

You already know what a *genre* is. If I asked you to name some movies in the genre of “romantic comedy,” you could do so, and we would probably agree on what usually happens in such movies: people fall in love, there’s some tension, it doesn’t seem like they’re going to get together in the end, and then they get together in the end. There’s some variation from one movie to the next, but, for the most part, they all have similar features. We call these *conventions*. In other words, conventions are what we come to expect from any particular genre.

But *genre* can mean more than movies and music. We can apply the same concept to any communication event, like an editorial in a newspaper, an Instagram photo, or an email to a teacher (in this class, we’re going to focus on communication events that involve writing). When you’re learning a new genre, it helps to get a handle on the *conventions* of that genre. Sometimes you can break from the conventions, but first you want to know how to follow the conventions.

You’re probably familiar with the genre known as “memes,” or “image macro memes” to be more precise. What are some of the *conventions* of this genre? An image, in color, with big white text, in all caps, at the top and bottom. They follow a setup/punchline joke format. You can also look at each meme as it’s own genre, since people are constantly creating new versions of each meme by adding new text. And if you’re familiar with the meme, or even if you just look at a few versions of a meme you’re not familiar with, you can understand the conventions and then *create your own* version by following those conventions. Here’s an example:

“One Does Not Simply”



Describe the conventions: We’ve already listed the conventions shared by all image macro memes, but what are some conventions of this meme in particular? The top text always begins “one does not simply,” and the bottom text is always an action of some sort. It could be an annoying habit that the author doesn’t like or wants to make fun of (“one does not simply / leave dirty dishes in the sink”), or something that no one actually does (“one does not simply / read the terms and conditions”), or something that people do that the

author believes doesn’t work (“one does not simply / write an essay the night before it’s due”).

Create your own

Say you wanted to create a version of this meme to complain about or make fun of a writing assignment in this class. How could you change the text to suit your purposes? Here’s one way you could do it:

Top text: ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY

Bottom text: REQUIRE TEN SOURCES