprise, work seeks the lowest hierarchic level.

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

**Vique's Law**

A man without religion is like a fish without a bicycle.



**Virtue Defined**

Virtue is right conduct in the face of temptation. If there is no temptation, there can be no virtue.

—Evelyn Cyril (Oscar) Gordon, in *Glory Road*  
by Robert A. Heinlein

**Vry's Law**

No observation, however simple, can be made except by those predisposed to make it.

—Vry, in *Helliconia Spring*  
by Brian W. Aldiss

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# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Walker's Observation

Lust is universal. Only inhibitions change from time to time and place to place.

—Lou Walker, July 30, 1979

## Walters' Law

If you're already in a hole, there's no use to continue digging.

—Roy W. Walters, Roy Walters Associates, Glen Rock, New Jersey

## The First Rule of War

One of the fundamental rules, if not the most fundamental rule of Vietnamese military science, is that in war you must win.

—General Vo Nguyen Giap, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Also see

**E**nemy's Legacy

## Watkins' Cautionary Note<sup>1</sup>

When you try to take the credit for something, you often receive the blame, instead.

—K. E. Watkins, General Electric Company, November 29, 1977

## Weiler's Law

Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself.

## Weinberg's Corollary

An expert is a person who avoids the small errors while sweeping on to the grand fallacy.

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<sup>1</sup> K.E. Watkins has declined to accept credit for the above statement, November 29, 1977

# *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*

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## Weiss' Instructions

1. Oh well, you don't have to calculate that, you can just figure it out.  
—D. T. Weiss to Bill Jamison, General Electric Company  
January 5, 1976
2. Oh, we don't have time to draw the graphs! Just guess at it!  
—D. T. Weiss to Sam A. Milam III, General Electric Company  
January 19, 1976
3. We've got to insert more discipline into our work. I want you to be thinking about that.  
—D. T. Weiss to L. E. Schnebly, G. A. Pierce, and Sam A. Milam III  
General Electric Company, February 5, 1976

Also see the  
**Peter Principle**

## Welch's Hypothesis

The amount of trouble varies directly as the square of the number of "dollies" involved.  
—Jim Welch, National Reactor Testing Station, Idaho Falls, Idaho, 1967

Also see  
Guidelines on **Women**

## First Law of Wing-Walking

Never turn loose of what you've got until you've got hold of something else.  
—Donald Herzberg

## Winnegan's Reminder

One man's nightmare is another man's wet dream.  
—Grandpa Winnegan, in *Riders of the Purple Wage*  
by Phillip José Farmer  
in the anthology *Dangerous Visions #1*  
edited by Harlan Ellison

## Wiseman's Assertion

The burning conviction that we have a holy duty toward others is often a way of attaching our drowning selves to a passing raft. What looks like a giving hand is often a holding on for dear life. Take away our holy duties and you leave our lives puny and meaningless. There is no doubt that in exchanging a self-centered for a selfless life we gain enormously in self-esteem. The vanity of the selfless, even those who practice utmost humility, is boundless.  
—Jim Wiseman, General Electric Company, August, 1974

**Woldow's Worry**

There would be nothing worse than if they actually built a panel exactly to print.

—Virginia J. Woldow, General Electric Company  
September 12, 1978

**Woldow's Observation**

Nepotism begins at home.

—Virginia J. Woldow, General Electric Company  
July 16, 1979

**Woldow's Objection**

This company produces vast projects from half vast plans.

—Virginia J. Woldow, General Electric Company  
February 15, 1979

**Wolf's Law**

Those who don't study the past will repeat its errors. Those who do study it will find other ways to err.

—Charles Wolf, Jr.

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**Guidelines on Women**

**Beifeld's Principle**

**DeAmicis' Observation**

**Italian Proverb**

**Peckham's Law**

**Playboy's Observation**

**Roger's Rule**

**Welch's Hypothesis**

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## Writer's Confession

.... Disturb a writer when he is in the throes of creation and he is likely to turn and bite right to the bone . . . and not even know that he's doing it. As writers' wives and husbands often learn to their horror.

And — attend me carefully, Gwen! — there is no way that writers can be tamed and rendered civilized. Or even cured. In a household with more than one person, of which one is a writer, the only solution known to science is to provide the patient with an isolation room, where he can endure the acute stages in private, and where food can be poked in to him with a stick. Because, if you disturb the patient at such times, he may break into tears or become violent. Or he may not hear you at all . . . and, if you shake him at this stage, he bites.

— Colin Richard speaking to Sadie Gwendolyn  
in *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls*, Chapter III  
by Robert A. Heinlein

## Rules for Written Reports

1. Always present as foresight what you have learned from hindsight.
2. The more dubious the results, the longer the lack of conclusions.
3. The conclusions are less important than the explanations for the lack of conclusions.
4. For an ordinary failure, write as clearly and as confidently as possible. Perhaps you can get by if you sound convincing.
5. For a bad failure, write as complexly and technically as possible. Perhaps you can confuse the issue.
6. For a colossal failure, write as pedantically and lengthily as possible. Perhaps no one will ever read the report.

—Milton Dickens, Professor of Speech, U.S.C.

## Wyzanski's Warning

More than once the judges of a court have been indirectly reminded that they personally are taxpayers. No sophisticated person is unaware that even in this very Commonwealth the Internal Revenue Service has been in possession of facts with respect to public officials which it has presented or shelved in order to serve what can only be called political ends, be they high or low. And a judge who knows the score is aware that every time his decisions offend the Internal Revenue Service he is inviting a close inspection of his own returns.

—District Judge Wyzanski, in Donald R. LORD et al. v. Alvin M. KELLY et al.  
Civ. A. No. 63-932., United States District Court, D. Massachusetts  
April 13, 1965

~ Y ~

### Yama's Declaration

An army, great in space, may offer opposition in a brief span of time. One man, brief in space, must spread his opposition across a period of many years if he is to have a chance of succeeding.

—Lord Yama, Deathgod, in *Lord of Light*, chapter iii  
by Roger Zelazny

Also see  
The Subversion Principle

### Yamamoto's Comment

. . . according to the American radio, our ultimatum was not delivered until 55 minutes after the attack. I can think of nothing that would more enrage the Americans. I fear that all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve.

—Admiral Yamamoto, Japanese Chief of the Navy  
(statement after the attack on Pearl Harbor)

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**Zapata's Beliefs**

Seek justice from tyrannical governments not with your hat in your hands but with a rifle in your fist.

I want to die a slave to principles, not to men.

The enemies of the country and of freedom of the people have always denounced as bandits those who sacrifice themselves for the noble causes of the people.

—Emiliano Zapata, from *The Ideology of a Peasant Revolutionary: Zapata*  
by Robert P. Millon

**Zimmerman's Law**

Regardless of whether a project expands or contracts, administrative overhead continues to grow.

—Charles J. Zimmerman

Also see  
**Bureaucracy Laws**

**Zymurgy's First Law**

Once you open a can of worms, the only way to re-can them is to use a larger can.

**Zymurgy's Second Law**

People are always available for work in the past tense.

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