

Microscopy AND Microanalysis

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HUMOR



Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

Our Administrative Assistant is normally a very pleasant and intelligent person. Her only fault appears to be that she has no sense of humor. We often have tea and coffee around 9am and read your column, tell science jokes and stories. She doesn't get our jokes nor understand why we laugh at your column. She typically rolls her eyes, mumbles something about "you people", and goes back to her office. How can we help her to stay and enjoy our merriment?

Inga in Eskilstuna

Dear Inga,

Quit your whining! I would have been happy with an efficient and intelligent administrative person. In my day, we had stenographers, secretaries, filers, mailroom people and strange little gnomes that kept popping in and out with papers for our inboxes. Keeping this rabble happy and productive required skill, diplomacy, and judicious use of the Lab Bat. As far as helping your Admin-Assistant to develop science nerd humor - I'm afraid it is an acquired taste that varies from scientist to scientist. Your jokes and stories in another lab might provoke violence to rival that of British football games or just mind-numbing ennui. She might prefer the sophisticated humor found on BBC stations. Maybe you should encourage her to provide her own stories. Now that I think about it, what are you implying when you associate this quality advice column with jokes and humorous stories? I see no humor in solving scientific conundrums and resolving potential interpersonal conflict. This is serious business and inquiring minds need to know!

Dear Abbe,

I am on the executive council of a scientific society and have noticed that the council adheres roughly to Robert's Rules of Order. I'm not sure we follow the Rules in a strict fashion and I'm not sure we should. I've found the whole process tedious and would prefer a workable alternative. Do you have any suggestions?

Running with Scissors in Albuquerque

Dear Stubby,

When I was a youth traveling around the States, I discovered Henry Roberts in his old age in Philadelphia, penniless and muttering something about motion sickness. I bought him dinner. He wouldn't eat until a motion was tabled about his etiquette. During the repast, he related to me that he was tired of the U.S. Army's usual meeting method of decision-making by bellowing and trading blows until one lone survivor was left standing. In 1875 during one such meeting, and after several doses of Tennessee moonshine, he had an epiphany. Henry immediately set forth his idea for order, but implementation was delayed until a feasibility study was done and a subcommittee was formed. Members for the subcommittee were chosen by a game of mumblety peg using bayonets. I never followed his Rules of Order - having watched too many parliamentary meetings. Instead we've adhered to the bellowing and blows system, finding it much more satisfying and we've never looked back.

For answers to life's mysteries, please contact Herr Abbe's administrative assistant at jshields@cb.uga.edu.