

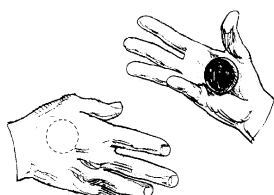
Stress Busters

Red sponge noses commonly found at novelty stores can vanish and appear out of casts, ears, stuffed animals, mommy's hair, the IV monitor, bed pan; or you can pop them on Daddy's nose, or the the doctor's, the nurse's or the patient's nose. These can be "stress busters" for hospital staff. One day I saw a whole group of interns wearing red noses and making rounds (I'd given them the noses the week before). Your hospital can buy them for you in bulk. I teach the doctors, nurses how to do simply "palms". If sponge balls are out of your range, try using foil balls. An 8 x 12 sheet of aluminum kitchen foil will make a ball about 1" in diameter. These are actually easier to palm and vanish than the sponge balls. The only problem with them is you can't use it for a clown nose or give it to a kid.

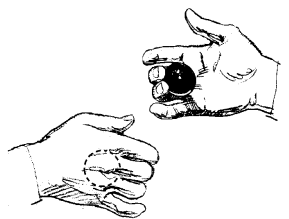
The essence of all sleight of hand is the ability to secure something in your hand unseen by your audience. The idea is to relax and hold your hand naturally and don't sneak glances at your hands or distort your fingers. Practice in front of a mirror. It is important to have your hand look just as natural when they are palming as when they are not. Here are three classic "palms" showing the front and natural look of the hand. The position on the inside is shown by the broken circle.

It is important to keep the back of the hand to your audience. In a hospital setting very often there will be family and hospital staff around the patient's bed, so you are working in the round. Play to the patients, except for young children, the others will go along with whatever you are doing.

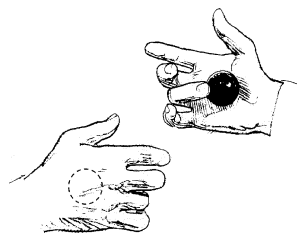
I use a vanish that probably only a clown with a "rubber face" could get away with. It works all the time for me. I eat it! Palming the ball and instantly make funny faces like "yuk!". This draws the attention away from the fact that I have slipped the ball into my pocket or switched hands.



Classic Palm



Finger Palm



Touch Palm

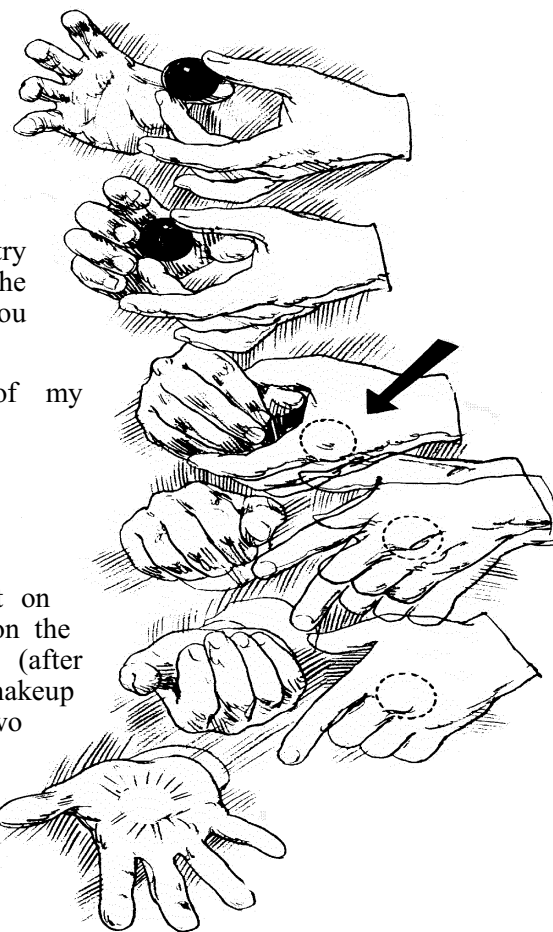
The classic vanish to the right is easy, if practiced. At first try to it keeping the ball in the right hand, so you can see in the mirror the natural way the hand would hold it. Then try it moving the ball to the left hand and see if you can keep it the same.

Here are some of my routines:

I have a ping pong ball that has rubber cement painted over the lettering. I also have rubber cement on my nose (I put it on the bridge of my nose (after powdering your makeup please!). When the two dried sides are stuck together, they will hold a light ball to your nose. I make the pretense of balancing the ball on my nose, drop it, stop to say a prayer, drop it, "mental floss" my head (See page 7). When I finally stand up with the ball (stuck) balanced on my nose with a "ta da" stance, my hat falls off. I don't know what is so funny about a clown losing her hat, but kids find it hysterical. In the process of dropping and kicking my hat around. I can eat the ball, and then sneeze it out of my nose. Or I can apologize outrageously to "Mini" who lives in my hat and finds the ball. Or I can gasp (and put a mouth coil in my mouth.) The segues are infinite.

Catching and vanishing a soap bubble works with some practice. A 1-inch plastic sphere can be purchased at a plastic store for about \$2.25. Find a bubble in front of a kids face. Point at it with the hand palming the sphere. Then break the bubble by rolling out the finger as the plastic bubble is rolled up. Done quickly, it give the illusion that you caught the bubble. After I catch the bubble, I throw it up in the air to show it is solid. I then vanish it and catch another.

— Shobi Dobi



The Classic Vanish

Illustration by Barry Ross*

* The illustrations on this page are by Barry Ross from the book *Now you see it, now you don't* by Bill Tarr and Barry Ross, Vintage Books, New York. Available at Borders and Books or your local book store.