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6 Laws You've Broken Without Even Realizing It

By [Cezary Jan Strusiewicz](#) | September 26, 2011 | 3,081,386 views

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#3. Betting With Friends



So, you're drinking away at the local bar, trying not to think about how your significant other shouted "Ray Romano" during sex last week, when you notice the game playing on the TV. Turning to your buddy, you bet him that the defending team will definitely make the next basket. They don't. You bet again and again, upping the ante each time. At the end of the night, you've bet and lost more than \$2,000.

Angry at yourself, you get up to leave, when suddenly a SWAT team storms the place, pushes you to the ground and cuffs you.

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"Is this about the dead hookers? It is, isn't it?"

What Did I Do?!

You see, all those bets you made violated the [Illegal Gambling Act of 1970](#). According to the IGA, any betting that goes against state or local law, involves five or more people and has a revenue of at least \$2,000 in one day constitutes an illegal gambling operation, punishable by [up to 10 years in prison](#).



Getty

By comparison, punching your wife warrants about [a tenth](#) of the jail time.

And that SWAT team/bar wager scenario we described above? [That really happened](#). The guy's name was Sal Culosi, and in 2005 he was overheard in a bar by a Virginia cop betting with his friends on college football to the tune of like \$50. The cop befriended Culosi, and over the course of a couple of months led him to raise the stakes until one day Culosi crossed the magical border of \$2,000.

A SWAT team arrived at his doorstep to arrest him and *shot him through the heart*.



Getty

It turns out gambling really *does* cause violence. Police violence, but still.

#2. Writing "Disturbing" Material

Flashback



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The Cracked Podcast



Are you an aspiring writer age 16 to 24? If so, how is your zombie story coming along? Seriously, even if you're not really into stuff like that, there must be some piece of "dark" writing you left behind somewhere, like a blog or a LiveJournal or a Facebook posting about some weird vampire Nazi dream you had or some moody lyrics you wrote back when you had a beard and a single pair of jeans.

Well, you better hope that no one finds what you've written "disturbing," because your goth phase might be breaking the law.



Getty

Honestly? We're OK with this one.

What Did I Do?!

Some state laws actually make it illegal to write about things that can freak other people out. Illinois, for example, has regulations against "disorderly conduct," which usually means stuff like prank calling 911, but can also apply to writing "disturbing fiction."

No, it doesn't even matter whether you make it public or not. If someone reads something you wrote and finds it reprehensibly soul-poisoning, *you* may face 30 days of jail time and a \$1,500 fine.



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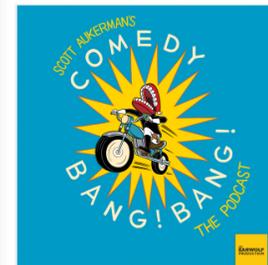
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In Kentucky, writing about a fictional military attack can result in a [second-degree FELONY charge of making terrorist threats](#). And in Oklahoma, a completely made-up story wherein a person gets injured or killed can get you arrested for planning to cause serious bodily harm, the maximum penalty for which is 10 years in prison.

In 2007, a Chicago high school student named Allen Lee was [arrested for disorderly conduct](#) over a class writing assignment involving stream of consciousness where the students were supposed to write whatever came to their minds. Instead of page after page filled with "boobs" and "weed," Lee ended up with an unsurprisingly nonsensical jumble of words and phrases, including "Super Mario," "ballet" and four instances of "stab." After reading his assignment, Lee's teacher turned it in to the school officials, who collectively decided that they must expel the straight-A student and have him arrested. You know, before he goes on a *writing spree*.



Getty

"Call the police, we have a Code Kafka! Repeat, CODE KAFKA!"

Oklahoma high school student [Brian Robertson](#) found himself in an even more baffling situation in 2001, when he discovered an evacuation manual on the school computer and used it as a basis to write a story about a commando attack on his school. When his teacher discovered the story, Robertson was immediately suspended and arrested under the Oklahoma statute preventing "planning acts of violence." Though in the end the case was thrown out, Robertson missed a year of school and was fired from his job, which you may notice leaves him with both the knowledge and the motive to carry out his fictitious assault.

#1. Owning a Permanent Marker



Let's say you're relaxing in the park one day when the cops come up and ask to talk to you. Apparently there was a string of muggings in the area and they'd like to search your bag. You agree

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because you've done no wrong and have nothing to hide, but also because they're cops and they have guns. Inside your bag, they find all the usual stuff: textbooks, pens, permanent markers, a mini flamethrower, the drug salvia and the insanely explosive compound tannerite. You know, [nothing illegal](#).

Pleased with your law-abidingness, you reach to get your bag back when suddenly the cops grab you by the arm and haul you off to jail.



Getty

What Did I Do?!

Actually, it was about the permanent markers. According to basically every anti-graffiti state law out there, it is illegal simply to possess "broad-tipped indelible markers" or "aerosol cans" in a public place, because they can be used to commit acts of vandalism. You can find such regulations all over the United States, from [Florida](#) to [New York](#) to [California](#), which also make it a crime to buy permanent markers for anyone under 18. California, remember, is a state where it is legal to buy weed if you have a doctor's note.

On the one hand, it's *kind* of understandable, seeing as in California alone the removal of graffiti costs millions of dollars each year. On the other hand, it also means you theoretically can spend up to a year in prison for holding outdoor arts and crafts classes for homeless orphans, and it technically makes any art school guilty of possessing contraband.



Getty

"Screw busting grow houses. Art class is where the *real* money is."

But That Will Never Happen to Me, Right?

Since a 2007 felony arrest for tagging, a reformed ex-graffiti artist from California, [Cristian Gheorghiu](#), was arrested a number of times for breaking parole because the authorities kept finding "[vandalism tools](#)" in his apartment. There were stickers, posters, a computer and *markers*, which, according to the sheriff's office, clearly pointed to Gheorghiu's revived criminal activity, and not the fact that he's making a living nowadays selling legitimate art.



The Art of Smear

Put it on a canvas, and suddenly it's no longer offensive garbage.

Right now, these parole violations (aka "owning stuff") can make it illegal for Gheorghiu to possess even a ballpoint pen. But OK, the guy *was* on parole, so as long as you don't get arrested for vandalism or graffiti, carrying markers shouldn't be a problem, right?

Not exactly. Just take a look at the case of the 13-year-old from Oklahoma who was taken into custody by the police for [allegedly writing on his desk](#), which violated an Oklahoma City ordinance against the possession of permanent markers.



Getty

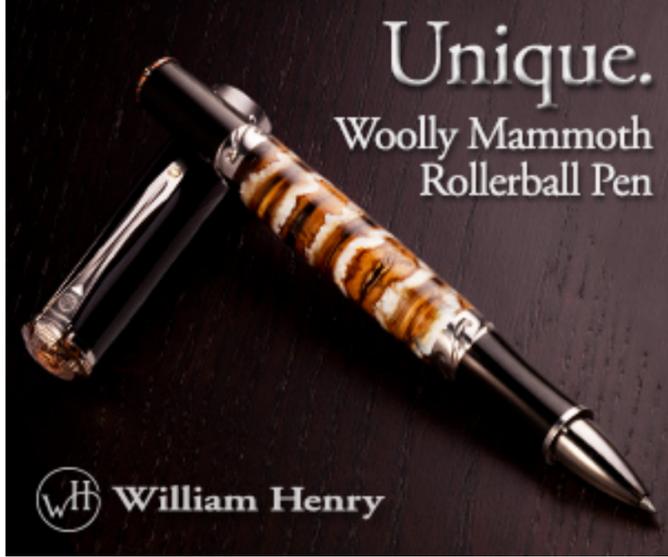
Hope the jail time is worth it, clowndick.

To continue boning up on the bar exam, check out [The 5 Most Popular Safety Laws \(That Don't Work\)](#) and [6 Insane Laws We'll Need in the Future](#).

And stop by [LinkSTORM](#) to see what happens when Swaim tours an orphanage.

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Do you have an idea in mind that would make a great article? Then sign up for our [writers workshop](#)! Do you possess expert skills in image creation and manipulation? Mediocre? Even rudimentary? Are you frightened by MS Paint and simply have a funny idea? You can create an [infographic](#) and you could be on the front page of [Cracked.com](#) tomorrow!



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[zodd1985](#)

0 thumbs up 0 thumbs down

09-27-2014 | 10:49 PM

Say goodbye to your freedoms. This kind of s**t is ridiculous.

Reply



[UnatouchedLover](#)

+3 thumbs up 3 thumbs down

09-27-2014 | 3:25 PM

That's ridiculous. Most "permanent" markers are easily removed with Germ-X/Rubbing alcohol.

Reply



astonefox

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 3:21 PM

#4 -- I assume not knowing it was illegal allowed them to escape the far more serious conspiracy to commit a felony charges?

[Reply](#)



Ahriman42

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 12:48 PM

I give the name "Rusty Shackleford" for most things

[Reply](#)



Gran.Enigma

+2 2 0

09-27-2014 | 10:48 AM

"Freedom is slavery."

[Reply](#)



Ninja_Penguin

+11 11 0

09-27-2014 | 9:23 AM

So this is the "freedom" I keep hearing so much about from Americans?

[Reply](#)



Gran.Enigma

+2 2 0

09-27-2014 | 10:43 AM

Yup.



LaDeX

+3 3 0

09-27-2014 | 9:19 AM

In Finland it's perfectly legal to use unsecured Wi-Fi because it's so easy to put a password on it.

[Reply](#)



kingmadison

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 8:42 AM

Pretty sure the broad tipped makers are the very very very broad tipped ones that virtually no one used but taggers. The tip is over an inch wide.

[Reply](#)



phoenix-fire

0 0 0

09-28-2014 | 4:38 AM

even if that was the case, 'taggers' are artists (whether they are good or bad ones varies) so if they want to use their skills to make a living, a career in art is the most sensible recourse. a career that will require them to use all those same supposedly illegal tools, regardless of whether they actually are taggers or not.



hellblade

+18 18 0

09-27-2014 | 7:40 AM

if 95% of the people are breaking the law, it's the law that is the problem, not the people.

[Reply](#)



Hollatchaboiy

+1 1 0

09-27-2014 | 7:14 AM

Haha... I always use "123 Fake Street" along with the zip code to Staten Island because the Wu-Tang Clan used to shout it out in all their rap songs.. In fact, this profile I'm using now is a false name with a Staten Island address to 123 Fake St.

[Reply](#)



Kingturd

+2 2 0

09-27-2014 | 7:41 AM

How can you live with yourself you CRIMINAL!



frommerman

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 11:28 AM

Will you come with me please? There are a few questions we want to ask...



HoroscopeRaper

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 7:03 AM

So which is dumber? The people who write these laws or the people who are the reasons they have to?

[Reply](#)



Fora

+7 8 1

09-27-2014 | 7:57 AM

People who wrote it.



trashflicks

+12 12 0

09-27-2014 | 6:15 AM

In defense of the apparent overreaction in regards to the high school kid from Illinois, he didn't just write "stab" a few times. Other lines from his stream of consciousness essay include: "I had this dream last night where I went into a building, pulled out two P90s and started shooting everyone, then had sex with the dead bodies. Well, not really, but it would be funny if I did." And addressing the English teacher: "As a teacher, don't be surprised on inspiring the first cg [Cary-Grove, his high school] shooter." And, to put this in perspective, all of this happened less than 10 days after the Virginia Tech shooting, the most deadly shooting event by a single gunman in U.S. history.

Regardless of the assignment's instructions to not censor yourself, as a teacher, you'd have to report this to the school administration and the school administration would have to report it to the police just to cover their asses. To my knowledge, he was never expelled but was suspended and then basically allowed to come to the school to be tutored in private offices while the legal proceedings took place. The charges were dropped about a month later.

[Reply](#)



LadyAngua

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 5:58 AM

How the hell did "50 Shades ... ' every get written?

[Reply](#)



IzzyJaecks

+11 11 0

09-27-2014 | 5:57 AM

A couple years ago, I got carded when buying spray paint... clear coat spray paint. Since I'm in my 40's, the clerk felt silly asking, but it's the law and that's fine. But because it was clear coat, I couldn't help adding with a smile, "Yes, I am the most boring graffiti artist ever."

[Reply](#)



mysticglen

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 8:27 PM

it could also be because some kids use the stuff to get high unfortunately...



Rayn

0 1 0

09-27-2014 | 5:56 AM

If I were American, I would have been breaking them.. as it is though...

[Reply](#)



ZeeWulf

+3 5 2

09-27-2014 | 5:50 AM

Rmmember, EVERYONE is a suspect and criminal. Makes it so much easier to justify shooting in the face when they resist under the belief they're innocent.

[Reply](#)



KleinerKiller

+19 20 1

09-26-2014 | 6:24 PM

America: where a cop can pretend to be some guy's friend, trick him into making increasingly larger bets, shoot him in the heart while he's unarmed and oblivious, and get off with three weeks of suspension.

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An_Pedant

+4 4 0

09-26-2014 | 8:12 PM

That story is 100% fucked up. "Serve and protect", indeed...



Kingturd

+2 3 1

09-27-2014 | 7:43 AM

Seems like I read that the guy was let go because the cop entrapped him when he encouraged him to up the bets.



KleinerKiller

+10 10 0

09-26-2014 | 5:32 PM

Well, ain't that just bloody f*****g grand. My primary hobby (and hopeful future occupation) is writing and publishing "disturbing stories". I thought this was America!

[Reply](#)



Matt_192

+5 5 0

09-26-2014 | 8:37 PM

You're right, this *is* america, and that's precisely why you can't do it.



IzzyJaecks

+2 2 0

09-27-2014 | 6:19 AM

"Are you an aspiring writer age 16 to 24? If so, how is your zombie story coming along?"

If you are already an adult over 24, than this doesn't apply to you.



Rattenhoofd

-14 2 16

09-26-2014 | 12:34 PM

Meh, all of these are reasonable laws with understandable origins. The fact that there are examples of them being abused doesn't change that. The "disturbing material" one for instance, it makes sense that they'd need a law to be able to punish me for writing a lengthy torture novel featuring a certain "Glayne Wadstone". The permanent markers one, catching graffiti vandals red-handed is very hard, so they need a way to arrest people hanging around a subway station with bags full of graffiti stuff.

The examples of abuse are all infuriating, but I disagree with the general vibe of "look how stupid these laws are" that this article seems to have.

[Reply](#)



Weirdoinventor

+14 14 0

09-26-2014 | 4:04 PM

I disagree. A law has to be written in such a way that you can only be found guilty of breaking it if you actually did something wrong. The example you give under the disturbing material one is simply a badly disguised death threat, and should be treated as such. If after filtering out stuff that already breaks another law there is still stuff left you don't want people to be able to write, they'll just have to write a law that forbids those things specifically by not using vague wording.



zodd1985

0 0 0

09-27-2014 | 10:52 PM

Shut up faggot.



S.Ambiguum

+5 7 2

09-26-2014 | 7:49 AM

Surprise, my name is not actually S. Ambiguum.

[Reply](#)



McHwang

+11 11 0

09-26-2014 | 6:38 PM

You criminal dirtbag.

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