

A large, solid orange circle is centered on a white background. Inside the circle, the text "HOW TO DO STUFF" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters. Below the main title, the subtitle "POSSIBLY HELPFUL GUIDES BY PETER SHELLY" is written in a smaller, white, uppercase font.

HOW TO DO STUFF

POSSIBLY HELPFUL GUIDES
BY PETER SHELLY

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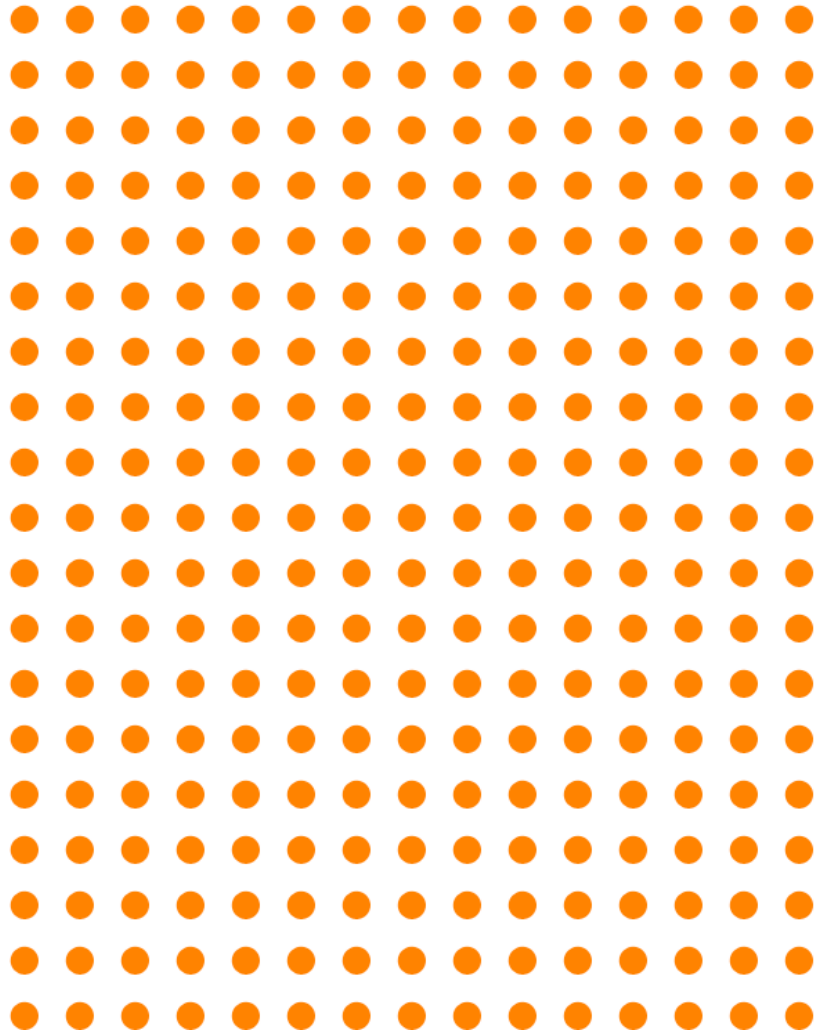
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An orange ribbon banner with a white rectangular box in the center containing the text "HOW TO READ THIS BOOK".

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

STEP 1: HOW TO BUILD A FIRE

STEP 2: HOW TO MOW THE LAWN

STEP 3: HOW TO RELAX IN THE COUNTRY

STEP 4: HOW TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

STEP 5: HOW TO GRILL A HOT DOG

STEP 6: HOW TO PREPARE A HOT DOG

STEP 7: HOW TO VACUUM A ROOM

STEP 8: HOW TO MAKE A S'MORE

STEP 9: HOW TO COMPOSE A TWEET

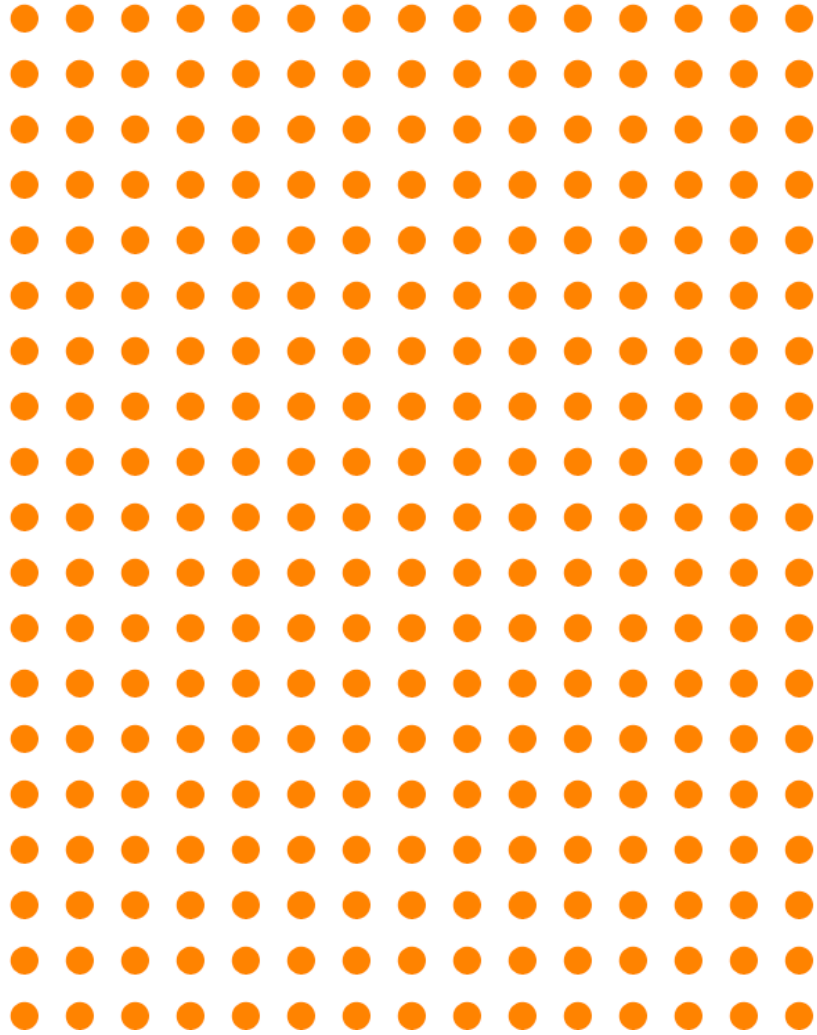
STEP 10: HOW TO PROPERLY ORDER AT IN-N-OUT BURGER

STEP 11: HOW TO WRITE AN AD

STEP 12: HOW TO CONTACT THE AUTHOR

STEP 13: HOW TO HIRE THE AUTHOR

STEP 14: HOW TO FINISH A BOOK





HOW
TO
BUILD
A
FIRE



It starts with a few pieces of paper, always. Paper lights easily. But you need more than that. So you ball them up individually on the grate and then you get something heavier, something that will light off the paper and burn for longer, because the paper's great and hot hot hot but it doesn't last more than a few seconds.

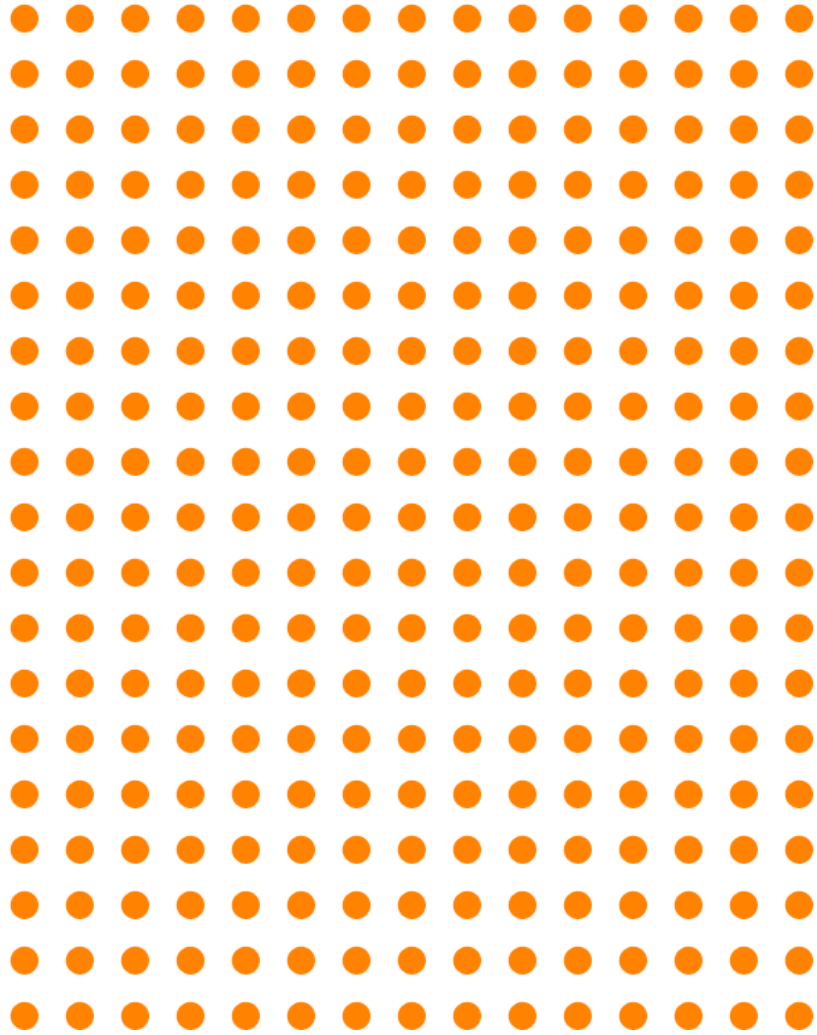
Next, you need a layer of fuel to catch, like the kindling you find when you go camping. You want real dry, real sinewy pieces of wood for this.

The point, when you're trying to get it going, is to create a lot of heat. Doesn't have to be a lot of flame, but there's gotta be heat. You take heat, you add oxygen and things that you want to burn, and you'll get fire.

So you've laid the groundwork with your paper (greeting cards work well, and, like the paper, you want them crumpled) and your kindling. Your fuel has to have room to breathe. Nothing should lie flat. Lean it up against another piece of wood; fire works the way air bubbles do in water: always pushing up.

On top of your smaller wood, prop your log. Now light that sucker, light it until the paper creates one big thicket of flame, the orange and white and blue lunging upward to catch the draft whooshing out the chimney, lighting the wood along the way. Snap and crackle and pop. The wood opens itself up to the heat, catching and charring and giving off warmth.

Look up: the view in front of you is the same as it's been since the first man grunted his way through these steps, banging rocks together where you used a match.





HOW
TO
MOW
THE
LAWN



Everything I learned about lawn mowing, I learned from Zambonis. It's simple. You get a lawn, a mower, and you go to it. It's not rocket science. But it is something you have to do, so why not make it a little bit interesting? Why not make it something you can hang your hat on?

I'm talking about making an event out of it. Not one you invite people over for, but one you can feel good about, an opportunity to take your shirt off and be outdoors without feeling the least bit self-conscious about that beer gut. It's Saturday afternoon, dammit!

First, go to the beer store and pick out something you like. Don't go too high-end with it -- if you can't drink it straight from the can, bottle, or growler, you've gone too far. I recommend Genny Cream Ale or something similar. Put it in the fridge and let's mow the lawn.

So here's how you do it the way a Zamboni driver would: first, carve around the edge of the lawn so you have a good outline of everything. When you complete the full rotation around the edge, cut straight up the middle, dividing the lawn in half. Turn and shave around along the outside edge again, overlapping what you've already covered so you're getting a nice, even cut. Once you've made it back to the middle, cut across the yard again. Up the middle, then down the outside, so the two halves fill in simultaneously. Rinse and repeat.

To finish: remember that beer we put in the fridge? Go treat yourself to a cold one.



How To Start Your Lawn Mower

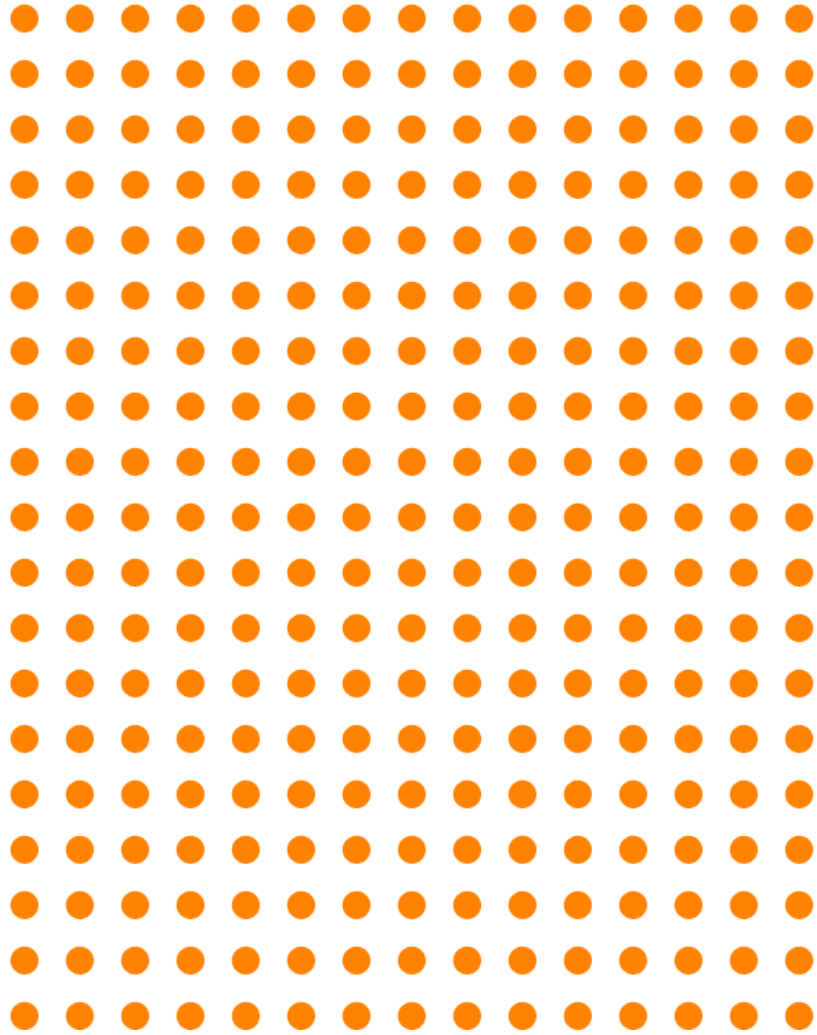
Does it have gas in it? (Did you actually check, or are you just assuming?) Might as well top it off while we're poking around.

Prime the engine: Find the little rubber bulb on the side of the engine and press it a few times. Four, maybe five should do it. Give it too many pumps and you could flood the engine. Flood the engine and you actually make it more difficult to start up.

While holding down the bail (that's the lever on the handle that sticks up), pull on the starter cord a few times until the engine starts. Yanking will just hurt your shoulder. Leverage your body weight against the mower and pull in a steady motion. It may take a few times until the engine catches, but once it goes, you're golden.



Want your lawn to look like the outfield of Yankee Stadium? It's not that difficult. The Yankees' groundskeepers get the grass to look like that by rolling it so it stands in different directions, reflecting light differently and revealing the cool shapes, patterns, and logos we see in the outfield. While they have a lot more ground to cover than you do (I would hope, for your sake...), the methods they use aren't substantially different from what you can do. Instead of using a commercial-grade roller like the pros do, you can get a kit that fits your push or riding mower for about eighty bucks at a hardware store.





HOW
TO
RELAX
IN THE
COUNTRY



What you need:

The country
A car

Think about things that whiz. Bits whiz through computer processors, electrons whiz through your television screen, cars whiz past you in the street, and days whiz past when you really need to hit that deadline.

Point is, stuff whizzes like crazy. Sometimes you need it to stop. When that happens, I like to take a day to drive out to the country, slow things down, and collect myself. Usually, I find it's not the things whizzing by that are the issue after all, but the fact that I want to whiz right along with them. So here's what you do:

Get in your car and drive. If you don't have a car, rent one. But drive. Drive until you're not in traffic anymore, until you can get up to speed and actually drive without hitting another light. Bottom line: get away from things that whiz.

There yet? Good. You're in the country. Now it's time to relax.

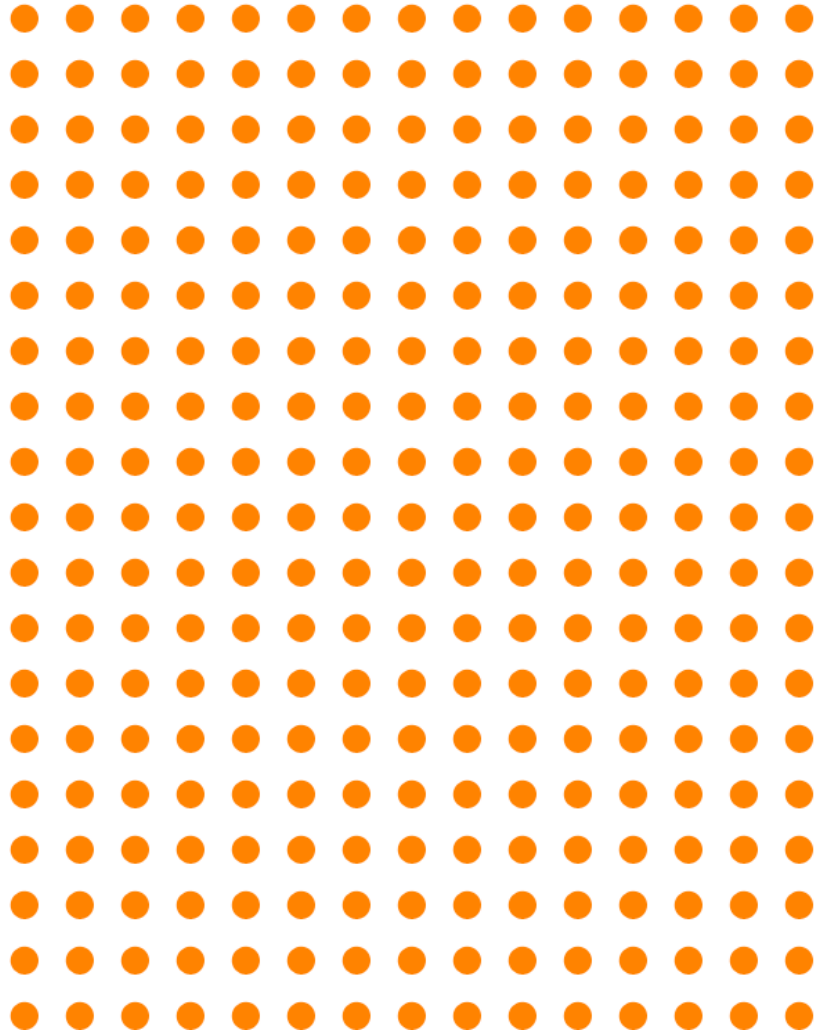
Don't stop driving, not yet at least. Try out a few of the roads that don't have stop lights on them. Drive down hills and over ridges,

through valleys, around fields. You're in the country, roll the windows down.

When you're ready, find a place to stop and stretch our legs. The best place to do this is at a winery. They're not as crowded as highway rest stops and they're better taken care of. Park the car, take your time walking to the entrance. The point of this stop isn't the wine tasting, it's the leg stretching. It's the vines that climb their trellises in neat rows. It's the air and the breeze and the silence. Stop and listen to the sound of things not whizzing around.

Whether you drink or not, go into the winery and listen in on a tasting. The hosts like talking wine and their wine and the country and their country. They're good at it, too. Stick around afterward and ask them about anything.

Return to the parking lot. Back in the unwhizziness of it all. Drive along other country roads, get lost.





HOW
TO
RUN
FOR
PRESIDENT



What you need:

To be a natural born citizen of the United States
35 years under your belt
14 years of living in the U.S.
Viability
Lots of money — or friends with lots of money
Lots of friends — preferably with lots of money

To run for president, one must first meet the several requirements set forth by the Constitution of the United States (this guide, of course, assumes you're running for president of the United States). You must be a natural born citizen of the United States. You must be 35 years old, and you must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years. These are the only true requirements of running for president.

However, beyond the Constitutionally required benchmarks, there are a few more things you'll need. First is popularity. The best way to achieve this is to have ideas and positions on the issues that are in line with at least half of the electorate (See: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt). Barring this, you might want to try researching some really crazy ideas that are popular with a marginalized-but-fervent sector of society idealistic enough to pledge their support to a losing cause (see: Ron Paul, Dennis Kucinich).

But suppose you don't have the most popular ideas in your party and you're unwilling to stoop to insanity. Then you'll need some other method to reach the popularity you're looking for. Try acting (see: Ronald Reagan, Fred Thompson), basketball (see: Bill Russell), or becoming governor of a state in the region of the country that might carry you to glory (see: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Howard Dean). Last but not least, become head of an organization rooted in religion (see: Pat Robertson) or a specific issue that a small percentage of the population will make their priority (see: Ralph Nader, The Rent Is Too Damned High guy ? even though he was only running for governor of New York State, he makes a great example here).

Now that you've got your fan base, you'll need money. Presidential runs require a lot of it: you'll need a tour bus and a staff and yard signs and TV ads. There's a lot going on and it all costs money. You'll need volunteers (who require busses and food) and Get Out The Vote events, you'll need speechwriters and lawyers and advisers who have experience with this sort of thing (which actually brings to mind another sort of candidate you can be: the independently wealthy kind. See: Ross Perot, Donald Trump).

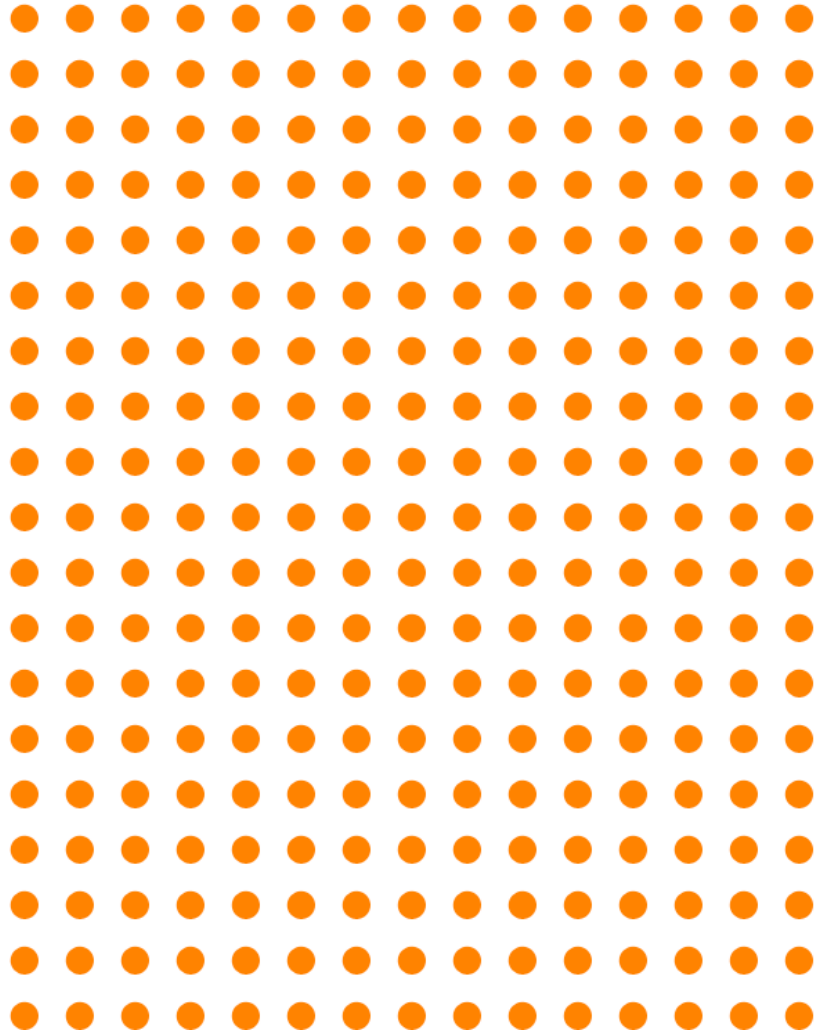
Each state has its own rules on how to actually get on the presidential ballot. Most require a petition with the signatures of thousands of registered voters to prove you are a viable candidate and not just the gasbag your opponent just called you on national TV.

So you'll also need thick skin and a rigid spine. Your ideas, ideology, and haircut will be criticized (see: John Edwards). Try to conceal the skeletons in your closet (see: Herman Cain).

Still in it to win it? Excellent. You'll make a fine Chancellor of the University of insert your state here someday. Just don't count on becoming president.

In reality, running for president has a lot more to do with the "What You Need" column than the "How To" side.

Winning, on the other hand...





HOW
TO
GRILL
A
HOT DOG



What you need:

1 Grill
1 Hot Dog
1 Bun

You're out on the balcony or in your back yard, you're hungry, and you've got your GRILLMASTER monogrammed apron on. Excellent. Now, the fun part.

Open the propane tank all the way. Give it a second for the gas to fill the lines to the grill, and then turn one of your burners all the way up to high and light that baby*!

*Seriously, though, if you've never done this before, have someone else show you. I'm not taking the blame for burning the hair off your arms -- or worse.

Now we get the fixins. Grab a package of Zweigle's if you're fortunate enough to live where they're sold, or a standard like Ballpark Franks if you're not.

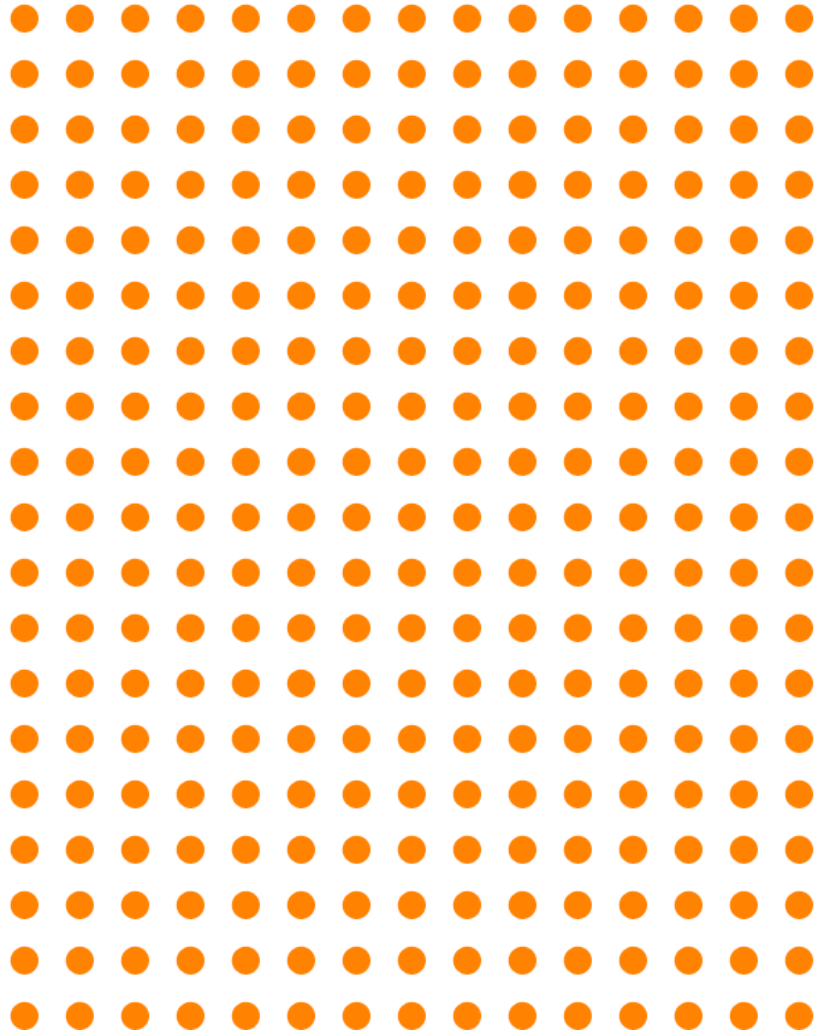
Grab your dog and toss it on the grill in an area that gets consistent heat (not unlike when you're making a s'more): you don't want it necessarily in the flames, but somewhere that it will cook consistently as you turn it. Give it a few minutes and then

turn it 90 degrees. A few more minutes then turn it again. The whole thing shouldn't take much more than 10 minutes.

You'll know your hot dog is done when it darkens to a deep rust color and the skin begins to puff throughout. Grill marks ain't bad, either. When the hot dog is done, turn off the burners and the propane. Make sure you check back later to make sure the flames are out and the grill is cooling. Take the dog from the grill and put it in the bun. Congratulations: you've grilled yourself a hot dog.



Two words: grill beer. Grilling is always an excuse to have a beer in hand (if that's your thing). To drink a beer: Open. Tip toward your mouth.





HOW
TO
PREPARE
A
HOT DOG



What you need:

Condiments

Purists will say all you need on a hot dog is mustard. Don't give in to people who consider themselves Hot Dog Purists. I like ketchup and yellow mustard on my dog. Sometimes, I'll even have sweet relish. So give an adequate squirt of each (I use a fork to dole out the relish; for some reason, relish in a squeeze bottle weirds me out).

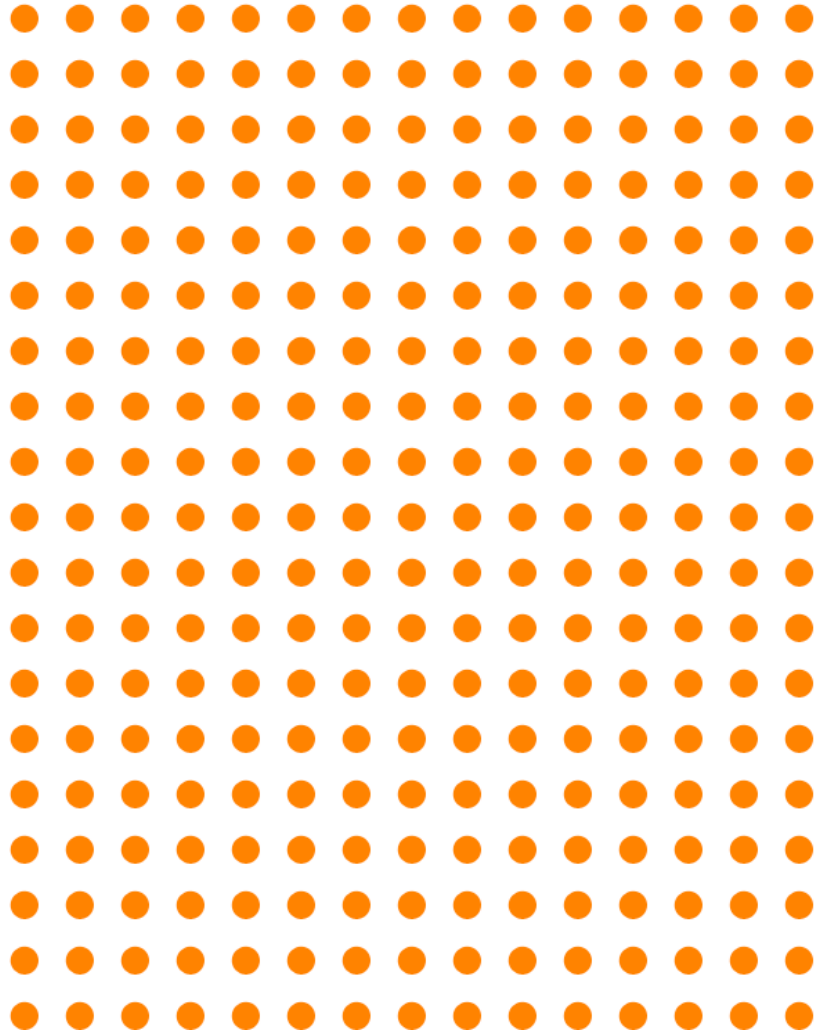


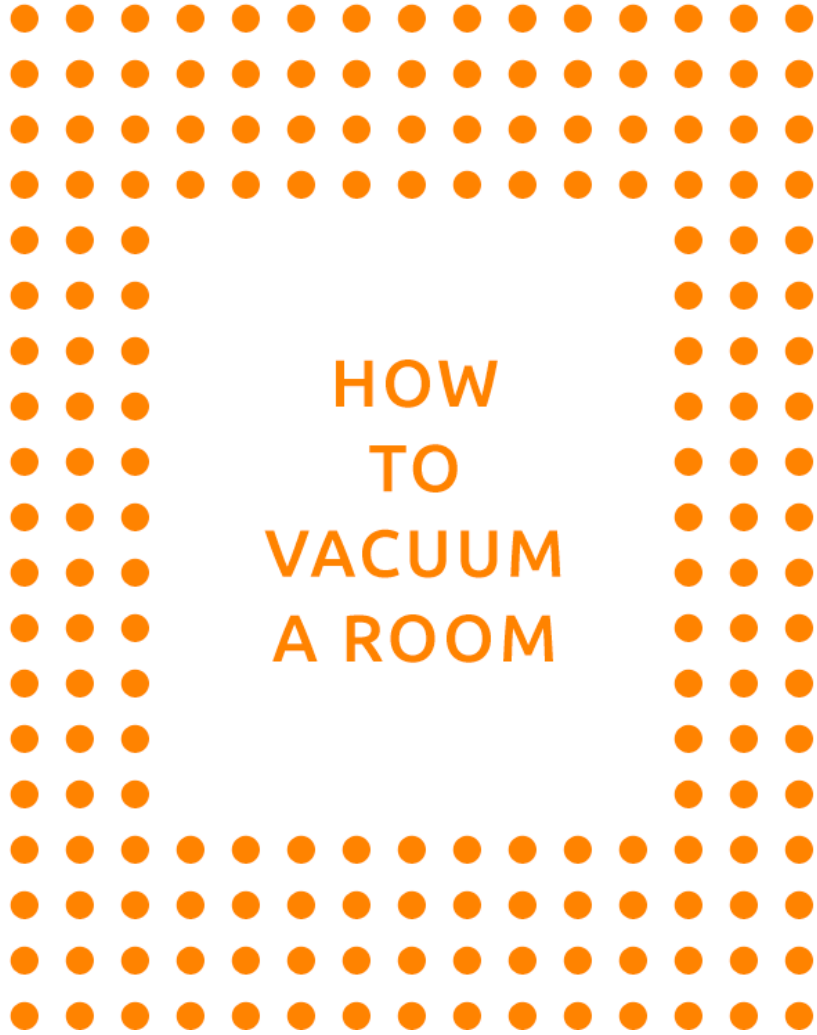
Green ketchup and oddly-colored tortilla chips.

If there are other condiments you prefer (cheese, chili, sauteed peppers and onions, etc.), throw 'em on. Then, grab a big handful of potato chips and a beverage of your choice and you're good to go!

Of course, if there are other condiments you enjoy, you can put them on your dog, too (like maybe baked beans or something? I

don't know, I'm throwing ideas at the wall now...). You don't have to take my word for it. I guess the point of this guide is that you don't need a guide to prepare your hot dog. Do what you need to do and chow down!





HOW
TO
VACUUM
A ROOM



Everything I learned about vacuuming, I learned from Zambonis. It's simple. You get a room, a vacuum, and you go to it. It's not rocket science. But it is something you have to do, so why not make it a little bit interesting? Why not make it something you can hang your hat on?

I'm talking about making an event out of it. Not one that you invite people over for, but one you can feel good about, an opportunity to take your shirt off and be indoors without feeling the least bit self-conscious about that beer gut. It's Saturday afternoon, dammit!

First, go to the beer store and pick out something you like. Don't go too high-end with it -- if you can't drink it straight from the can, bottle, or growler, you've gone too high-end. I recommend Genny Cream Ale or something similar. Put it in the fridge and let's vacuum.

So here's how you do it the way a Zamboni driver would: first, move around the edge of the room so you have a good outline of everything. When you complete the full rotation around the edge, cut straight up the middle, dividing the lawn in half. Turn and vacuum around along the outside edge again, overlapping what you've already covered so you're getting a nice, even path. Once you've made it back to the middle, cut across the room again. Up

the middle, then down the outside, so the two halves clean in simultaneously. Rinse and repeat.



To finish: remember that beer we put in the fridge? Go treat yourself to a cold one.

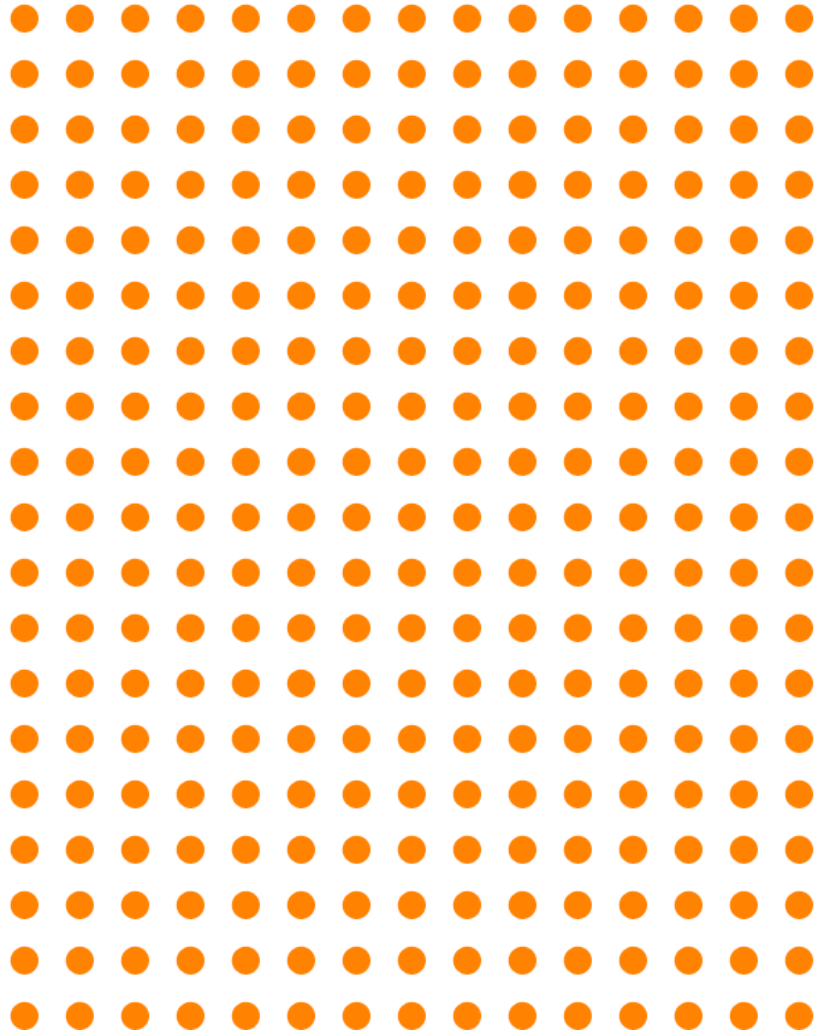


How To Start Your Vacuum Cleaner

Is it plugged in? (Did you actually check, or are you just assuming?)

Push the "on" button. Your vacuum will turn on.

Want your room to look like the outfield of Yankee Stadium? Try to make that feeling go away. You'll probably just ruin the carpet.





HOW
TO
MAKE
A S'MORE



What you need:

1 bag of marshmallows.
1 long stick sharpened at one end.
1 fire. (See: HOW TO BUILD A FIRE)
1 package chocolate bars
1 package graham crackers

The first s'more recipe appeared in the Girl Scout Handbook in 1927, under the name "Some Mores," as in, "gimme some more!" Since then, it hasn't changed, and for good reason: there's no need. As good now as they were then, s'mores are a campfire tradition.

To make a s'more, you must have fire. It can be a gas stove in the kitchen, it can be a fireplace in the living room, it can be a firepit in the back yard. But you must have fire. The microwave will not give you the toasty brown complexion or turn the marshmallow into what it needs to be: the vehicle for deliciousness, the breadbowl of desserts. (Also, it gets messy). Once you have your fire, you'll want to find the spots that are hottest. These are the best places to roast. Ideally, you'll want to wait until the fire has died down to embers. At this point, heat will be constant and you'll be able to roast best.

So you have your fire and you have a prime spot for roasting. Now, you prepare the graham cracker. Break it into two halves,

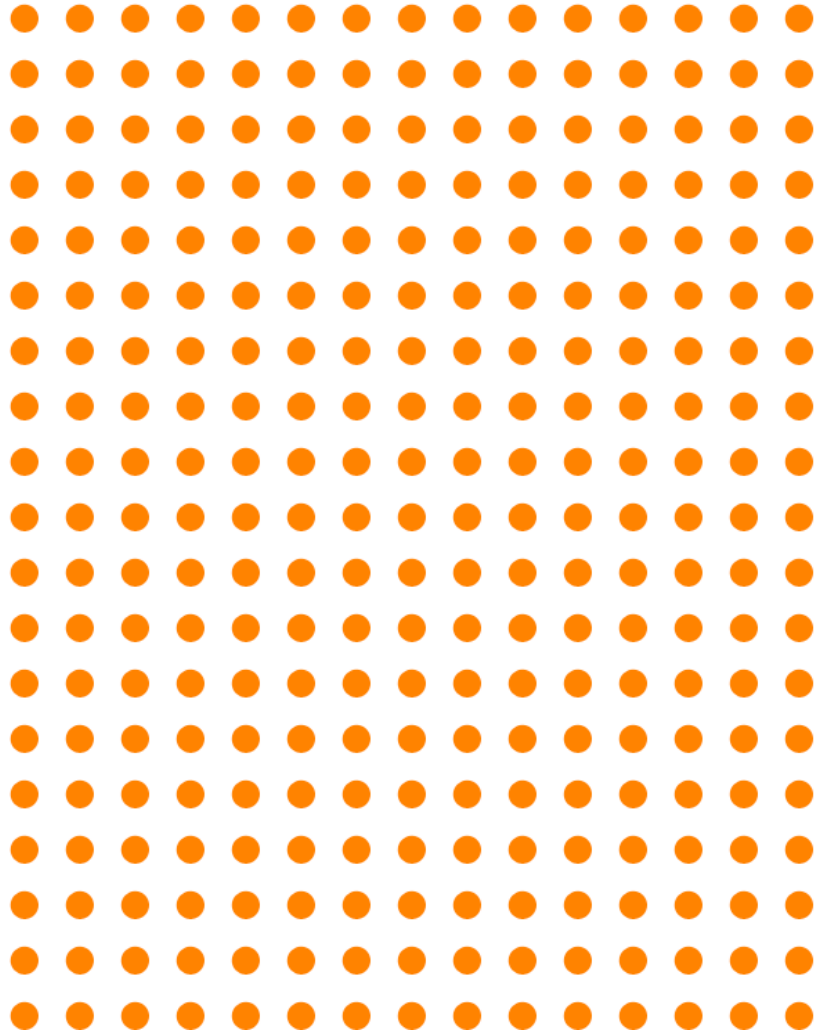
top and bottom. Put a bunch of chocolate on the bottom half. Now you can roast your marshmallow. Pluck one from the bag, stab it with the business end of the stick, and hold it over the fire. Evenly rotate the stick for a consistent finish. You want to make sure you cook the mallow slowly, as the inside needs to be warm and gooey, the outside is browned and crispy.

Of course, if you prefer a more charred marshmallow, put the tip of the stick close enough to the fire that it catches. Give it a second to bake before blowing it out. When the marshmallow is good and ready (try it a few different ways to see what you like), you can put your s'more together.

This part takes a little coordination. (If you're in a group, just ask someone to do it for you.) You've got the makings of your s'more ready, and it's obvious where everything goes. Just make it happen and try not to get marshmallow all over you. And remember, the Five Second Rule doesn't apply at a campsite. That's gross.

You smack it all together, letting the chocolate melt and run into the marshmallow and the graham holds it all together and it's delicious looking. You probably show everyone around you, "Oh man, guys, I've got a good one." There's a moment of self-congratulatory triumph ? this, too, is a tradition probably started by the Girl Scouts, but there's no shame in that.

Then you stuff.





HOW
TO
COMPOSE
A TWEET



What you need:

1 Computer
1 Website with a cute picture of a cat or dog

Open your browser. (You don't use I.E., right?). In the address bar, type:

www.twitter.com

Click on the button that says "Sign Up" (if you already have an account, you can just log in). On the next page, enter your name, email address, and a username. (Helpful tip: Your username should be pretty close to your actual name. Nobody respects @NickelbackFan1.) Then choose a password, fill out the Captcha box, and hit "Sign up."

Now we are ready to compose a tweet. Find the icon with a pencil in it and click on it.

In a new browser window, go to the website with the photo of the cute cat or dog you've chosen. Click in the address bar, highlight the entire line, and click Edit > Copy. Go back to the window with your tweet. Now, we write. Try starting with something like this:

Hey, check out this (adjective) (cat or dog) I just saw on (website title*).

*On the internet, there are Good Guys and Bad Guys. Good Guys credit their sources. You want to be a Good Guy, right?

That's a good start, but we're not done yet. If you want to connect with others, you'll want to use a hashtag somewhere in there. This allows anybody who uses the same hashtag to see what you've posted. Friendship ensues. So let's add a hashtag to our tweet:

Hey, check out this (adjective) (cat or dog) I just saw on (website title). # (one-word description of the feeling evoked by your cute cat/dog here).

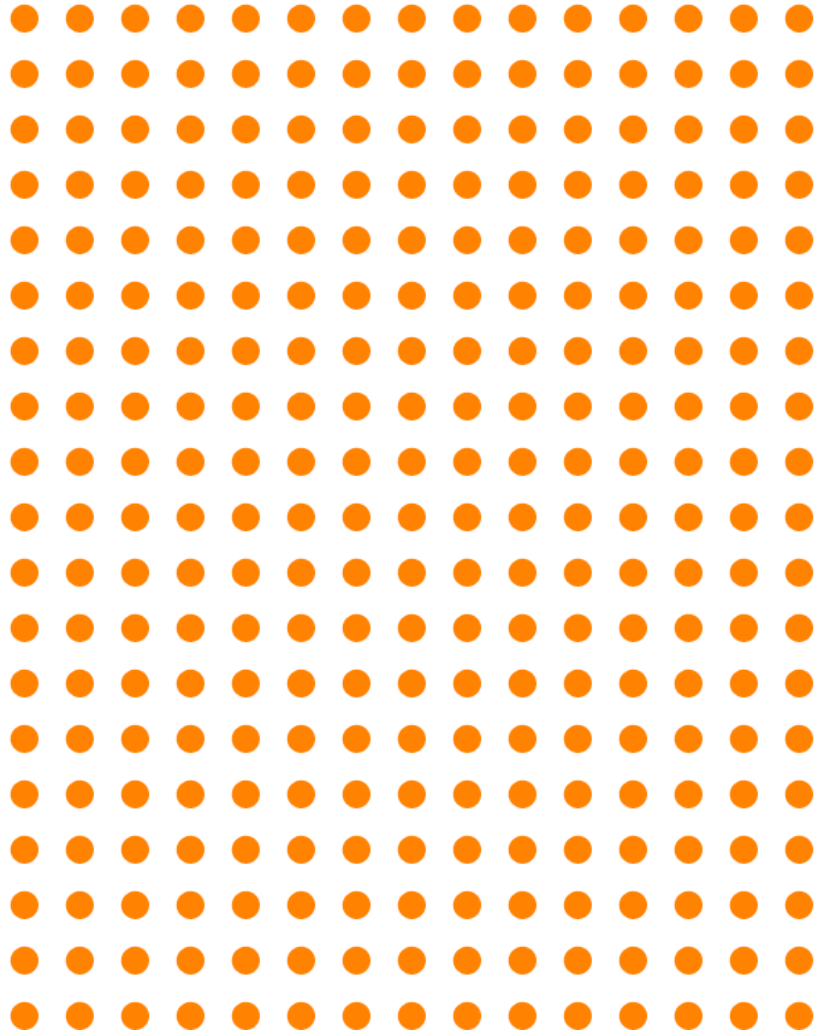
Almost there. Now, we just paste the link in place after your hashtag (Edit > Paste).

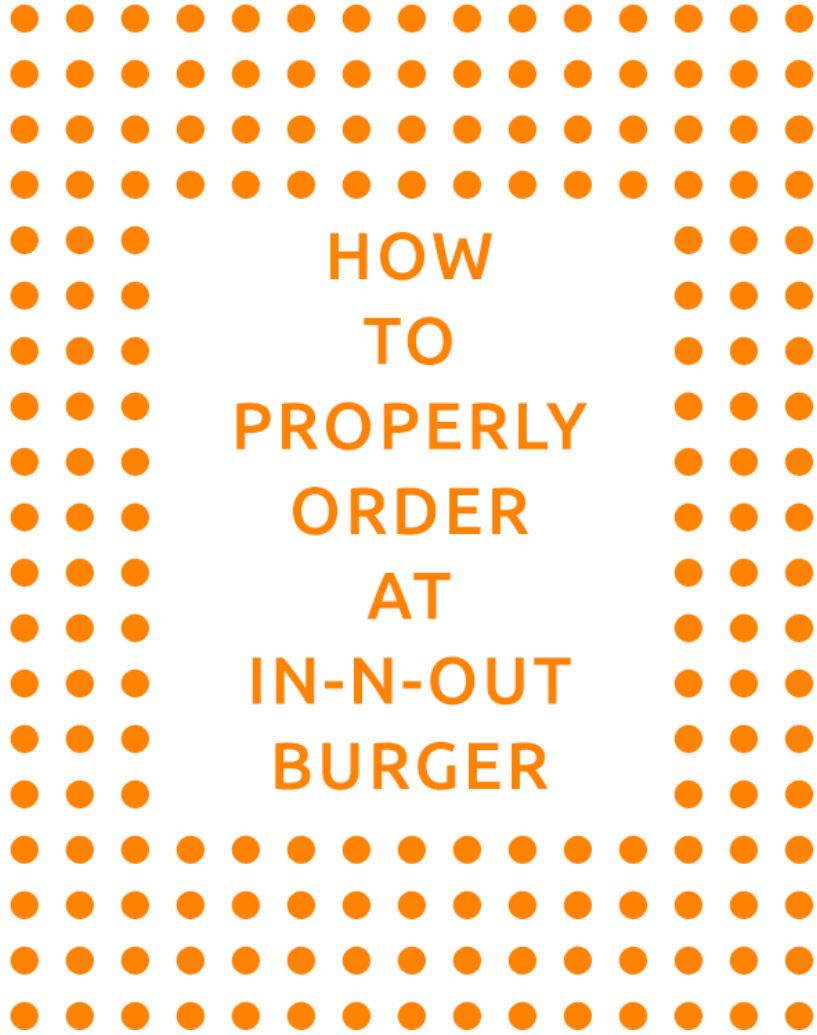
Congratulations, you've composed your first tweet.

Click the "Tweet" button to post.



Tweets must be under 140 characters, including spaces, punctuation, and other characters (hashtags, too!), so try to be concise.





HOW
TO
PROPERLY
ORDER
AT
IN-N-OUT
BURGER



What you need:

To live within walking or driving distance of an In-N-Out Burger

Who says choice is king? At In-N-Out Burger, the original drive-thru hamburger stand, simplicity has ruled since 1948. The joint has two menus: the simple red and white board that hangs behind the counter, and a heralded (not-so-) secret menu that allows fans to customize their meals. Unlike every other guide out there, this one isn't about the Animal Style fries or Protein Style burgers that you'll receive if you say the right codewords (for the record, though, those are the right codewords). This guide is simply about how to order from the everyday menu. Simplicity rules.

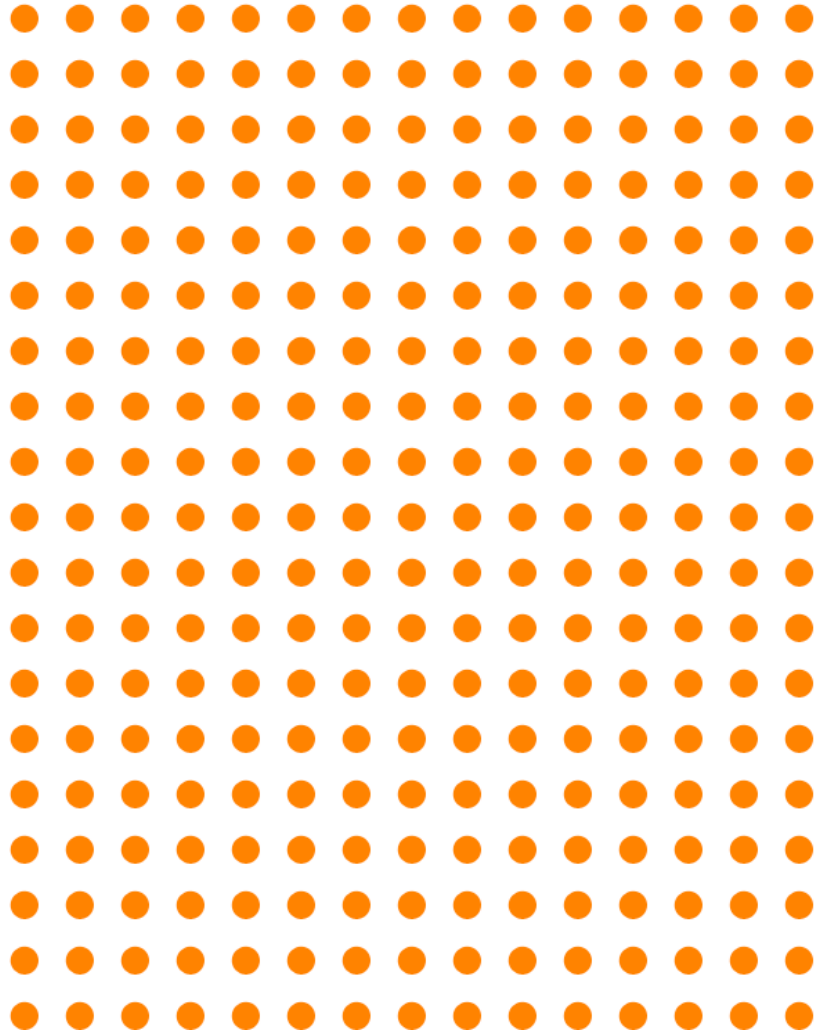
Of course, the proper order will consist of the In-N-Out staples: burger, fries, beverage. When you step up to the counter, don't concern yourself with the secret menu or how long your burgers have been sitting under a heat lamp; everything is made fresh, and the ingredients are never frozen. You don't need to ask for anything special to make it taste delicious. That comes standard. So to properly order from In-N-Out Burger, you just need to say this:

I'd like a Double Double, no onions, an order of french fries, and a chocolate shake.

That's it. Pay the cashier and step aside to let the next person up (there is a line behind you...)

You've just ordered a burger with two meat patties and two slices of cheese, lettuce, tomato, and no onions (that's because I don't like onions). You're also getting an order of fries (they only come in one size) and a chocolate shake (it, too, only comes in one size). After you pay and you're waiting for your order to come up, watch your burgers cook on the grill; if you're lucky just then, someone will be putting the potatoes through the french fry cutter — all of the fries come to the restaurant in potato form. It'll take a few minutes longer than other fast food joints because there's more to the process than just pushing microwave buttons — and there's that line of other people to take care of, too.

Is your mouth watering yet?





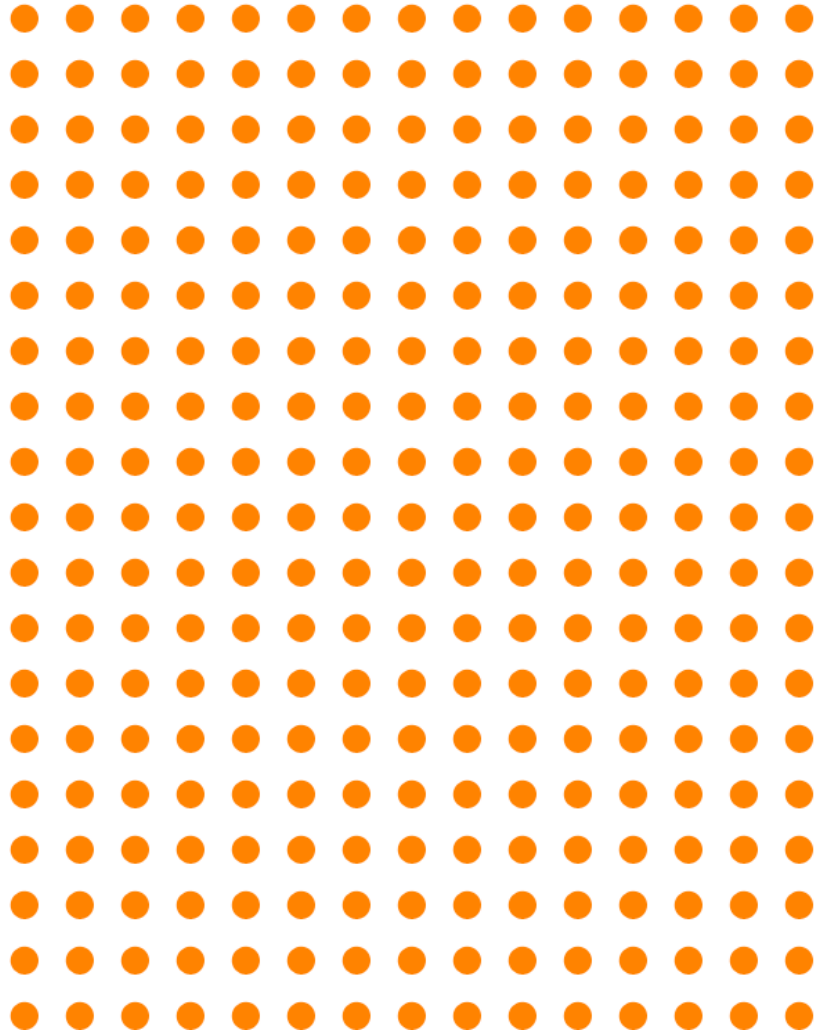
HOW
TO
WRITE
AN AD



(Or, Why I Wrote This Book.)

Advertising is often trying to convince people that they want something. We try to tell them how helpful the product is, how cool they will be once they own that product, or why the company that made it is totally better than all the others. Advertising agencies go waaaay out of their way to make these points, and it's effective and engaging.

But what if we didn't have to make it so hard? A lot of advertising is simply pointing out the quality inherent in the product itself. You don't need to invent anything to make your point. You just need to present it succinctly and memorably. It's the opposite of a big complex idea: it's like telling someone how to make a s'more.





HOW
TO
CONTACT
THE
AUTHOR



What you need:

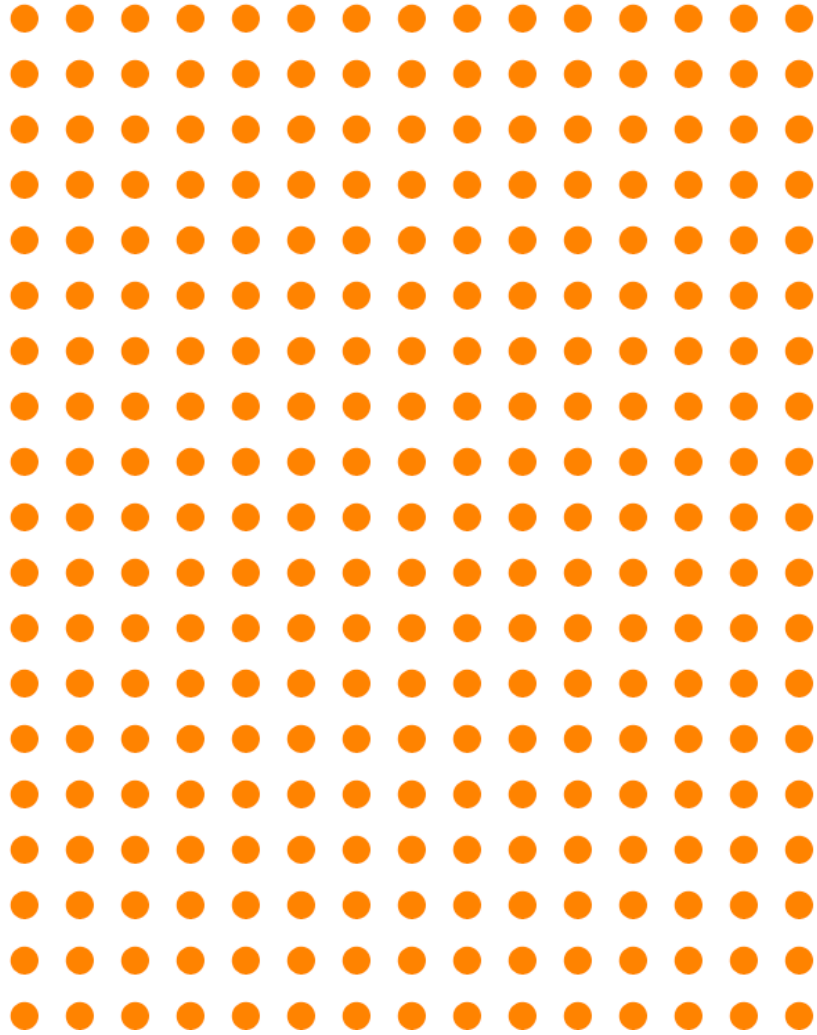
1 Computer

Easy peasy. Pull up your email or log onto Twitter (See: HOW TO COMPOSE A TWEET) and start talking!

petercshelly@gmail.com
[@peteshelly](https://twitter.com/peteshelly)

Read more of my writing at

pshly.me (work)
peteshelly.com (play)





HOW
TO
HIRE
THE
AUTHOR



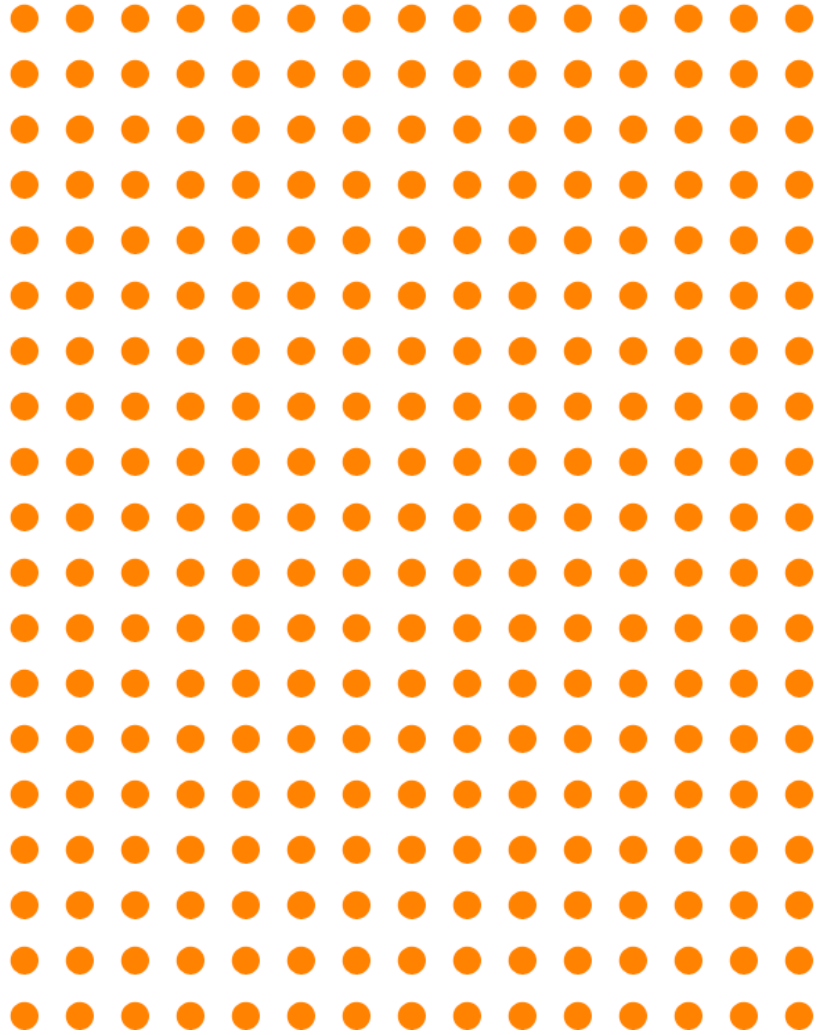
What you need:

1 Computer

Even easier. Get in touch (see: HOW TO CONTACT THE AUTHOR) and offer to pay me money to write something for you (or, you can offer to fly me to L.A. and buy me lunch at In-N-Out Burger).

Not sure you want to hire me? Check out my portfolio for things I've done professionally and for fun:

pshly.me (professionally)
peteshelly.com (for fun)





HOW
TO
FINISH
A BOOK



The end of a book is often sad: you want the story to continue, you want the characters to live on beyond the page, you want me to explain how to shovel the driveway or fix that leaky faucet...

The cool thing about this book is it's just the beginning. Hopefully, I'll write more guides on things that I want to learn how to do. Hopefully, you'll want to read them. You may even want to suggest topics that I should cover. To do so, check out the website I've designed for this book:

HowToDoStuff.co

In the meantime, I'm working on several other projects that are equally entertaining (and, depending on how little help these guides might have offered you, maybe equally helpful). I wrote this book as a challenge to myself: first, to see if I could write about these topics in a way that was interesting and concise; second, to go about the process of creating a book I could read on my iPad. It works on an iPad. Hopefully, it reads well, too. If you're at all interested in future challenges I attempt, you can follow my progress:

pshly.me/InTheMeantime

But now, the book must come to a close.

To finish a book, simply write:

