

## Bubble Gum 101: A short course in the gentle art of mastication

By Sean M. Toren

There's a window in childhood—a time when you either really learn how to blow bubbles (and hawk and spit) or you don't. My call came at age 8. I gave myself up to it wholly, letting my "inner-bubble" take over until I became obsessed with mastering the mythic "inside-out, nine-bubble" bubble. It required extreme control (and lots of gum) to blow so many bubbles inside one another.

I mastered it, though. I practiced by day, working the optimum four fresh pieces of Bazooka into a "working wad" that I could get a good hour out of before I'd start over, blowing a final hearty balloon, then tossing the bubble and attached wad, yelling "Splashdown!" because it looked a little like an Apollo spacecraft.

I'd forgotten that chewers aren't just born, but made, however, until I watched my girlfriend trying to blow bubbles.

Her shape was all wrong, the blow uncontrolled, the follow-through a disaster. The result was gum in her hair, on her face, stuck to her dry lips, time and time again.

"Weren't you a kid? Ever?" I was amazed. She's the Best Kisser in the World—how could she be such a spaz with something so simple? Suddenly she seemed from another age (or planet), as if she might not know how to use a doorknob or work a zipper, either.

"I had an accident, OK?" she said, picking gum shards off her lips with a fingernail. "When I was 6, in our car. They never let me chew gum again."

The horror. I began to coach, literally from the driver's seat. "Chew it more, work it across the roof of

your mouth, even the piece, work the...NO!" Another one up in smoke.

We spent the better part of an hour trying to get it right, as bubble after messy bubble popped on her face—until I cast back to childhood and remembered the sequence to creating the perfect bubble. Here are my tips for her—and any of you 20- or 30- or 40-somethings who missed the bubble boat.

**THE PITCH** Get a good, quality bubble gum. No Dentine, no Wrigleys. You need a dangerous wad, a good-sized gob. Bazooka, Super Bubble—the kind that's shelved about knee-high in the 7-11. Use only one or two pieces at first: You'll need to develop your chew strength for more.

**EVEN THE PLAYING FIELD** Chew it well. Get the sugar out. For adults, there's always the "spit or swallow" dilemma, but I say swallow—you might need the sugar buzz to keep your attention focused.

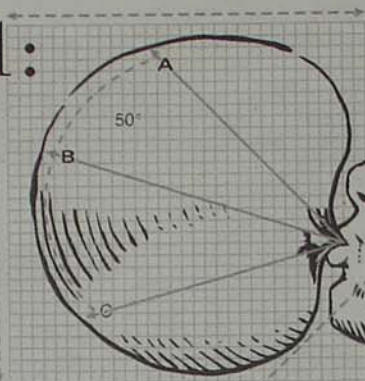
**The Stance:** This part's easy. Press it up against the roof of your mouth; flatten it into an even oval.

**THE SWING** "You know how to bubble, don't you? You just pucker your lips and blow." Ha! If only it were so easy. This is where my friend and most neophytes have problems.

**THE SET-UP** Use your tongue to hold the disc against the inside of your top and bottom teeth.

**THE PRE-BLOW** Very important. Give a little puff to press the disc forward and seal it against the inside of your lips.

**THE FOLLOW-THROUGH** With the disc sealed and air sneaking



Tip: Flatten gum against roof of mouth into disk shape

around the sides of your tongue, blow evenly and cleanly.

**GETTING TO FIRST**

Now for "gum management," or how *not* to blow it. There are several schools of thought on this, but I'm a strong believer that if you control the bubble through its entire cycle, it can never control you.

Keep the blow even, and bring it out all at once. Read the thickness, feel the resistance. In short, be the bubble.

If you push beyond the bubble's natural size, it will pop backwards and coat your face. This is very bad form, though it will be a laugh-generator for kids and everyone else around you. But what are you smirking at? This isn't kid stuff anymore! You're 20 years behind the curve, so get it right!

**BRINGING IT HOME** Retrieving



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**inciting conversation**

Think you blow the best bubble? Share your bubble blowing memories—log on at [www.siren-media.net](http://www.siren-media.net) and click on the Blow a Bubble Forum.

## It bounces, it stretches, it cleans computer keyboards

### Silly Putty hits the big 5-0

If, as a kid, you ever slapped Silly Putty on the Sunday morning comics to pick up Snoopy and then streeeeetched him long and skinny, raise your hand. And while it's in the air, start waving it about and shrieking, "Happy Birthday!" because Silly Putty just turned 50! Yep, that purveyor of bouncy pleasure just hit the big golden half-a-century. And to celebrate, the manufacture has laid a golden egg.

To commemorate the big 5-0, the Silly Putty company is stocking store shelves with a gold version of the sleek pink elastic goo, and giving away a 14-karat gold Silly Putty egg to the winner of the "Sillest Uses for Silly Putty" contest.

Despite a reputation for silliness, Silly Putty has its serious side. These days, you can find it sleeping in the Smithsonian, among the other icons of America's pop culture. And Silly Putty has traveled in space. The astronauts of Apollo 8 used Silly Putty to tack down tools inside their gravity-free capsule.

Silly Putty inventor James Wright.



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