

More Laws

A

Abbott's Admonitions:

1. If you have to ask, you're not entitled to know.
2. If you don't like the answer, you shouldn't have asked the question.

Abrams's Advice:

When eating an elephant, take one bite at a time.

Rule of Accuracy:

When working toward the solution of a problem, it always helps if you know the answer.

Corollary: Provided, of course, that you know there is a problem.

Acheson's Rule of the Bureaucracy:

A memorandum is written not to inform the reader but to protect the writer.

Acton's Law:

Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Ade's Law:

Anybody can win -- unless there happens to be a second entry.

Airplane Law:

When the plane you are on is late, the plane you want to transfer to is on time.

Alan's Law of Research

The theory is supported as long as the funds are.

Albrecht's Law:

Social innovations tend to the level of minimum tolerable well being.

Algren's Precepts:

Never eat at a place called Mom's. Never play cards with a man named Doc. And never lie down with a woman who's got more troubles than you.

Allen's Law of Civilization:

It is better for civilization to be going down the drain than to be coming up it.

Agnes Allen's Law:

Almost anything is easier to get into than out of.

Allen's Axiom:

When all else fails, follow instructions.

Allen's Distinction:

The lion and the calf shall lie down together, but the calf won't get much sleep.

Fred Allen's Motto:

I'd rather have a free bottle in front of me than a prefrontal lobotomy.

Alley's Axiom:

Justice always prevails . . . three times out of seven.

Alligator Allegory:

The objective of all dedicated product support employees should be to thoroughly analyze all situations, anticipate all problems prior to their occurrence, have answers for these problems, and move swiftly to solve these problems when called upon. However, when you are up to your ass in alligators, it is difficult to remind yourself that your initial objective was to drain the swamp.

Allison's Precept:

The best simple-minded test of expertise in a particular area is the ability to win money in a series of bets on future occurrences in that area.

Anderson's Law:

Any system or program, however complicated, if looked at in exactly the right way, will become even more complicated.

Andrews's Canoeing Postulate:

No matter which direction you start it's always against the wind coming back.

Law of Annoyance:

When working on a project, if you put away a tool that you're certain you're finished with, you will need it instantly.

Anthony's Law of Force:

Don't force it, get a larger hammer.

Anthony's Law of the Workshop:

Any tool, when dropped, will roll into the least accessible corner of the workshop.

Corollary: On the way to the corner, any dropped tool will first always strike your toes.

Laws of Applied Confusion:

- ☞ The one piece that the plant forgot to ship is the one that supports 75% of the balance of the shipment.

Corollary: Not only did the plant forget to ship it, 50% of the time they haven't even made it.

- ☞ Truck deliveries that normally take one day will take five when you are waiting for the truck.
- ☞ After adding two weeks to the schedule for unexpected delays, add two more for the unexpected, unexpected delays.
- ☞ In any structure, pick out the one piece that should not be mismarked and expect the plant to cross you up.

Corollaries:

1. In any group of pieces with the same erection mark on it, one should not have that mark on it.
2. It will not be discovered until you try to put it where the mark says it's supposed to go.
3. Never argue with the fabricating plant about an error. The inspection prints are all checked off, even to the holes that aren't there.

Approval Seeker's Law:

Those whose approval you seek the most give you the least.

The Aquinas Axiom:

What the gods get away with, the cows don't.

Army Axiom:

Any order that can be misunderstood has been misunderstood.

Army Law:

If it moves, salute it; if it doesn't move, pick it up; if you can't pick it up, paint it.

Ashley-Perry Statistical Axioms:

1. Numbers are tools, not rules.
2. Numbers are symbols for things; the number and the thing are not the same.
3. Skill in manipulating numbers is a talent, not evidence of divine guidance.
4. Like other occult techniques of divination, the statistical method has a private jargon deliberately contrived to obscure its methods from nonpractitioners.
5. The product of an arithmetical computation is the answer to an equation; it is not the solution to a problem.
6. Arithmetical proofs of theorems that do not have arithmetical bases prove nothing.

Astrology Law:

It's always the wrong time of the month.

Fourteenth Corollary of Atwood's General Law of Dynamic Negatives:

No books are lost by loaning except those you particularly wanted to keep.

Avery's Rule of Three:

Trouble strikes in series of threes, but when working around the house the next job after a series of three is not the fourth job -- it's the start of a brand new series of three.

[Back to top](#)

B

Babcock's Law:

If it can be borrowed and it can be broken, you will borrow it and you will break it.

Baer's Quartet:

What's good politics is bad economics; what's bad politics is good economics; what's good economics is bad politics; what's bad economics is good politics.

Bagdikian's Law of Editor's Speeches:

The splendor of an editor's speech and the splendor of his newspaper are inversely related to the distance between the city in which he makes his speech and the city in which he publishes his paper.

Baker's Byroad:

When you are over the hill, you pick up speed.

Baker's Law:

Misery no longer loves company. Nowadays it insists on it.

Baldy's Law:

Some of it plus the rest of it is all of it.

Barber's Laws of Backpacking

1. The integral of the gravitational potential taken around any loop trail you chose to hike always comes out positive.
2. Any stone in your boot always migrates against the pressure gradient to exactly the point of most pressure.
3. The weight of your pack increases in direct proportion to the amount of food you consume from it. If you run out of food, the pack weight goes on increasing anyway.
4. The number of stones in your boot is directly proportional to the number of hours you have been on the trail.
5. The difficulty of finding any given trail marker is directly proportional to the importance of the consequences of failing to find it.
6. The size of each of the stones in your boot is directly proportional to the number of hours you have been on the trail.
7. The remaining distance to your chosen campsite remains constant as twilight approaches.
8. The net weight of your boots is proportional to the cube of the number of hours you have been on the trail.
9. When you arrive at your chosen campsite, it is full.
10. If you take your boots off, you'll never get them back on again.
11. The local density of mosquitoes is inversely proportional to your remaining repellent.

Barrett's Laws of Driving:

1. You can get ANYWHERE in ten minutes if you go fast enough.
2. Speed bumps are of negligible effect when the vehicle exceeds triple the desired restraining speed.
3. The vehicle in front of you is traveling slower than you are.
4. This lane ends in 500 feet.

Barr's Comment on Domestic Tranquility:

On a beautiful day like this it's hard to believe anyone can be unhappy -- but we'll work on it.

Barth's Distinction

There are two types of people: those who divide people into two types, and those who don't.

Bartz's Law of Hokey Horsepuckery:

The more ridiculous a belief system, the higher the probability of its success.

Baruch's Rule for Determining Old Age:

Old age is always fifteen years older than I am.

Barzun's Laws of Learning

1. The simple but difficult arts of paying attention, copying accurately, following an argument, detecting an ambiguity or a false inference, testing guesses by summoning

up contrary instances, organizing one's time and one's thought for study -- all these arts -- cannot be taught in the air but only through the difficulties of a defined subject. They cannot be taught in one course or one year, but must be acquired gradually in dozens of connections.

2. The analogy to athletics must be pressed until all recognize that in the exercise of Intellect those who lack the muscles, coordination, and will power can claim no place at the training table, let alone on the playing field.

Forthoffer's Cynical Summary of Barzun's Laws

1. That which has not yet been taught directly can never be taught directly.
2. If at first you don't succeed, you will never succeed.

Baxter's First Law:

Government intervention in the free market always leads to a lower national standard of living.

Baxter's Second Law:

The adoption of fractional gold reserves in a currency system always leads to depreciation, devaluation, demonetization and, ultimately, to complete destruction of that currency.

Baxter's Third Law:

In a free market good money always drives bad money out of circulation.

Beardsley's Warning to Lawyers:

Beware of and eschew pompous prolixity.

Beauregard's Law:

When you're up to your nose, keep your mouth shut.

Becker's Law:

It is much harder to find a job than to keep one.

Beers Law of Reciprocating Systems Dynamics:

Some mistakes are too fun to make only once.

Beifeld's Principle:

The probability of a young man meeting a desirable and receptive young female increases by pyramidal progression when he is already in the company of (1) a date, (2) his wife, and (3) a better looking and richer male friend.

Belle's Constant:

The ratio of time involved in work to time available for work is usually about 0.6.

Benchley's Distinction:

There are two types of people: those who divide people into two types, and those who don't.

Benchley's Law:

Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment.

Berkeley's Laws:

1. The world is more complicated than most of our theories make it out to be.
2. Ignorance is no excuse.

3. Never decide to buy something while listening to the salesman.
4. Information which is true meets a great many different tests very well.
5. Most problems have either many answers or no answer. Only a few problems have a single answer.
6. An answer may be wrong, right, both, or neither. Most answers are partly right and partly wrong.
7. A chain of reasoning is no stronger than its weakest link.
8. A statement may be true independently of illogical reasoning.
9. Most general statements are false, including this one.
10. An exception TESTS a rule; it NEVER PROVES it.
11. The moment you have worked out an answer, start checking it -- it probably isn't right.
12. If there is an opportunity to make a mistake, sooner or later the mistake will be made.
13. Being sure mistakes will occur is a good frame of mind for catching them.
14. Check the answer you have worked out once more -- before you tell it to anybody.
15. Estimating a figure may be enough to catch an error.
16. Figures calculated in a rush are very hot; they should be allowed to cool off a little before being used; thus we will have a reasonable time to think about the figures and catch mistakes.
17. A great many problems do not have accurate answers, but do have approximate answers, from which sensible decisions can be made.

Berra's Law:

You can observe a lot just by watching.

Berson's Corollary of Inverse Distances:

The farther away from the entrance that you have to park, the closer the space vacated by the car that pulls away as you walk up to the door.

Bicycle Law:

All bicycles weigh 50 pounds:

A 30-pound bicycle needs a 20-pound lock and chain.

A 40-pound bicycle needs a 10-pound lock and chain.

A 50-pound bicycle needs no lock or chain.

First Law of Bicycling:

No matter which way you ride it's uphill and against the wind.

The Billings Phenomenon:

The conclusions of most good operations research studies are obvious.

Billings's Law:

Live within your income, even if you have to borrow to do so.

Blaauw's Law:

Established technology tends to persist in spite of new technology.

Blanchard's Newspaper Obituary Law:

If you want your name spelled wrong, die.

Bok's Law:

If you think education is expensive -- try ignorance.

Boling's Postulate:

If you're feeling good, don't worry. You'll get over it.

Bolton's Law of Ascending Budgets:

Under current practices, both expenditures and revenues rise to meet each other, no matter which one may be in excess.

Bombeck's Rule of Medicine:

Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died.

Bonafede's Revelation:

The conventional wisdom is that power is an aphrodisiac. In truth, it's exhausting.

Boob's Law:

You always find something the last place you look.

Booker's Law:

An ounce of application is worth a ton of abstraction.

Boozer's Revision:

A bird in the hand is dead.

Boren's Laws of the Bureaucracy:

1. When in doubt, mumble.
2. When in trouble, delegate.
3. When in charge, ponder.

Borkowski's Law:

You can't guard against the arbitrary.

Borstelmann's Rule:

If everything seems to be coming your way, you're probably in the wrong lane.

Boston's Irreversible Law of Clutter:

In any household, junk accumulates to fill the space available for its storage.

Boulton's Criterion:

If the converse of a statement is absurd, the original statement is an insult to the intelligence and should never have been said.

Boyle's Laws:

1. The success of any venture will be helped by prayer, even in the wrong denomination.
2. When things are going well, someone will inevitably experiment detrimentally.
3. The deficiency will never show itself during the dry runs.
4. Information travels more surely to those with a lesser need to know.
5. An original idea can never emerge from committee in the original.
6. When the product is destined to fail, the delivery system will perform perfectly.
7. The crucial memorandum will be snared in the out-basket by the paper clip of the overlying correspondence and go to file.
8. Success can be insured only by devising a defense against failure of the contingency plan.
9. Performance is directly affected by the perversity of inanimate objects.
10. If not controlled, work will flow to the competent man until he submerges.
11. The lagging activity in a project will invariably be found in the area where the highest overtime rates lie waiting.
12. Talent in staff work or sales will recurringly be interpreted as managerial ability.

13. The "think positive" leader tends to listen to his subordinates' premonitions only during the postmortems.
14. Clearly stated instructions will consistently produce multiple interpretations.
15. On successive charts of the same organization the number of boxes will never decrease.

Branch's First Law of Crisis:

The spirit of public service will rise, and the bureaucracy will multiply itself much faster, in time of grave national concern.

First Law of Bridge:

It's always the partner's fault.

Brien's First Law:

At some time in the life cycle of virtually every organization, its ability to succeed in spite of itself runs out.

Broder's Law:

Anybody that wants the presidency so much that he'll spend two years organizing and campaigning for it is not to be trusted with the office.

Brontosaurus Principle:

Organizations can grow faster than their brains can manage them in relation to their environment and to their own physiology; when this occurs, they are an endangered species.

Brooks's Law:

Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later.

Brooke's Law:

Whenever a system becomes completely defined, some damn fool discovers something which either abolishes the system or expands it beyond recognition.

Brownian Motion Rule of Bureaucracies:

It is impossible to distinguish, from a distance, whether the bureaucrats associated with your project are simply sitting on their hands, or frantically trying to cover their asses.

Heisenberg's Addendum to Brownian Bureaucracy: If you observe a bureaucrat closely enough to make the distinction above, he will react to your observation by covering his ass.

(Jerry) Brown's Law:

Too often I find that the volume of paper expands to fill the available briefcases.

(Sam) Brown's Law:

Never offend people with style when you can offend them with substance.

(Tony) Brown's Law of Business Success:

Our customer's paperwork is profit. Our own paperwork is loss.

Bruce-Briggs's Law of Traffic:

At any level of traffic, any delay is intolerable.

Buchwald's Law:

As the economy gets better, everything else gets worse.

Bucy's Law:

Nothing is ever accomplished by a reasonable man.

Bunuel's Law:

Overdoing things is harmful in all cases, even when it comes to efficiency.

Bureaucratic Cop-Out #1:

You should have seen it when *I* got it.

Burns's Balance:

If the assumptions are wrong, the conclusions aren't likely to be very good.

Bustlin' Billy's Bogus Beliefs:

1. The organization of any program reflects the organization of the people who develop it.
2. There is no such thing as a "dirty capitalist", only a capitalist.
3. Anything is possible, but nothing is easy.
4. Capitalism can exist in one of only two states -- welfare or warfare.
5. I'd rather go whoring than warring.
6. History proves nothing.
7. There is nothing so unbecoming on the beach as a wet kilt.
8. A little humility is arrogance.
9. A lot of what appears to be progress is just so much technological rococo.

Butler's Law of Progress:

All progress is based on a universal innate desire on the part of every organism to live beyond its income.

Bye's First Law of Model Railroadng:

Anytime you wish to demonstrate something, the number of faults is proportional to the number of viewers.

Bye's Second Law of Model Railroadng:

The desire for modeling a prototype is inversely proportional to the decline of the prototype.

[Back to top](#)

C

Cahn's Axiom (Allen's Axiom):

When all else fails, read the instructions.

Calkin's Law of Menu Language:

The number of adjectives and verbs that are added to the description of a menu item is in inverse proportion to the quality of the resulting dish.

John Cameron's Law:

No matter how many times you've had it, if it's offered, take it, because it'll never be quite the same again.

Camp's Law:

A coup that is known in advance is a coup that does not take place.

Campbell's Law:

Nature abhors a vacuous experimenter.

Canada Bill Jones's Motto:

It's morally wrong to allow suckers to keep their money.

Cannon's Cogent Comment:

The leak in the roof is never in the same location as the drip.

Cannon's Comment:

If you tell the boss you were late for work because you had a flat tire, the next morning you will have a flat tire.

Carson's Law

It's better to be rich and healthy than poor and sick.

Cartoon Laws

1. Any body suspended in space will remain in space until made aware of its situation. Daffy Duck steps off a cliff, expecting further pastureland. He loiters in midair, soliloquizing flippantly, until he chances to look down. At this point, the familiar principle of 32 feet per second per second takes over.
2. Any body in motion will tend to remain in motion until solid matter intervenes suddenly. Whether shot from a cannon or in hot pursuit on foot, cartoon characters are so absolute in their momentum that only a telephone pole or an outsize boulder retards their forward motion absolutely. Sir Isaac Newton called this sudden termination of motion the stooge's surcease.
3. Any body passing through solid matter will leave a perforation conforming to its perimeter. Also called the silhouette of passage, this phenomenon is the specialty of victims of directed-pressure explosions and of reckless cowards who are so eager to escape that they exit directly through the wall of a house, leaving a cookie-cutout-perfect hole. The threat of skunks or matrimony often catalyzes this reaction.
4. The time required for an object to fall twenty stories is greater than or equal to the time it takes for whoever knocked it off the ledge to spiral down twenty flights to attempt to capture it unbroken. Such an object is inevitably priceless, the attempt to capture it inevitably unsuccessful.
5. All principles of gravity are negated by fear. Psychic forces are sufficient in most bodies for a shock to propel them directly away from the earth's surface. A spooky noise or an adversary's signature sound will induce motion upward, usually to the cradle of a chandelier, a treetop, or the crest of a flagpole. The feet of a character who is running or the wheels of a speeding auto need never touch the ground, especially when in flight.
6. As speed increases, objects can be in several places at once. This is particularly true of tooth-and-claw fights, in which a character's head may be glimpsed emerging from the cloud of altercation at several places simultaneously. This effect is common as well among bodies that are spinning or being throttled. A 'wacky' character has the option of self-replication only at manic high speeds and may ricochet off walls to achieve the velocity required.
7. Certain bodies can pass through solid walls painted to resemble tunnel entrances; others cannot. This trompe l'oeil inconsistency has baffled generation, but at least it is known that whoever paints an entrance on a wall's surface to trick an opponent will be unable to pursue him into this theoretical space. The painter is flattened against the wall when he attempts to follow into the painting. This is ultimately a problem of art, not of science.

8. Any violent rearrangement of feline matter is impermanent. Cartoon cats possess even more deaths than the traditional nine lives might comfortably afford. They can be decimated, spliced, splayed, accordion-pleated, spindled, or disassembled, but they cannot be destroyed. After a few moments of blinking self pity, they reinflate, elongate, snap back, or solidify. Corollary: A cat will assume the shape of its container.
9. For every vengeance there is an equal and opposite revengeance. This is the one law of animated cartoon motion that also applies to the physical world at large. For that reason, we need the relief of watching it happen to a duck instead.
10. Everything falls faster than an anvil. Examples too numerous to mention from the Roadrunner cartoons.

Cavanaugh's Postulate:

All kookies are not in a jar.

Law of Character and Appearance:

People don't change; they only become more so.

Checkbook Balancer's Law:

In matters of dispute, the bank's balance is always smaller than yours.

Cheops's Law:

Nothing ever gets built on schedule or within budget.

Chili Cook's Secret:

If your next pot of chili tastes better, it probably is because of something left out, rather than added.

Chisholm's First Law and Corollary: see Murphy's Third and Fifth Laws.

Chisholm's Second Law:

When things are going well, something will go wrong.

Corollaries:

1. When things just can't get any worse, they will.
2. Anytime things appear to be going better, you have overlooked something.

Chisholm's Third Law:

Proposals, as understood by the proposer, will be judged otherwise by others.

Corollaries:

1. If you explain so clearly that nobody can misunderstand, somebody will.
2. If you do something which you are sure will meet with everyone's approval, somebody won't like it.
3. Procedures devised to implement the purpose won't quite work.
4. No matter how long or how many times you explain, no one is listening.

The First Discovery of Christmas Morning: Batteries not included.

Churchill's Commentary on Man:

Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on as though nothing has happened.

Ciardi's Poetry Law:

Whenever in time, and wherever in the universe, any man speaks or writes in any detail about the technical management of a poem, the resulting irascibility of the reader's response is a constant.

Clarke's First Law:

When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.

Corollary (Asimov): When the lay public rallies round an idea that is denounced by distinguished but elderly scientists, and supports that idea with great fervor and emotion -- the distinguished but elderly scientists are then, after all, right.

Clarke's Second Law:

The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

Clarke's Third Law:

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

Clarke's Law of Revolutionary Ideas:

Every revolutionary idea -- in Science, Politics, Art or Whatever -- evokes three stages of reaction. They may be summed up by the three phrases:

1. "It is completely impossible -- don't waste my time."
2. "It is possible, but it is not worth doing."
3. "I said it was a good idea all along."

Clark's First Law of Relativity:

No matter how often you trade dinner or other invitations with in-laws, you will lose a small fortune in the exchange.

Corollary: Don't try it: you cannot drink enough of your in-laws' booze to get even before your liver fails.

Clark's Law:

It's always darkest just before the lights go out.

Cleveland's Highway Law:

Highways in the worst need of repair naturally have low traffic counts, which results in low priority for repair work.

Clopton's Law:

For every credibility gap there is a gullibility fill.

Clyde's Law:

If you have something to do, and you put it off long enough, chances are someone else will do it for you.

Cohen's Law:

What really matters is the name you succeed in imposing on the facts -- not the facts themselves.

Cohen's Laws of Politics:

Law of Alienation:

Nothing can so alienate a voter from the political system as backing a winning candidate.

Law of Ambition:

At any one time, thousands of borough councilmen, school board members, attorneys, and businessmen -- as well as congressmen, senators, and governors -- are dreaming of the White House, but few, if any of them, will make it.

Law of Attraction:

Power attracts people but it cannot hold them.

Law of Competition:

The more qualified candidates who are available, the more likely the compromise will be on the candidate whose main qualification is a nonthreatening incompetence.

Law of Inside Dope:

There are many inside dopes in politics and government.

Law of Lawmaking:

Those who express random thoughts to legislative committees are often surprised and appalled to find themselves the instigators of law.

Law of Permanence:

Political power is as permanent as today's newspaper. Ten years from now, few will know or care who the most powerful man in any state was today.

Law of Secrecy:

The best way to publicize a governmental or political action is to attempt to hide it.

Law of Wealth:

Victory goes to the candidate with the most accumulated or contributed wealth who has the financial resources to convince the middle class and poor that he will be on their side.

Law of Wisdom:

Wisdom is considered a sign of weakness by the powerful because a wise man can lead without power but only a powerful man can lead without wisdom.

Cohn's Law:

The more time you spend in reporting on what you are doing, the less time you have to do anything. Stability is achieved when you spend all your time doing nothing but reporting on the nothing you are doing.

Mr. Cole's Axiom:

The sum of the intelligence on the planet is a constant; the population is growing.

Colson's Law:

If you've got them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.

Comins's Law:

People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.

Committee Rules:

1. Never arrive on time, or you will be stamped a beginner.
2. Don't say anything until the meeting is half over; this stamps you as being wise.
3. Be as vague as possible; this prevents irritating the others.
4. When in doubt, suggest that a subcommittee be appointed.
5. Be the first to move for adjournment; this will make you popular -- it's what everyone is waiting for.

Commoner's Three Laws of Ecology:

1. No action is without side-effects.
2. Nothing ever goes away.
3. There is no free lunch.

Law of Computability

Any system or program, however complicated, if looked at in exactly the right way, will become even more complicated.

Law of Computability Applied to Social Science:

If at first you don't succeed, transform your data set.

Laws of computer programming

1. Any given program, when running, is obsolete.
2. Any given program costs more and takes longer.
3. If a program is useful, it will have to be changed.
4. If a program is useless, it will have to be documented.
5. Any program will expand to fill available memory.
6. The value of a program is proportional to the weight of its output.
7. Program complexity grows until it exceeds the capabilities of the programmer who must maintain it.
8. Any non-trivial program contains at least one bug.
9. Undetectable errors are infinite in variety, in contrast to detectable errors, which by definition are limited.
10. Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later.
11. Lubarisky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology: There's always one more bug.

First Maxim of Computers

To err is human, but to really screw things up requires a computer.

Connolly's Law of Cost Control:

The price of any product produced for a government agency will be not less than the square of the initial Firm Fixed-Price Contract.

Connolly's Rule for Political Incumbents:

Short-term success with voters on any side of a given issue can be guaranteed by creating a long-term special study commission made up of at least three divergent interest groups.

Conrad's Conundrum

Technologies don't transfer.

Considine's Law:

Whenever one word or letter can change the entire meaning of a sentence, the probability of an error being made will be in direct proportion to the embarrassment it will cause.

Conway's Law #1

If you assign N persons to write a compiler you'll get a N-1 pass compiler.

Conway's Law #2

In every organization there will always be one person who knows what is going on. -> This person must be fired.

Cooke's Law:

In any decisive situation, the amount of relevant information available is inversely proportional to the importance of the decision.

Cook's Law:

Much work, much food; little work, little food; no work, burial at sea.

Coolidge's Immutable Observation:

When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results.

Cooper's Law:

All machines are amplifiers.

Cooper's Metalaw:

A proliferation of new laws creates a proliferation of new loopholes.

Mr. Cooper's Law:

If you do not understand a particular word in a piece of technical writing, ignore it. The piece will make perfect sense without it.

Corcoroni's Laws of Bus Transportation:

1. The bus that left the stop just before you got there is your bus.
2. The amount of time you have to wait for a bus is directly proportional to the inclemency of the weather.
3. All buses heading in the opposite direction drive off the face of the earth and never return.
4. The last rush-hour express bus to your neighborhood leaves five minutes before you get off work.
5. Bus schedules are arranged so your bus will arrive at the transfer point precisely one minute after the connecting bus has left.

6. Any bus that can be the wrong bus will be the wrong bus. All others are out of service or full.

Cornuelle's Law:

Authority tends to assign jobs to those least able to do them.

Corry's Law:

Paper is always strongest at the perforations.

Courtois's Rule:

If people listened to themselves more often, they'd talk less.

Crane's Law (Friedman's Reiteration):

There ain't no such thing as a free lunch. ("tanstaafl")

Mark Miller's Exception to Crane's Law:

There are no "free lunches", but sometimes it costs more to collect money than to give away food.

Crane's Rule:

There are three ways to get something done: do it yourself, hire someone, or forbid your kids to do it.

Cripp's Law:

When traveling with children on one's holidays, at least one child of any number of children will request a rest room stop exactly halfway between any two given rest areas.

Cropp's Law:

The amount of work done varies inversely with the amount of time spent in the office.

Culshaw's First Principle of Recorded Sound:

Anything, no matter how bad, will sound good if played back at a very high level for a short time.

Cutler Webster's Law:

There are two sides to every argument unless a man is personally involved, in which case there is only one.

Czecinski's Conclusion:

There is only one thing worse than dreaming you are at a conference and waking to find that you are at a conference, and that is the conference where you can't fall asleep.

[Back to top](#)

D

Darrow's Observation:

History repeats itself. That's one of the things wrong with history.

Darwin's Observation:

Nature will tell you a direct lie if she can.

Dave's Law of Advice:

Those with the best advice offer no advice.

Dave's Rule of Street Survival:

Speak softly and own a big, mean Doberman.

Davidson's Maxim:

Democracy is that form of government where everybody gets what the majority deserves.

Davis's Basic Law of Medicine:

Pills to be taken in twos always come out of the bottle in threes.

de la Lastra's Law

After the last of 16 mounting screws has been removed from an access cover, it will be discovered that the wrong access cover has been removed.

de la Lastra's Corollary

After an access cover has been secured by 16 hold-down screws, it will be discovered that the gasket has been omitted.

Deadlock's Law:

If the law-makers make a compromise, the place where it will be felt most is the taxpayer's pocket.

Corollary: The compromise will always be more expensive than either of the suggestions it is compromising.

Dean's Law of the District of Columbia:

Washington is a much better place if you are asking questions rather than answering them.

First Law of Debate:

Never argue with a fool. People might not know the difference.

Decaprio's Rule

Everything takes more time and money.

Deitz's Law of Ego:

The fury engendered by the misspelling of a name in a column is in direct ratio to the obscurity of the mentionee.

Dennis's Principles of Management by Crisis:

1. To get action out of management, it is necessary to create the illusion of a crisis in the hope it will be acted upon.
2. Management will select actions or events and convert them to crises. It will then over-react.
3. Management is incapable of recognizing a true crisis.
4. The squeaky hinge gets the oil.

Dhawan's Laws for the Non-Smoker:

1. The cigarette smoke always drifts in the direction of the non-smoker regardless of the direction of the breeze.
2. The amount of pleasure derived from a cigarette is directly proportional to the number of non-smokers in the vicinity.
3. A smoker is always attracted to the non-smoking section.
4. The life of a cigarette is directly proportional to the intensity of the protests from non-smokers.

Dieter's Law:

Food that tastes the best has the highest number of calories.

Dijkstra's Prescription for Programming Inertia:

If you don't know what your program is supposed to do, you'd better not start writing it.

Diogenes's First Dictum:

The more heavily a man is supposed to be taxed, the more power he has to escape being taxed.

Diogenes's Second Dictum:

If a taxpayer thinks he can cheat safely, he probably will.

Dirksen's Three Laws of Politics:

1. Get elected.
2. Get re-elected.
3. Don't get mad -- get even.

Principle of Displaced Hassle:

To beat the bureaucracy, make your problem their problem.

Donohue's Law:

Anything worth doing is worth doing for money.

Donsen's Law:

The specialist learns more and more about less and less until, finally, he knows everything about nothing; whereas the generalist learns less and less about more and more until, finally, he knows nothing about everything.

Laws of Dormitory Life:

1. The amount of trash accumulated within the space occupied is exponentially proportional to the number of living bodies that enter and leave within any given amount of time.
2. Since no matter can be created or destroyed (excluding nuclear and cafeteria substances), as one attempts to remove unwanted material (i.e., trash) from one's living space, the remaining material mutates so as to occupy 30 to 50 percent more than its original volume.

Corollary: Dust breeds.

- The odds are 6:5 that if one has late classes, one's roommate will have the EARLIEST possible classes.

Corollary 1: One's roommate (who has early classes) has an alarm clock that is louder than God's own.

Corollary 2: When one has an early class, one's roommate will invariably enter the space late at night and suddenly become hyperactive, ill, violent, or all three.

Douglas's Law of Practical Aeronautics:

When the weight of the paperwork equals the weight of the plane, the plane will fly.

Dow's Law:

In a hierarchical organization, the higher the level, the greater the confusion.

Dror's First Law:

While the difficulties and dangers of problems tend to increase at a geometric rate, the knowledge and manpower qualified to deal with these problems tend to increase linearly.

Dror's Second Law:

While human capacities to shape the environment, society, and human beings are rapidly increasing, policymaking capabilities to use those capacities remain the same.

Ducharme's Precept

Opportunity always knocks at the least opportune moment.

Dude's Law of Duality:

Of two possible events, only the undesired one will occur.

Dunne's Law:

The territory behind rhetoric is too often mined with equivocation.

Dunn's Discovery:

The shortest measurable interval of time is the time between the moment one puts a little extra aside for a sudden emergency and the arrival of that emergency.

Durant's Discovery:

One of the lessons of history is that nothing is often a good thing to do and always a clever thing to say.

Durrell's Parameter:

The faster the plane, the narrower the seats.

Dyer's Law:

A continuing flow of paper is sufficient to continue the flow of paper.

[Back to top](#)

E

Economists' Laws:

1. What men learn from history is that men do not learn from history.
2. If on an actuarial basis there is a 50-50 chance that something will go wrong, it will actually go wrong nine times out of ten.

Edington's Theory:

The number of different hypotheses erected to explain a given biological phenomenon is inversely proportional to the available knowledge.

Law of Editorial Correction:

Anyone nit-picking enough to write a letter of correction to an editor doubtless deserves the error that provoked it.

Ehrlich's Rule:

The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts.

Ehrman's Commentary

Things will get worse before they will get better. Who said things would get better?

Eliot's Observation:

Nothing is so good as it seems beforehand.

Ellenberg's Theory:

One good turn gets most of the blanket.

Emerson's Insight:

That which we call sin in others is experiment for us.

Old Engineer's Law:

The larger the project or job, the less time there is to do it.

The "Enough Already" Law:

The more you run over a dead cat, the flatter it gets.

Extended Epstein-Heisenberg Principle:

In an R & D orbit, only 2 of the existing 3 parameters can be defined simultaneously. The parameters are: task, time, and resources (\$). 1) If one knows what the task is, and there is a time limit allowed for the completion of the task, then one cannot guess how much it will cost. 2) If the time and resources (\$) are clearly defined, then it is impossible to know what part of the R & D task will be performed. 3) If you are given a clearly defined R & D goal and a definite amount of money which has been calculated to be necessary for the completion of the task, one cannot predict if and when the goal will be reached. 4) If one is lucky enough to be able to accurately define all three parameters, then what one is dealing with is not in the realm of R & D.

Epstein's Law:

If you think the problem is bad now, just wait until we've solved it.

Ettorre's Observation:

The other line moves faster.

Corollary: Don't try to change lines. The other line -- the one you were in originally -- will then move faster.

Evans's Law:

Nothing worth a damn is ever done as a matter of principle. (If it is worth doing, it is done because it is worth doing. If it is not, it's done as a matter of principle.)

Evans's Law of Politics:

When team members are finally in a position to help the team, it turns out they have quit the team.

Evelyn's Rules for Bureaucratic Survival:

1. A bureaucrat's castle is his desk . . . and parking place. Proceed cautiously when changing either.
2. On the theory that one should never take anything for granted, follow up on everything, but especially those items varying from the norm. The greater the divergence from normal routine and/or the greater the number of offices potentially involved, the better the chance a never-to-be-discovered person will file the problem away in a drawer specifically designed for items requiring a decision.
3. Never say without qualification that your activity has sufficient space, money, staff, etc.
4. Always distrust offices not under your jurisdiction which say that they are there to serve you. "Support" offices in a bureaucracy tend to grow in size and make demands

on you out of proportion to their service, and in the end require more effort on your part than their service is worth.

Corollary: Support organizations can always prove success by showing service to someone . . . not necessarily you.

☞ Incompetents often hire able assistants.

Everitt's Form of the Second Law of Thermodynamics:

Confusion (entropy) is always increasing in society. Only if someone or something works extremely hard can this confusion be reduced to order in a limited region. Nevertheless, this effort will still result in an increase in the total confusion of society at large.

Eve's Discovery:

At a bargain sale, the only suit or dress that you like best and that fits is the one not on sale.

Adam's Corollary: It's easy to tell when you've got a bargain -- it doesn't fit.

Nonreciprocal Laws of Expectations:

1. Negative expectations yield negative results.
2. Positive expectations yield negative results.

First Law of Expert Advice:

Don't ask the barber whether you need a haircut.

[Back to top](#)

F

Faber's Laws:

1. If there isn't a law, there will be.
2. The number of errors in any piece of writing rises in proportion to the writer's reliance on secondary sources.

Fairfax's Law:

Any facts which, when included in the argument, give the desired result, are fair facts for the argument.

Falkland's Rule:

When it is not necessary to make a decision, it is necessary not to make a decision.

Farber's First Law:

Give him an inch and he'll screw you.

Farber's Second Law:

A hand in the bush is worth two anywhere else.

Farber's Third Law:

We're all going down the same road in different directions.

Farber's Fourth Law:

Necessity is the mother of strange bedfellows.

Farnsdick's corollary

After things have gone from bad to worse, the cycle will repeat itself.

Farrow's Finding:

If God had intended for us to go to concerts, He would have given us tickets.

Law of Fashion:

Any given dress is: indecent 10 years before its time, daring 1 year before its time, chic in its time, dowdy 3 years after its time, hideous 20 years after its time, amusing 30 years after its time, romantic 100 years after its time, and beautiful 150 years after its time.

Rule of Feline Frustration:

When your cat has fallen asleep on your lap and looks utterly content and adorable, you will suddenly have to go to the bathroom.

Fetridge's Law:

Important things that are supposed to happen do not happen, especially when people are looking.

Fett's Law of the Lab:

Never replicate a successful experiment.

The Fifth Rule:

You have taken yourself too seriously.

Finagle's Creed:

Science is Truth. Don't be misled by fact.

Finagle's First Law:

If an experiment works, something has gone wrong.

Finagle's Second Law:

No matter what result is anticipated, there will always be someone eager to (a) misinterpret it, (b) fake it, or (c) believe it happened according to his own pet theory.

Finagle's Third Law:

In any collection of data, the figure most obviously correct, beyond all need of checking, is the mistake.

Corollaries:

1. No one whom you ask for help will see it.
2. Everyone who stops by with unsought advice will see it immediately.

Finagle's Fourth Law:

Once a job is fouled up, anything done to improve it only makes it worse.

Finagle's Law According to Niven:

The perversity of the universe tends to a maximum.

Finagle's Laws of Information:

1. The information you have is not what you want.
2. The information you want is not what you need.
3. The information you need is not what you can obtain.

4. The information you can obtain costs more than you want to pay.

Finagle's Rules:

Ever since the first scientific experiment, man has been plagued by the increasing antagonism of nature. It seems only right that nature should be logical and neat, but experience has shown that this is not the case. A further series of rules has been formulated, designed to help man accept the pigheadedness of nature.

1. To study a subject best, understand it thoroughly before you start.
2. Always keep a record of data. It indicates you've been working.
3. Always draw your curves, then plot the reading.
4. In case of doubt, make it sound convincing.
5. Experiments should be reproducible. They should all fail in the same way.
6. When you don't know what you are doing, do it NEATLY.
7. Teamwork is essential; it allows you to blame someone else.
8. Always verify your witchcraft.
9. Be sure to obtain meteorological data before leaving on vacation.
10. Do not believe in miracles. Rely on them.

Fishbein's Conclusion:

The tire is only flat on the bottom.

Fitz-Gibbon's Law:

Creativity varies inversely with the number of cooks involved with the broth.

Flap's Law:

Any inanimate object, regardless of its composition or configuration, may be expected to perform at any time in a totally unexpected manner for reasons that are either entirely obscure or completely mysterious.

Ford Pinto Rule:

Never buy a car that has a wick.

Foster's Law:

If you cover a congressional committee on a regular basis, they will report the bill on your day off.

Fowler's Law:

In a bureaucracy, accomplishment is inversely proportional to the volume of paper used.

Fowler's Note:

The only imperfect thing in nature is the human race.

Frankel's Law:

Whatever happens in government could have happened differently, and it usually would have been better if it had.

Corollary: Once things have happened, no matter how accidentally, they will be regarded as manifestations of an unchangeable Higher Reason.

Franklin's Rule:

Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.

Freeman's Law:

Nothing is so simple it cannot be misunderstood.

Freemon's Rule:

Circumstances can force a generalized incompetent to become competent, at least in a specialized field.

Fried's Law:

Ideas endure and prosper in inverse proportion to their soundness and validity.

Laws of the Frisbee:

1. The most powerful force in the world is that of a disc straining to land under a car, just beyond reach. (The technical term for this force is "car suck".)
2. The higher the quality of a catch or the comment it receives, the greater the probability of a crummy return throw. ("Good catch. . . Bad throw.")
3. One must never precede any maneuver by a comment more predictive than, "Watch this!" (Keep 'em guessing.)
4. The higher the costs of hitting any object, the greater the certainty it will be struck. (Remember: The disc is positive; cops and old ladies are clearly negative.)
5. The best catches are never seen. ("Did you see that?" "See what?")
6. The greatest single aid to distance is for the disc to be going in a direction you did not want. (Wrong way = long way.)
7. The most powerful hex words in the sport are: "I really have this down -- watch." (Know it? Blow it!)
8. In any crowd of spectators at least one will suggest that razor blades could be attached to the disc. ("You could maim and kill with that thing.")
9. The greater your need to make a good catch, the greater the probability your partner will deliver his worst throw. (If you can't touch it, you can't trick it.)
10. The single most difficult move with a disc is to put it down. ("Just one more!")

Frisch's Law:

You cannot have a baby in one month by getting nine women pregnant.

Frothingham's Fallacy:

Time is money.

Fudd's First Law of Opposition:

If you push something hard enough, it will fall over.

Teslacle's Deviant to Fudd's Law:

It goes in -- it must come out.

Funkhouser's Law of the Power of the Press:

The quality of legislation passed to deal with a problem is inversely proportional to the volume of media clamor that brought it on.

Futility Factor (Carson's Consolation):

No experiment is ever a complete failure -- it can always serve as a bad example, or the exception that proves the rule (but only if it is the first experiment in the series).

Fyffe's Axiom:

The problem-solving process will always break down at the point at which it is possible to determine who caused the problem.

[Back to top](#)

G

Gadarene Swine Law:

Merely because the group is in formation does not mean that the group is on the right course.

Galbraith's Law of Political Wisdom:

Anyone who says he isn't going to resign, four times, definitely will.

Galbraith's Law of Prominence:

Getting on the cover of "Time" guarantees the existence of opposition in the future.

Gallois's Revelation:

If you put tomfoolery into a computer, nothing comes out but tomfoolery. But this tomfoolery, having passed through a very expensive machine, is somehow ennobled, and no one dares to criticize it.

Corollary - An expert is a person who avoids the small errors while sweeping on to the Grand Fallacy.

Laws of Gardening:

1. Other people's tools work only in other people's yards.
2. Fancy gizmos don't work.
3. If nobody uses it, there's a reason.
4. You get the most of what you need the least.

Gardner's Rule of Society:

The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.

Gell-Mann's Dictum: Whatever isn't forbidden is required.

Corollary: If there's no reason why something shouldn't exist, then it must exist.

Law of Generalizations: All generalizations are false.

Gerrold's Fundamental Truth

It's a good thing money can't buy happiness. We couldn't stand the commercials.

Gerrold's Law

A little ignorance can go a long way.

(Lyall's Addendum: ...in the direction of maximum harm.)

Gerrold's Pronouncement

The difference between a politician and a snail is that a snail leaves its slime behind.

Gerrold's Laws of Infernal Dynamics:

1. An object in motion will be heading in the wrong direction.
2. An object at rest will be in the wrong place.

Gerrold's Laws of Infernal Dynamics:

1. An object in motion will always be headed in the wrong direction.
2. An object at rest will always be in the wrong place.

3. The energy required to change either one of the states will always be more than you wish to expend, but never so much as to make the task totally impossible.

Getty's Reminder:

The meek shall inherit the earth, but NOT its mineral rights.

Gibb's Law

Infinity is one lawyer waiting for another.

Gilb's Laws of Unreliability (see also Troutman's Laws of Computer Programming):

1. Computers are unreliable, but humans are even more unreliable.

Corollary: At the source of every error which is blamed on the computer you will find at least two human errors, including the error of blaming it on the computer.

2. Any system which depends on human reliability is unreliable.
3. The only difference between the fool and the criminal who attacks a system is that the fool attacks unpredictably and on a broader front.
4. A system tends to grow in terms of complexity rather than of simplification, until the resulting unreliability becomes intolerable.
5. Self-checking systems tend to have a complexity in proportion to the inherent unreliability of the system in which they are used.
6. The error-detection and correction capabilities of any system will serve as the key to understanding the type of errors which they cannot handle.
7. Undetectable errors are infinite in variety, in contrast to detectable errors, which by definition are limited.
8. All real programs contain errors until proved otherwise -- which is impossible.
9. Investment in reliability will increase until it exceeds the probable cost of errors, or somebody insists on getting some useful work done.

Gilmer's Motto for Political Leadership:

Look over your shoulder now and then to be sure someone's following you.

Ginsberg's Theorem (Generalized Laws of Thermodynamics):

1. You can't win.
2. You can't break even.
3. You can't even quit the game.

Ehrman's Commentary on Ginsberg's Theorem:

1. Things will get worse before they get better.
2. Who said things would get better?

Freeman's Commentary on Ginsberg's Theorem:

Every major philosophy that attempts to make life seem meaningful is based on the negation of one part of Ginsberg's Theorem. To wit:

1. Capitalism is based on the assumption that you can win.
2. Socialism is based on the assumption that you can break even.
3. Mysticism is based on the assumption that you can quit the game.

Glatum's Law of Materialistic Acquisitiveness:

The perceived usefulness of an article is inversely proportional to its actual usefulness once bought and paid for.

Godin's Law:

Generalizedness of incompetence is directly proportional to highestness in hierarchy.

Golden Principle:

Nothing will be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.

The Golden Rule of Arts and Sciences:

Whoever has the gold makes the rules.

Gold's Law

If the shoe fits, it's ugly.

(Bill) Gold's Law:

A column about errors will contain errors.

(Vic) Gold's Law:

The candidate who is expected to do well because of experience and reputation (Douglas, Nixon) must do BETTER than well, while the candidate expected to fare poorly (Lincoln, Kennedy) can put points on the media board simply by surviving.

Goldwyn's Law of Contracts:

A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

Golub's Laws of Computerdom:

1. Fuzzy project objectives are used to avoid the embarrassment of estimating the corresponding costs.
2. A carelessly planned project takes three times longer to complete than expected; a carefully planned project takes only twice as long.
3. The effort required to correct course increases geometrically with time.
4. Project teams detest weekly progress reporting because it so vividly manifests their lack of progress.

The 19 Rules for good Riting:

1. Each pronoun agrees with their antecedent.
2. Just between you and I, case is important.
3. Verbs has to agree with their subject.
4. Watch out for irregular verbs which has cropped up into our language.
5. Don't use no double negatives.
6. A writer mustn't shift your point of view.
7. When dangling, don't use participles.
8. Join clauses good like a conjunction should.
9. And don't use conjunctions to start sentences.
10. Don't use a run-on sentence you got to punctuate it.
11. About sentence fragments.

12. In letters themes reports articles and stuff like that we use commas to keep strings apart.
13. Don't use commas, which aren't necessary.
14. Its important to use apostrophe's right.
15. Don't abbrev.
16. Check to see if you any words out.
17. In my opinion I think that the author when he is writing should not get into the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words which he does not really need.
18. Then, of course, there's that old one: Never use a preposition to end a sentence with.
19. Last but not least, avoid cliches like the plague.

Goodfader's Law:

Under any system, a few sharpies will beat the rest of us.

Goodin's Law of Conversions

The new hardware will break down as soon as the old is disconnected and out.

Gordon's First Law:

If a research project is not worth doing, it is not worth doing well.

Goulden's Axiom of the Bouncing Can:

If you drop a full can of beer, and remember to rap the top sharply with your knuckle prior to opening, the ensuing gush of foam will be between 89 and 94 percent of the volume that would splatter you if you didn't do a damned thing and went ahead and pulled the top immediately.

Goulden's Law of Jury Watching:

If a jury in a criminal trial stays out for more than 24 hours, it is certain to vote acquittal, save in those instances when it votes guilty.

Graditor's Laws:

1. If it can break, it will, but only after the warranty expires.
2. A necessary item goes on sale only after you have purchased it at the regular price.

Gray's Law of Bilateral Asymmetry in Networks:

Information flows efficiently through organizations, except that bad news encounters high impedance in flowing upward.

Rule of the Great:

When someone you greatly admire and respect appears to be thinking deep thoughts, they are probably thinking about lunch.

Greenberg's First Law of Influence:

Usefulness is inversely proportional to reputation for being useful.

Greener's Law:

Never argue with a man who buys ink by the barrel.

Greenhaus's Summation:

I'd give my right arm to be ambidextrous.

Gresham's Law:

Trivial matters are handled promptly; important matters are never resolved.

Grosch's Law:

Computing power increases as the square of the cost. If you want to do it twice as cheaply, you have to do it four times slower.

Gross's Law:

When two people meet to decide how to spend a third person's money, fraud will result.

Grossman's Misquote

Complex problems have simple, easy to understand wrong answers.

Gummidge's Law:

The amount of expertise varies in inverse proportion to the number of statements understood by the general public.

Gumperson's Law:

The probability of anything happening is in inverse ratio to its desirability.

Corollaries:

1. After a salary raise, you will have less money at the end of the month than you had before.
2. The more a recruit knows about a given subject, the better chance he has of being assigned to something else.
3. You can throw a burnt match out the window of your car and start a forest fire, but you can use two boxes of matches and a whole edition of the Sunday paper without being able to start a fire under the dry logs in your fireplace.
4. Children have more energy after a hard day of play than they do after a good night's sleep.
5. The person who buys the most raffle tickets has the least chance of winning.
6. Good parking places are always on the other side of the street.

Gumperson's Proof:

The most undesirable things are the most certain (death and taxes).

Guthman's Law of Media:

Thirty seconds on the evening news is worth a front page headline in every newspaper in the world.

[Back to top](#)

H

Hacker's Law:

The belief that enhanced understanding will necessarily stir a nation or an organization to action is one of mankind's oldest illusions.

Hacker's Law of Personnel:

Anyone having supervisory responsibility for the completion of a task will invariably protest that more resources are needed.

Hagerty's Law:

If you lose your temper at a newspaper columnist, he'll get rich or famous or both.

Haldane's Law:

The Universe is not only queerer than we imagine, it is queerer than we CAN imagine.

Hale's Rule:

The sumptuousness of a company's annual report is in inverse proportion to its profitability that year.

Hall's Law:

There is a statistical correlation between the number of initials in an Englishman's name and his social class (the upper class having significantly more than three names, while members of the lower class average 2.6).

Halpern's Observation:

That tendency to err that programmers have been noticed to share with other human beings has often been treated as if it were an awkwardness attendant upon programming's adolescence, which like acne would disappear with the craft's coming of age. It has proved otherwise.

Harden's Law:

Every time you come up with a terrific idea, you find that someone else thought of it first.

Hardin's Law:

You can never do merely one thing.

Harper's Magazine's Law:

You never find an article until you replace it.

Harris's Lament:

All the good ones are taken.

Harris's Law:

Any philosophy that can be put "in a nutshell" belongs there.

Harris's Restaurant Paradox:

One of the greatest unsolved riddles of restaurant eating is that the customer usually gets faster service when the restaurant is crowded than when it is half empty; it seems that the less the staff has to do, the slower they do it.

Harrison's Postulate

For every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.

Hartig's How Is Good Old Bill? We're Divorced Law:

If there is a wrong thing to say, one will.

Hartig's Sleeve in the Cup, Thumb in the Butter Law:

When one is trying to be elegant and sophisticated, one won't.

Hartley's Law:

You can lead a horse to water, but if you can get him to float on his back you've got something.

Hartley's Second Law

Never go to bed with anybody crazier than you are.

Hartman's Automotive Laws:

1. Nothing minor ever happens to a car on the weekend.
2. Nothing minor ever happens to a car on a trip.
3. Nothing minor ever happens to a car.

Hart's Law:

In a country as big as the United States, you can find fifty examples of anything.

Harvard Law:

Under the most rigorously controlled conditions of pressure, temperature, volume, humidity, and other variables, any experimental organism will do as it damn well pleases.

Harver's Law

A drunken man's words are a sober man's thoughts.

Hawkin's Theory of Progress

Progress does not consist of replacing a theory that is wrong with one that is right. It consists of replacing a theory that is wrong with one that is more subtly wrong.

Hein's Law:

Problems worthy of attack prove their worth by hitting back.

Heller's Myths of Management:

The first myth of management is that it exists. The second myth of management is that success equals skill.

Corollary (Johnson): Nobody really knows what is going on anywhere within your organization.

Hellrung's Law

If you wait, it will go away. (Shevelson's Extension: ... having done its damage.)
[Grelb's Addition: ... if it was bad, it will be back.]

Hendrickson's Law:

If a problem causes many meetings, the meetings eventually become more important than the problem.

Herblock's Law:

If it's good, they'll stop making it.

Herrnstein's Law:

The total attention paid to an instructor is a constant regardless of the size of the class.

Hersh's Law:

Biochemistry expands to fill the space and time available for its completion and publication.

Hildebrand's Law:

The quality of a department is inversely proportional to the number of courses it lists in its catalogue.

Historian's Rule:

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian.

Hogg's Law of Station Wagons:

The amount of junk is in direct proportion to the amount of space available.
Baggage Corollary: If you go on a trip taking two bags with you, one containing everything you need for the trip and the other containing absolutely nothing, the second bag will be completely filled with junk acquired on the trip when you return.

The Laws of Homework:

1. The number of assignments one has is inversely proportional to the numbers of days one has to do the assignments.

2. The number of errors a students makes on an assignment is directly proportional to the assignments length.

Horner's Five Thumb Postulate:

Experience varies directly with equipment ruined.

Horngren's Observation: (generalized)

The real world is a special case.

Horowitz's Rule:

A computer makes as many mistakes in two seconds as 20 men working 20 years.

Howard's First Law of Theater:

Use it.

Howe's Law:

Every man has a scheme that will not work.

Hull's Theorem:

The combined pull of several patrons is the sum of their separate pulls multiplied by the number of patrons.

Hull's Warning:

Never insult an alligator until after you have crossed the river.

[Back to top](#)

I

IBM Pollyanna Principle

Machines should work. People should think.

Idea Formula:

One man's brain plus one other will produce about one half as many ideas as one man would have produced alone. These two plus two more will produce half again as many ideas. These four plus four more begin to represent a creative meeting, and the ratio changes to one quarter as many.

The Ike Tautology:

Things are more like they are now than they have ever been before.

Corollary: Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.

Iles's Law:

There is an easier way to do it.

Corollaries:

1. When looking directly at the easier way, especially for long periods, you will not see it.
2. Neither will Iles.

Imhoff's Law:

The organization of any bureaucracy is very much like a septic tank -- the REALLY big chunks always rise to the top.

Index of Development:

The degree of a country's development is measured by the ratio of the price of an automobile to the cost of a haircut. The lower the ratio, the higher the degree of development.

Law of the Individual:

Nobody really cares or understands what anyone else is doing.

Laws of Institutional Food:

1. Everything is cold except what should be.
2. Everything, including the corn flakes, is greasy.

Law of Institutions:

The opulence of the front office decor varies inversely with the fundamental solvency of the firm.

Iron Law of Distribution:

Them what has -- gets.

Wakefield's Refutation of the Iron Law of Distribution:

Them what gets -- has.

Issawi's Law of Aggression:

At any given moment, a society contains a certain amount of accumulated and accruing aggressiveness. If more than 21 years elapse without this aggressiveness being directed outward, in a popular war against other countries, it turns inward, in social unrest, civil disturbances, and political disruption.

Issawi's Laws of Committo-Dynamics:

1. Comitas comitatum, omnia comitas.
2. The less you enjoy serving on committees, the more likely you are to be pressed to do so.

Issawi's Law of the Conservation of Evil:

The total amount of evil in any system remains constant. Hence, any diminution in one direction -- for instance, a reduction in poverty or unemployment -- is accompanied by an increase in another, e.g., crime or air pollution.

Issawi's Law of Consumption Patterns:

Other people's patterns of expenditure and consumption are highly irrational and slightly immoral.

Issawi's Law of Cynics:

Cynics are right nine times out of ten; what undoes them is their belief that they are right ten times out of ten.

Issawi's Law of Dogmatism:

When we call others dogmatic, what we really object to is their holding dogmas that are different from our own.

Issawi's Law of Estimation of Error:

Experts in advanced countries underestimate by a factor of 2 to 4 the ability of people in underdeveloped countries to do anything technical.

Issawi's Law of Frustration:

One cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs -- but it is amazing how many eggs one can break without making a decent omelet.

Issawi's Laws of Progress:

The Course of Progress: Most things get steadily worse.

The Path of Progress: A shortcut is the longest distance between two points.

The Dialectics of Progress: Direct action produces direct reaction.

The Pace of Progress: Society is a mule, not a car . . . If pressed too hard, it will kick and throw off its rider.

Issawi's Law of the Social Sciences:

By the time a social science theory is formulated in such a way that it can be tested, changing circumstances have already made it obsolete.

Issawi's Observation on the Consumption of Paper:

Each system has its own way of consuming vast amounts of paper: in socialist societies by filling large forms in quadruplicate, in capitalist societies by putting up huge posters and wrapping every article in four layers of cardboard.

First Postulate of Isomorphism

Things equal to nothing else are equal to each other.

Italian Proverb:

She who is silent consents.

[Back to top](#)

J

Jacquin's Postulate on Democratic Governments:

No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session.

Jake's Law:

Anything hit with a big enough hammer will fall apart.

Jaroslovsky's Law:

The distance you have to park from your apartment increases in proportion to the weight of packages you are carrying.

Jay's Laws of Leadership:

1. Changing things is central to leadership, and changing them before anyone else is creativity.
2. To build something that endures, it is of the greatest important to have a long tenure in office -- to rule for many years. You can achieve a quick success in a year or two, but nearly all of the great tycoons have continued their building much longer.

Jenkinson's Law:

It won't work.

Jinny's Law:

There is no such thing as a short beer. (As in, "I'm going to stop off at Joe's for a short beer before on the way home.")

John's Axiom:

When your opponent is down, kick him.

John's Collateral Corollary:

In order to get a loan you must first prove you don't need it.

Johnson's First Law:

When any mechanical contrivance fails, it will do so at the most inconvenient possible time.

Johnson's Second Law:

If, in the course of several months, only three worthwhile social events take place, they will all fall on the same evening.

Johnson's Third Law:

If you miss one issue of any magazine, it will be the issue containing the article, story, or installment you were most anxious to read.

Corollary: All of your friends either missed it, lost it, or threw it out.

Johnson's First Law of Auto Repair:

Any tool dropped while repairing an automobile will roll under the car to the vehicle's exact geographic center.

Johnson-Laird's Law:

Toothache tends to start on Saturday night.

Jones's Law:

The man who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone he can blame it on.

Jones's Motto:

Friends may come and go, but enemies accumulate.

McClaghry's Codicil on Jones's Motto: To make an enemy, do someone a favor.

Jones's Principle:

Needs are a function of what other people have.

Juhani's Law:

The compromise will always be more expensive than either of the suggestions it's compromising.

[Back to top](#)

K

Kafka's Law:

In the fight between you and the world, back the world.

Kamin's First Law:

All currencies will decrease in value and purchasing power over the long term, unless they are freely and fully convertible into gold and that gold is traded freely without restrictions of any kind.

Kamin's Second Law:

Threat of capital controls accelerates marginal capital outflows.

Kamin's Third Law:

Combined total taxation from all levels of government will always increase (until the government is replaced by war or revolution).

Kamin's Fourth Law:

Government inflation is always worse than statistics indicate: central bankers are biased toward inflation when the money unit is non-convertible, and without gold or silver backing.

Kamin's Fifth Law:

Purchasing power of currency is always lost far more rapidly than ever regained. (Those who expect even fluctuations in both directions play a losing game.)

Kamin's Sixth Law:

When attempting to predict and forecast macro-economic moves or economic legislation by a politician, never be misled by what he says; instead watch what he does.

Kamin's Seventh Law:

Politicians will always inflate when given the opportunity.

Kaplan's Law of the Instrument:

Give a small boy a hammer and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding.

Katz's Law:

Men and nations will act rationally when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

Katz's Maxims:

1. Where are the calculations that go with the calculated risk?
2. Inventing is easy for staff outfits. Stating a problem is much harder. Instead of stating problems, people like to pass out half- accurate statements together with half-available solutions which they can't finish and which they want you to finish.
3. Every organization is self-perpetuating. Don't ever ask an outfit to justify itself, or you'll be covered with facts, figures, and fancy. The criterion should rather be, "What will happen if the outfit stops doing what it's doing?" The value of an organization is more easily determined this way.
4. Try to find out who's doing the work, not who's writing about it, controlling it, or summarizing it.
5. Watch out for formal briefings; they often produce an avalanche (a high-level snow job of massive and overwhelming proportions).
6. The difficulty of the coordination task often blinds one to the fact that a fully coordinated piece of paper is not supposed to be either the major or the final product of the organization, but it often turns out that way.
7. Most organizations can't hold more than one idea at a time. Thus complementary ideas are always regarded as competitive. Further, like a quantized pendulum, an organization can jump from one extreme to the other, without ever going through the middle.
8. Try to find the real tense of the report you are reading: Was it done, is it being done, or is it something to be done? Reports are now written in four tenses: past tense, present tense, future tense, and pretense. Watch for novel uses of "contractor grammar", defined by the imperfect past, the insufficient present, and the absolutely perfect future.

Kelley's Law:

Last guys don't finish nice.

Kelly's Law:

An executive will always return to work from lunch early if no one takes him.

Kennedy's Law:

Excessive official restraints on information are inevitably self-defeating and productive of headaches for the officials concerned.

Kent's Law:

The only way a reporter should look at a politician is down.

Kerr-Martin Law:

1. In dealing with their OWN problems, faculty members are the most extreme conservatives.
2. In dealing with OTHER people's problems, they are the world's most extreme liberals.

Kettering's Laws:

1. If you want to kill any idea in the world today, get a committee working on it.
2. If you have always done it that way, it is probably wrong.

Key to Status:

$S = D/K$. S is the status of a person in an organization, D is the number of doors he must open to perform his job, and K is the number of keys he carries. A higher number denotes higher status. Thus the janitor needs to open 20 doors and has 20 keys ($S = 1$), a secretary has to open two doors with one key ($S = 2$), but the president never has to carry any keys since there is always someone around to open doors for him (with $K = 0$ and a high D, his S reaches infinity).

Kharasch's Institutional Imperative:

Every action or decision of an institution must be intended to keep the institution machinery working.

Corollary: The expert judgment of an institution, when the matter involved concerns continuation of the institution's operations, is totally predictable, and hence the finding is totally worthless.

Kirkland's Law:

The usefulness of any meeting is in inverse proportion to the attendance.

Kitman's Law:

On the TV screen, pure drivel tends to drive off ordinary drivel.

Klipstein's Lament

All warranty and guarantee clauses are voided by payment of the invoice.

Klipstein's Observation

Any product cut to length will be too short.

Klipstein's Law of Specifications:

In specifications, Murphy's Law supersedes Ohm's.

Knight's Law

Life is what happens to you while you are making other plans.

Knoll's Law of Media Accuracy:

Everything you read in the newspapers is absolutely true except for that rare story of which you happen to have firsthand knowledge.

Knowles's Law of Legislative Deliberation:

The length of debate varies inversely with the complexity of the issue.

Corollary: When the issue is trivial, and everyone understands it, debate is almost interminable.

Kohn's Second Law:

Any experiment is reproducible until another laboratory tries to repeat it.

Koppett's Law:

Whatever creates the greatest inconvenience for the largest number must happen.

Korman's conclusion

The trouble with resisting temptation is it may never come your way again.

Kotowski's Law of Dirty Work:

If you volunteer to do a task that nobody likes to do, you'll be expected to do it every time in the future.

Kristol's Law:

Being frustrated is disagreeable, but the real disasters in life begin when you get what you want.

Krueger's Observation

A taxpayer is someone who does not have to take a civil service exam in order to work for the government.

[Back to top](#)

L

Labor Law

A disagreeable law is its own reward.

First Law of Laboratory Work

Hot glass looks exactly the same as cold glass.

LaCombe's Rule of Percentages

The incidence of anything worthwhile is either 15-25 percent or 80-90 percent.

Corollary (Dudenhoefer)

An answer of 50 percent will suffice for the 40-60 range.

Langin's Law

If things were left to chance, they'd be better.

Langsam's Law

Everything depends.

Lani's Principles of Economics

1. Taxes are not levied for the benefit of the taxed.
2. \$100 placed at 7% interest compounded quarterly for 200 years will increase to more than \$100,000,000 by which time it will be worth nothing.
3. In God we trust; all others pay cash.

La Rochefoucauld's Law

It is more shameful to distrust one's friends than to be deceived by them.

Larrimer's Constant

What this world needs is a damned good plague.

Law of Late-Comers

Those who have the shortest distance to travel invariably arrive latest.

Laura's Law

No child throws up in the bathroom.

Lawyer's Rule

When the law is against you, argue the facts. When the facts are against you, argue the law. When both are against you, call the other lawyer names.

Leahy's Law

If a thing is done wrong often enough, it becomes right.

Corollary: Volume is a defense to error.

Le Chatelier's Law

If some stress is brought to bear on a system in equilibrium, the equilibrium is displaced in the direction which tends to undo the effect of the stress.

Lenin's Law

Whenever the cause of the people is entrusted to professors, it is lost.

Le Pelley's Law

The bigger the man, the less likely he is to object to caricature.

Les Miserables Metalaw

All laws, whether good, bad, or indifferent, must be obeyed to the letter.

Levy's Ten Laws of the Disillusionment of the True Liberal

1. Large numbers of things are determined, and therefore not subject to change.
2. Anticipated events never live up to expectations.
3. That segment of the community with which one has the greatest sympathy as a liberal inevitably turns out to be one of the most narrow-minded and bigoted segments of the community.
4. Always pray that your opposition be wicked. In wickedness there is a strong strain toward rationality. Therefore there is always the possibility, in theory, of handling the wicked by outthinking them.

Corollary 1: Good intentions randomize behavior.

Corollary 2: Good intentions are far more difficult to cope with than malicious intent.

Corollary 3: If good intentions are combined with stupidity, it is impossible to outthink them.

Corollary 4: Any discovery is more likely to be exploited by the wicked than applied by the virtuous.

5. In unanimity there is cowardice and uncritical thinking.
6. To have a sense of humor is to be a tragic figure.
7. To know thyself is the ultimate form of aggression.
8. No amount of genius can overcome a preoccupation with detail.
9. Only God can make a random selection.

10. Eternal boredom is the price of constant vigilance.

Lewis's Laws

1. People will buy anything that's one to a customer.
2. No matter how long or how hard you shop for an item, after you've bought it it will be on sale somewhere cheaper.

Liebling's Law

If you just try long enough and hard enough, you can always manage to boot yourself in the posterior.

Lilly's Metalaw

All laws are simulations of reality.

Lloyd-Jones's Law of Leftovers:

The amount of litter on the street is proportional to the local rate of unemployment.

Law of Local Anesthesia

Never say "oops" in the operating room.

(F)law of Long-Range Planning

The longer ahead you plan a special event, and the more special it is, the more likely it is to go wrong.

Long's Ideas(edited)

1. Expertise in one field does not carry over into other fields. But experts often think so. The narrower their field of knowledge the more likely they are to think so.
2. Never try to outstubborn a cat.
3. Tilting at windmills hurts you more than the windmills.
4. Yield to temptation; it may not pass your way again.
5. Waking a person unnecessarily should not be considered a capital crime. For a first offense, that is.
6. The correct way to punctuate a sentence that starts: "Of course it's none of my business, but . . ." is to place a period after the word "but". Don't use excessive force in supplying such a moron with a period. Cutting his throat is only a momentary pleasure and is bound to get you talked about.
7. A skunk is better company than a person who prides himself on being "frank".
8. Natural laws have no pity.
9. You can go wrong by being too skeptical as readily as by being too trusting.
10. Anything free is worth what you pay for it.
11. Climate is what we expect; weather is what we get.
12. Pessimist by policy, optimist by temperament -- it is possible to be both. How? By never taking an unnecessary chance and by minimizing risks you can't avoid. This permits you to play out the game happily, untroubled by the certainty of the outcome.
13. "I came, I saw, SHE conquered." (The original Latin seems to have been garbled.)
14. A committee is a life form with six or more legs and no brain.
15. Don't try to have the last word. You might get it.

Los Angeles Dodgers Law

Wait till last year.

Law of the Lost Inch

In designing any type of construction, no overall dimension can be totaled correctly after 4:40 p.m. on Friday.

Corollaries:

1. Under the same conditions, if any minor dimensions are given to sixteenths of an inch, they cannot be totaled at all.
2. The correct total will become self-evident at 9:01 a.m. on Monday.

Lowrey's Law

If it jams, force it. If it breaks, it needed replacing anyway.

Lowrey's Law of Expertise

Just when you get really good at something, you don't need to do it any more.

Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology

There's always one more bug.

Lubin's Law

If another scientist thought your research was more important than his, he would drop what he is doing and do what you are doing.

Luce's Law

No good deed goes unpunished.

Lucy's Law

The alternative to getting old is depressing.

Luten's Laws

1. When properly administered, vacations do not diminish productivity: for every week you're away and get nothing done, there's another week when your boss is away and you get twice as much done.
2. It's not so hard to lift yourself by your bootstraps once you're off the ground.

Lyall's Conjecture:

If a computer cable has one end, then it has another.

Lyall's Fundamental Observation:

The most important leg of a three legged stool is the one that's missing.

Lynch's Law:

When the going gets tough, everybody leaves.

Lyon's Law of Hesitation:

He who hesitates is last.

[Back to top](#)

M

Madison's Question:

If you have to travel on a Titanic, why not go first-class?

Rev. Mahaffy's Observation:

There's no such thing as a large whiskey.

Maier's Law:

If the facts do not conform to the theory, they must be disposed of.

Corollaries:

1. The bigger the theory, the better.
2. The experiment may be considered a success if no more than 50% of the observed measurements must be discarded to obtain a correspondence with the theory. (Compensation Corollary)

Malek's Law:

Any simple idea will be worded in the most complicated way.

Malinowski's Law:

Looking from far above, from our high places of safety in the developed civilization, it is easy to see all the crudity and irrelevance of magic.

Malloy's Maxim:

The fact that monkeys have hands should give us pause.

The first Myth of Management

It exists.

Truths of Management:

1. Think before you act; it's not your money.
2. All good management is the expression of one great idea.
3. No executive devotes effort to proving himself wrong.
4. Cash in must exceed cash out.
5. Management capability is always less than the organization actually needs.
6. Either an executive can do his job or he can't.
7. If sophisticated calculations are needed to justify an action, don't do it.
8. If you are doing something wrong, you will do it badly.
9. If you are attempting the impossible, you will fail.
10. The easiest way of making money is to stop losing it.

Truth 5.1 of Management:

Organizations always have too many managers.

Manly's Maxim:

Logic is a systematic method of coming to the wrong conclusion with confidence.

Mark's mark:

Love is a matter of chemistry; sex is a matter of physics.

Marshall's Generalized Iceberg Theorem:

Seven-eighths of everything can't be seen.

Marshall's Universal Laws of Perpetual Perceptual Obfuscation:

1. Nobody perceives anything with total accuracy.
2. No two people perceive the same thing identically.
3. Few perceive what difference it makes -- or care.

Martha's Maxim (and see Olum's Observation and Farrow's Finding):

If God had meant for us to travel tourist class, He would have made us narrower.

Dean Martin's Definition of Drunkenness:

You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on.

Martin-Berthelot Principle:

Of all possible committee reactions to any given agenda item, the reaction that will occur is the one which will liberate the greatest amount of hot air.

Martin's Laws of Academia:

1. The faculty expands its activity to fit whatever space is available, so that more space is always required.
2. Faculty purchases of equipment and supplies always increase to match the funds available, so these funds are never adequate.
3. The professional quality of the faculty tends to be inversely proportional to the importance it attaches to space and equipment.

Martin's Law of Committees:

All committee reports conclude that "it is not prudent to change the policy (or procedure, or organization, or whatever) at this time."

Martin's Exclusion: Committee reports dealing with wages, salaries, fringe benefits, facilities, computers, employee parking, libraries, coffee breaks, secretarial support, etc., always call for dramatic expenditure increases.

Martin's Law of Communication:

The inevitable result of improved and enlarged communication between different levels in a hierarchy is a vastly increased area of misunderstanding.

Martin's Minimax Maxim:

Everyone knows that the name of the game is to let the other guy have all of the little tats and to keep all of the big tits for yourself.

Matsch's Law:

It is better to have a horrible ending than to have horrors without end.

Matsch's Maxim:

A fool in a high station is like a man on the top of a small mountain: everything appears small to him and he appears small to everybody.

Matz's warning:

Beware of the physician who is great at getting out of trouble.

Maugham's Thought:

Only a mediocre person is always at his best.

May's Law:

The quality of the correlation is inversely proportional to the density of the control (the fewer the facts, the smoother the curves).

May's Mordant Maxim:

A university is a place where men of principle outnumber men of honor.

McCarthy's Law:

Being in politics is like being a football coach. You have to be smart enough to understand the game and dumb enough to think it's important.

McLaughry's Law of Public Policy:

Politicians who vote huge expenditures to alleviate problems get re-elected; those who propose structural changes to prevent problems get early retirement.

McCloughry's Law of Zoning:

Where zoning is not needed, it will work perfectly; where it is desperately needed, it always breaks down.

McDonald's Second Law:

Consultants are mystical people who ask a company for a number and give it back to them.

McGoon's Law:

The probability of winning is inversely proportional to the amount of the wager.

McGovern's Law:

The longer the title, the less important the job.

McGurk's Law:

Any improbable event which would create maximum confusion if it did occur, will occur.

McKenna's Law:

When you are right, be logical. When you are wrong, be-fuddle.

McLaughlin's Law (and see Parson's Third Law):

The length of any meeting is inversely proportional to the length of the agenda for that meeting.

McLean's Maxim:

There are only two problems with people. One is that they don't think. The other is that they do.

McNaughton's Rule:

Any argument worth making within the bureaucracy must be capable of being expressed in a simple declarative sentence that is obviously true once stated.

Margaret Mead's Law of Human Migration:

At least fifty percent of the human race doesn't want their mother-in-law within walking distance.

Melcher's Law:

In a bureaucracy, every routing slip will expand until it contains the maximum number of names that can be typed in a single vertical column.

H. L. Mencken's Law:

Those who can -- do.

Those who cannot -- teach.

Those who cannot teach -- administrate. (Martin's Extension)

Mencken's Metalaw:

For every human problem, there is a neat, simple solution; and it is always wrong.

Merkin's Maxim:

When in doubt, predict that the present trend will continue.

Merrill's First Corollary:

There are no winners in life; only survivors.

Merrill's Second Corollary:

In the highway of life, the average happening is of about as much true significance as a dead skunk in the middle of the road.

Meskimen's Laws: 1) When they want it bad (in a rush), they get it bad. 2) There's never time to do it right, but always time to do it over.

Michehl's Theorem:

Less is more.

Pastore's Comment on Michehl's Theorem:

Nothing is ultimate.

Mickelson's Law of Falling Objects:

Any object that is accidentally dropped will hide under a larger object.

Miksch's Law:

If a string has one end, then it has another end.

Miller's Law:

You can't tell how deep a puddle is until you step into it.

Mills's Law of Transportation Logistics:

The distance to the gate from which your flight departs is inversely proportional to the time remaining before the scheduled departure of the flight.

Corollaries (Woods): 1) This remains true even as you rush to catch the flight. 2) From this it follows that you are invariably rushing the wrong way.

MIST Law (Man In The Street):

The number of people watching you is directly proportional to the stupidity of your action.

Mobil's Maxim:

Bad regulation begets worse regulation.

Moer's Truism:

The trouble with most jobs is the resemblance to being in a sled dog team. No one gets a change of scenery, except the lead dog.

Money Maxim:

Money isn't everything. (It isn't plentiful, for instance.)

Montagu's Maxim:

The idea is to die young as late as possible.

Morley's Conclusion:

No man is lonely while eating spaghetti.

Morton's Law:

If rats are experimented upon, they will develop cancer. ("What this country needs are some stronger white rats.")

Mosher's Law:

It's better to retire too soon than too late.

Munnecke's Law:

If you don't say it, they can't repeat it.

Murchison's Law of Money:

Money is like manure. If you spread it around, it does a lot of good. But if you pile it up in one place, it stinks like hell.

[Back to top](#)

N

Nader's Law:

The speed of exit of a civil servant is directly proportional to the quality of his service.

NASA Skylab Rule:

Don't do it if you can't keep it up.

NASA Truisms:

1. Research is reading two books that have never been read in order to write a third that will never be read.
2. A consultant is an ordinary person a long way from home.
3. Statistics are a highly logical and precise method for saying a half-truth inaccurately.

Law of Nations:

In an underdeveloped country, don't drink the water; in a developed country, don't breathe the air.

Navy Law:

If you can keep your head when all about you others are losing theirs, maybe you just don't understand the situation.

Evvie Nef's Law:

There is a solution to every problem; the only difficulty is finding it.

Nessen's Law:

Secret sources are more credible.

Newman's Law:

Hypocrisy is the Vaseline of social intercourse.

Newman's Observation:

The first shall be last and the last shall be first. But if you're in the middle, you're stuck there.

Newton's Little-known Seventh Law:

A bird in the hand is safer than one overhead.

Nick the Greek's Law:

All things considered, life is 9-to-5 against.

Nienberg's Law:

Progress is made on alternate Fridays.

Nies's Law:

The effort expended by the bureaucracy in defending any error is in direct proportion to the size of the error.

Ninety-ninety Rule of Project Schedules:

The first ninety percent of the task takes ninety percent of the time, and the last ten percent takes the other ninety percent.

Nixon's Rule:

If two wrongs don't make a right, try three.

Nobel Effect:

There is no proposition, no matter how foolish, for which a dozen Nobel signatures cannot be collected. Furthermore, any such petition is guaranteed page-one treatment in the New York Times.

Noble's Law of Political Imagery:

All other things being equal, a bald man cannot be elected President of the United States.

Corollary:

Given a choice between two bald political candidates, the American people will vote for the less bald of the two.

No. 3 Pencil Principle:

Make it sufficiently difficult for people to do something, and most people will stop doing it.

Corollary: If no one uses something, it isn't needed.

Nyquist's Theory of Equilibrium:

Equality is not when a female Einstein gets promoted to assistant professor; equality is when a female schlemiel moves ahead as fast as a male schlemiel.

[Back to top](#)

0

Oaks's Unruly Laws for Lawmakers:

1. Law expands in proportion to the resources available for its enforcement.
2. Bad law is more likely to be supplemented than repealed.
3. Social legislation cannot repeal physical laws.

O'Brien's First Law of Politics:

The more campaigning, the better.

O'Brien's Principle (The \$357.73 Theorem):

Auditors always reject any expense account with a bottom line divisible by five or ten.

O'Brien's Rule:

Nothing is ever done for the right reason.

The Obvious Law:

Actually, it only SEEMS as though you mustn't be deceived by appearances.

Occam's Electric Razor:

The most difficult light bulb to replace burns out first and most frequently.

Occam's Razor:

Entities ought not to be multiplied except from necessity.

Reformulations:

1. The explanation requiring the fewest assumptions is the most likely to be correct.
2. Whenever two hypotheses cover the facts, use the simpler of the two.
3. Cut the crap.

Oesner's Law (Oeser's Law?):

There is a tendency for the person in the most powerful position in an organization to spend all his time serving on committees and signing letters.

Old and Kahn's Law:

The efficiency of a committee meeting is inversely proportional to the number of participants and the time spent on deliberations.

Old Children's Law:

If it tastes good, you can't have it. If it tastes awful, you'd better clean your plate.

Olum's Observation (and see Martha's Maxim and Farrow's Finding):

If God had intended us to go around naked, He would have made us that way.

Oppenheimer's Observation:

The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds, and the pessimist knows it.

Optimum Optimorum Principle:

There comes a time when one must stop suggesting and evaluating new solutions, and get on with the job of analyzing and finally implementing one pretty good solution.

Ordering Principle:

Those supplies necessary for yesterday's experiment must be ordered no later than tomorrow noon.

Orion's Law:

Everything breaks down.

Orwell's Law of Bridge:

All bridge hands are equally likely, but some are more equally likely than others.

Osborn's Law:

Variables won't; constants aren't.

Otten's Law of Testimony:

When a person says that, in the interest of saving time, he will summarize his prepared statement, he will talk only three times as long as if he had read the statement in the first place.

Otten's Law of Typesetting:

Typesetters always correct intentional errors, but fail to correct unintentional ones.

Ozian Option:

I can't give you brains, but I can give you a diploma.

[Back to top](#)

P

Panic Instruction:

When you don't know what to do, walk fast and look worried.

Paperboy's rule of Weather

No matter how clear the skies are, a thunderstorm will move in 5 minutes after the papers are delivered.

Paradox of Selective Equality:

All things being equal, all things are never equal.

Pardo's Postulates:

1. Anything good is either illegal, immoral, or fattening.
2. The three faithful things in life are money, a dog, and an old woman.

3. Don't care if you're rich or not, as long as you live comfortably and can have everything you want.

Pareto's Law (The 20/80 Law):

20% of the customers account for 80% of the turnover, 20% of the components account for 80% of the cost, and so forth.

Parker's Rule of Parliamentary Procedure:

A motion to adjourn is always in order.

Parker's Law of Political Statements:

The truth of a proposition has nothing to do with its credibility, and vice versa.

Parker's Third Rule of Tech Support:

If you can't navigate a one-level, five-item phone tree, you didn't need a computer anyway.

Parkin's Law of Irritation:

Anything that happens enough times to irritate you will happen at least once more.

Parkinson's Axioms:

1. An official wants to multiply subordinates, not rivals.
2. Officials make work for each other.

Parkinson's First Law:

Work expands to fill the time available for its completion; the thing to be done swells in perceived importance and complexity in a direct ratio with the time to be spent in its completion.

Parkinson's Second Law:

Expenditures rise to meet income.

Parkinson's Third Law:

Expansion means complexity; and complexity decay.

Parkinson's Fourth Law:

The number of people in any working group tends to increase regardless of the amount of work to be done.

Parkinson's Fifth Law:

If there is a way to delay an important decision the good bureaucracy, public or private, will find it.

Parkinson's Sixth Law:

The progress of science varies inversely with the number of journals published.

Parkinson's Law of Delay:

Delay is the deadliest form of denial.

Parkinson's Law of Medical Research:

Successful research attracts the bigger grant which makes further research impossible.

Parkinson's Law of the Telephone:

The effectiveness of a telephone conversation is in inverse proportion to the time spent on it.

Parkinson's Law of 1000:

An enterprise employing more than 1000 people becomes a self-perpetuating empire, creating so much internal work that it no longer needs any contact with the outside world.

Parkinson's Principle of Non-Origination:

It is the essence of grantsmanship to persuade the Foundation executives that it was THEY who suggested the research project and that you were a belated convert, agreeing reluctantly to all they had proposed.

Mrs. Parkinson's Law:

Heat produced by pressure expands to fill the mind available, from which it can pass only to a cooler mind.

Parson's Laws:

1. If you break a cup or plate, it will not be the one that was already chipped or cracked.
2. A place you want to get to is always just off the edge of the map you happen to have handy.
3. A meeting lasts at least 1 1/2 hours however short the agenda.

Dolly Parton's Principle:

The bigger they are, the harder it is to see your shoes.

Pastore's Truths:

1. Even paranoids have enemies.
2. This job is marginally better than daytime TV.
3. On alcohol: four is one more than more than enough.

Patricks's Theorem:

If the experiment works, you must be using the wrong equipment.

Patton's Law:

A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.

Paturi Principle:

Success is the result of behavior that completely contradicts the usual expectations about the behavior of a successful person.

Corollary: The amount of success is in inverse proportion to the effort involved in attaining it.

Paul Principle:

People become progressively less competent for jobs they once were well equipped to handle.

Paul's Law:

You can't fall off the floor.

Paulg's Law:

In America, it's not how much an item costs, it's how much you save.

Peckham's Law (Beckhap's Law?):

Beauty times brains equals a constant.

Peers's Law:

The solution to a problem changes the problem.

Captain Penny's Law:

You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool MOM.

Perelman's Point:

There is nothing like a good painstaking survey full of decimal points and guarded generalizations to put a glaze like a Sung vase on your eyeball.

Perkin's postulate:

The bigger they are, the harder they hit.

Perlsweig's Law:

People who can least afford to pay rent, pay rent. People who can most afford to pay rent, build up equity.

Persig's Postulate:

The number of rational hypotheses that can explain any given phenomenon is infinite.

Law of the Perversity of Nature:

You cannot successfully determine beforehand which side of the bread to butter.

Peter Principle:

In every hierarchy, whether it be government or business, each employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence; every post tends to be filled by an employee incompetent to execute its duties.

Corollaries:

1. Incompetence knows no barriers of time or place.
2. Work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence.
3. If at first you don't succeed, try something else.

Peter's Hidden Postulate According to Godin:

Every employee begins at his level of competence.

Peter's Inversion:

Internal consistency is valued more highly than efficiency.

Peter's Law of Evolution:

Competence always contains the seed of incompetence.

Peter's Law of Substitution:

Look after the molehills and the mountains will look after themselves.

Peter's Observation:

Super-competence is more objectionable than incompetence.

Peter's Paradox:

Employees in a hierarchy do not really object to incompetence in their colleagues.

Peter's Perfect People Palliative:

Each of us is a mixture of good qualities and some (perhaps) not-so-good qualities. In considering our fellow people we should remember their good qualities and realize that their faults only prove that they are, after all, human. We should refrain from making harsh judgments of people just because they happen to be dirty, rotten, no-good sons-of-bitches.

Peter's Placebo:

An ounce of image is worth a pound of performance.

Peter's Prognosis:

Spend sufficient time in confirming the need and the need will disappear.

Peter's Rule for Creative Incompetence:

Create the impression that you have already reached your level of incompetence.

Peter's Theorem:

Incompetence plus incompetence equals incompetence.

Peterson's Law:

History shows that money will multiply in volume and divide in value over the long run. Or, expressed differently, the purchasing power of currency will vary inversely with the magnitude of the public debt.

Phases of a Project:

1. Exultation.
2. Disenchantment.
3. Confusion.
4. Search for the Guilty.
5. Punishment of the Innocent.
6. Distinction for the Uninvolved.

Phelps's Laws of Renovation:

1. Any renovation project on an old house will cost twice as much and take three times as long as originally estimated.
2. Any plumbing pipes you choose to replace during renovation will prove to be in excellent condition; those you decide to leave in place will be rotten.

Phelps's Law of Retributive Statistics:

An unexpectedly easy-to-handle sequence of events will be immediately followed by an equally long sequence of trouble.

Theory of the International Society of Philosophic Engineering:

1. In any calculation, any error which can creep in will do so.
2. Any error in any calculation will be in the direction of most harm.
3. In any formula, constants (especially those obtained from engineering handbooks) are to be treated as variables.
4. The best approximation of service conditions in the laboratory will not begin to meet those conditions encountered in actual service.
5. The most vital dimension on any plan or drawing stands the greatest chance of being omitted.
6. If only one bid can be secured on any project, the price will be unreasonable.
7. If a test installation functions perfectly, all subsequent production units will malfunction.
8. All delivery promises must be multiplied by a factor of 2.0.
9. Major changes in construction will always be requested after fabrication is nearly completed.
10. Parts that positively cannot be assembled in improper order will be.
11. Interchangeable parts won't.

12. Manufacturer's specifications of performance should be multiplied by a factor of 0.5.
13. Salespeople's claims for performance should be multiplied by a factor of 0.25.
14. Installation and Operating Instructions shipped with the device will be promptly discarded by the Receiving Department.
15. Any device requiring service or adjustment will be least accessible.
16. Service Conditions as given on specifications will be exceeded.
17. If more than one person is responsible for a miscalculation, no one will be at fault.
18. Identical units which test in an identical fashion will not behave in an identical fashion in the field.
19. If, in engineering practice, a safety factor is set through service experience at an ultimate value, an ingenious idiot will promptly calculate a method to exceed said safety factor.
20. Warranty and guarantee clauses are voided by payment of the invoice.

Phone Booth Rule:

A lone dime always gets the number nearly right.

Pierson's Law:

If you're coasting, you're going downhill.

Pike Law of Punditry:

The successful pundit is provided more opportunities to say things than he has things worth saying.

Axiom of the Pipe. (Trischmann's Paradox)

A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool something to stick in his mouth.

Plotnick's Law:

The time of departure will be delayed by the square of the number of people involved.

Law of Political Erosion:

Once the erosion of power begins, it has a momentum all its own.

Politicians' Rules:

1. When the polls are in your favor, flaunt them.
2. When the polls are overwhelmingly unfavorable, either (a) ridicule and dismiss them or (b) stress the volatility of public opinion.
3. When the polls are slightly unfavorable, play for sympathy as a struggling underdog.
4. When too close to call, be surprised at your own strength.

The Pollyanna Paradox:

Every day, in every way, things get better and better; then worse again in the evening.

Potter's Law:

The amount of flak received on any subject is inversely proportional to the subject's true value.

Poulsen's Law:

When anything is used to its full potential, it will break.

Pournelle's Law of Costs and Schedules:

Everything costs more and takes longer.

Powell's Law:

Never tell them what you wouldn't do.

Law of Predictive Action:

The second most powerful phrase in the world is "Watch this!" The most powerful phrase is "Oh yeah? Watch this!"

Preudhomme's Law of Window Cleaning:

It's on the other side.

Price's Law of Politics:

It's easier to be a liberal a long way from home.

Price's Law of Science:

Scientists who dislike the restraints of highly organized research like to remark that a truly great research worker needs only three pieces of equipment -- a pencil, a piece of paper, and a brain. But they quote this maxim more often at academic banquets than at budget hearings.

The Principle Concerning Multifunctional Devices:

The fewer functions any device is required to perform, the more perfectly it can perform those functions.

Law of Probable Dispersal:

Whatever hits the fan will not be evenly distributed. (also known as the How Come It All Landed On Me Law)

Laws of Procrastination:

1. Procrastination shortens the job and places the responsibility for its termination on someone else (the authority who imposed the deadline).
2. It reduces anxiety by reducing the expected quality of the project from the best of all possible efforts to the best that can be expected given the limited time.
3. Status is gained in the eyes of others, and in one's own eyes, because it is assumed that the importance of the work justifies the stress.
4. Avoidance of interruptions including the assignment of other duties can be achieved, so that the obviously stressed worker can concentrate on the single effort.
5. Procrastination avoids boredom; one never has the feeling that there is nothing important to do.
6. It may eliminate the job if the need passes before the job can be done.

Professional's Law:

Doctors, dentists, and lawyers are only on time for appointments when you're not.

Project scheduling "99" rule

The first 90 percent of the task takes 90 percent of the time. The last 10 percent takes the other 90 percent.

Proverbial Law:

For every proverb that so confidently asserts its little bit of wisdom, there is usually an equal and opposite proverb that contradicts it.

Public Relations Client Turnover Law:

The minute you sign a client is the minute you start to lose him.

First Rule of Public Speaking:

Nice guys finish fast.

Pudder's Law:

Anything that begins well ends badly. Anything that begins badly ends worse.

Puritan's Law:

Evil is live spelled backwards.

Corollary: If it feels good, don't do it.

Putney's Law:

If the people of a democracy are allowed to do so, they will vote away the freedoms which are essential to that democracy.

Putt's Law:

Technology is dominated by two types of people -- those who understand what they do not manage, and those who manage what they do not understand.

[Back to top](#)

Q

Q's Law:

No matter what stage of completion one reaches in a North Sea (oil) field, the cost of the remainder of the project remains the same.

[Back to top](#)

R

Rakove's Laws of Politics:

1. The amount of effort put into a campaign by a worker expands in proportion to the personal benefits that he will derive from his party's victory.
2. The citizen is influenced by principle in direct proportion to his distance from the political situation.

Ralph's Observation:

It is a mistake to allow any mechanical object to realize that you are in a hurry.

Randolph's Cardinal Principle of Statecraft:

Never needlessly disturb a thing at rest.

Rangnekar's Modified Rules Concerning Decisions:

1. If you must make a decision, delay it.
2. If you can authorize someone else to avoid a decision, do so.
3. If you can form a committee, have them avoid the decision.
4. If you can otherwise avoid a decision, avoid it immediately.

Rapoport's Rule of the Roller-Skate Key:

Certain items which are crucial to a given activity will show up with uncommon regularity until the day when that activity is planned, at which point the item in question will disappear from the face of the earth.

Raskin's Zero Law:

The more zeros found in the price tag for a government program, the less Congressional scrutiny it will receive.

Law of Raspberry Jam:

The wider any culture is spread, the thinner it gets.

Rather's Rule:

In dealing with the press do yourself a favor. Stick with one of three responses: (a) I know and I can tell you, (b) I know and I can't tell you, or (c) I don't know.

Rayburn's Rule:

If you want to get along, go along.

Fundamental Tenet of Reform:

Reforms come from below. No man with four aces howls for a new deal.

Law of Reruns:

If you have watched a TV series only once, and you watch it again, it will be a rerun of the same episode.

Law of Research:

Enough research will tend to support your theory.

Law of Restaurant Acoustics:

In a restaurant with seats which are close to each other, one will always find the decibel level of the nearest conversation to be inversely proportional to the quality of the thought going into it.

Law of Revelation:

The hidden flaw never remains hidden.

First Law of Revision:

Information necessitating a change of design will be conveyed to the designer after -- and only after -- the plans are complete. (Often called the "Now they tell us!" Law.)

Corollary: In simple cases, presenting one obvious right way versus one obvious wrong way, it is often wiser to choose the wrong way, so as to expedite subsequent revision.

Second Law of Revision:

The more innocuous the modification appears to be, the further its influence will extend and the more plans will have to be redrawn.

Third Law of Revision:

If, when completion of a design is imminent, field dimensions are finally supplied as they actually are -- instead of as they were meant to be -- it is always easier to start all over.

Corollary: It is usually impractical to worry beforehand about interferences -- if you have none, someone will make one for you.

Fourth Law of Revision:

After painstaking and careful analysis of a sample, you are always told that it is the wrong sample and doesn't apply to the problem.

Richard's Complementary Rules of Ownership:

1. If you keep anything long enough you can throw it away.
2. If you throw anything away, you will need it as soon as it is no longer accessible.

Richman's Inevitables of Parenthood:

1. Enough is never enough.
2. The sun always rises in the baby's bedroom window.
3. Birthday parties always end in tears.
4. Whenever you decide to take the kids home, it is always five minutes earlier that they break into fights, tears, or hysteria.

Riddle's Constant:

There are coexisting elements in frustration phenomena which separate expected results from achieved results.

Riesman's Law:

An inexorable upward movement leads administrators to higher salaries and narrower spans of control.

Rigg's Hypothesis:

Incompetence tends to increase with the level of work performed. And, naturally, the individual's staff needs will increase as his level of incompetence increases.

Law of Road Construction:

After large expenditures of federal, state, and county funds; after much confusion generated by detours and road blocks; after greatly annoying the surrounding population with noise, dust, and fumes -- the previously existing traffic jam is relocated by one-half mile.

Robertson's Law:

Everything happens at the same time with nothing in between.

The Three Laws of Robotics:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

Rodovic's Rule:

In any organization, the potential is much greater for the subordinate to manage his superior than for the superior to manage his subordinate.

Rodriguez's Observation:

A consultant is someone who, when hired to find out what time it is, borrows your watch to find out.

Corollary (Martin): If you hire a consultant to read your own watch to you, you got your money's worth.

Roemer's Law:

The rate of hospital admissions responds to bed availability. If we insist on installing more beds, they will tend to get filled.

Roger's Ratio:

One-third of the people in the United States promote, while the other two-thirds provide.

Rosenbaum's Rule:

The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.

Rosenfield's Regret:

The most delicate component will be dropped.

Rosenstock-Huessy's Law of Technology:

All technology expands the space, contracts the time, and destroys the working group.

(Al) Ross's Law:

Bare feet magnetize sharp metal objects so they always point upward from the floor -- especially in the dark.

(Charles) Ross's Law:

Never characterize the importance of a statement in advance.

Rudin's Law:

In a crisis that forces a choice to be made among alternative courses of action, most people will choose the worse one possible.

Runamok's Law:

There are four kinds of people: those who sit quietly and do nothing, those who talk about sitting quietly and doing nothing, those who do things, and those who talk about doing things.

Runyon's Law:

The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that's the way to bet.

First Rule of Rural Mechanics:

If it works, don't fix it.

Ryan's Law:

Make three correct guesses consecutively and you will establish yourself as an expert.

[Back to top](#)

S

Sadat's Reminder:

Those who invented the law of supply and demand have no right to complain when this law works against their interest.

Sam's Axioms:

1. Any line, however short, is still too long.
2. Work is the crabgrass of life, but money is the water that keeps it green.

Sattinger's Law:

It works better if you plug it in.

Sattler's Law:

There are 32 points to the compass, meaning that there are 32 directions in which a spoon can squirt grapefruit; yet, the juice almost invariably flies straight into the human eye.

Saunders's Discovery:

Laziness is the mother of nine inventions out of ten.

Sayre's Third Law of Politics:

Academic politics is the most vicious and bitter form of politics, because the stakes are so low.

Schenk's First Principle of Industrial Market Economics:

Good salesmen and good repairmen will never go hungry.

Schickel's TV Theorems:

1. Any dramatic series the producers want us to take seriously as a representation of contemporary reality cannot be taken seriously as a representation of anything -- except a show to be ignored by anyone capable of sitting upright in a chair and chewing gum simultaneously.
2. The only programs a grown-up can possibly stand are those intended for children. Or, more properly, those that cater to those pre-adolescent fantasies that most have never abandoned.

Schmidt's Law:

Never eat prunes when you're hungry.

Schmidt's Law (probably a different Schmidt):

If you mess with something long enough, it'll break.

Schuckit's Law:

All interference in human conduct has the potential for causing harm, no matter how innocuous the procedure may be.

Schultze's Law:

If you can't measure output, then you measure input.

Schumpeter's Observation of Scientific and Nonscientific Theories:

Any theory can be made to fit any facts by means of appropriate additional assumptions.

Old Scottish Prayer:

O Lord, grant that we may always be right, for Thou knowest we will never change our minds.

Scott's First Law:

No matter what goes wrong, it will probably look right.

Scott's Second Law:

When an error has been detected and corrected, it will be found to have been correct in the first place.

Corollary: After the correction has been found in error, it will be impossible to fit the original quantity back into the equation.

Screwdriver Syndrome:

Sometimes, where a complex problem can be illuminated by many tools, one can be forgiven for applying the one he knows best.

Segal's Law:

A man with one watch knows what time it is; a man with two watches is never sure.

Law of Selective Gravity (the Buttered Side Down Law):

An object will fall so as to do the most damage.

Corollary (Klipstein): The most delicate component will be the one to drop.

Sells's Law:

The first sample is always the best.

Laws of Serendipity:

1. In order to discover anything you must be looking for something.
2. If you wish to make an improved product, you must already be engaged in making an inferior one.

Sevareid's Law:

The chief cause of problems is solutions.

Shaffer's Law:

The effectiveness of a politician varies in inverse proportion to his commitment to principle.

Shalit's Law:

The intensity of movie publicity is in inverse ratio to the quality of the movie.

Shanahan's Law:

The length of a meeting rises with the square of the number of people present.

Sharkey's Fourth Law of Motion:

Passengers on elevators constantly rearrange their positions as people get on and off so there is at all times an equal distance between all bodies.

Shaw's Principle:

Build a system that even a fool can use, and only a fool will want to use it.

Shelton's Laws of Pocket Calculators:

1. Rechargeable batteries die at the most critical time of the most complex problem.
2. When a rechargeable battery starts to die in the middle of a complex calculation, and the user attempts to connect house current, the calculator will clear itself.
3. The final answer will exceed the magnitude or precision or both of the calculator.
4. There are not enough storage registers to solve the problem.
5. The user will forget mathematics in proportion to the complexity of the calculator.
6. Thermal paper will run out before the calculation is complete.

Shirley's Law:

Most people deserve each other.

Short's Quotations:

1. Any great truth can -- and eventually will -- be expressed as a cliché. A cliché is a sure and certain way to dilute an idea. For instance, my grandmother used to say, "The black cat is always the last one off the fence." I have no idea what she meant, but at one time it was undoubtedly true.
2. Half of being smart is knowing what you're dumb at.
3. Malpractice makes malperfect.

4. Neurosis is a communicable disease.
5. The only winner in the War of 1812 was Tchaikovsky.
6. Nature abhors a hero. For one thing, he violates the law of conservation of energy. For another, how can it be the survival of the fittest when the fittest keeps putting himself in situations where he is most likely to be creamed?
7. A little ignorance can go a long way.
8. Learn to be sincere. Even if you have to fake it.
9. There is no such thing as an absolute truth -- that is absolutely true.
10. Understanding the laws of nature does not mean we are free from obeying them.
11. Entropy has us outnumbered.
12. The human race never solves any of its problems -- it only outlives them.
13. Hell hath no fury like a pacifist.

Law of Selective Gravity:

An object will fall so as to do the most damage.

Sevareid's Law:

The chief cause of problems is solutions.

Mother Sigafos's Observation:

A man should be greater than some of his parts.

Simmon's Law:

The desire for racial integration increases with the square of the distance from the actual event.

Simon's Law:

Everything put together sooner or later falls apart.

Sinner's Law of Retaliation:

Do whatever your enemies don't want you to do.

Skinner's Constant (Flannegan's Finagling Factor):

That quantity which, when multiplied by, divided into, added to, or subtracted from the answer you got, gives you the answer you should have gotten.

Skole's Rule for Antique Dealers:

Never simply say, "Sorry, we don't have what you're looking for." Always say, "Too bad, I just sold one the other day."

Law of Slide Presentation:

In any slide presentation, at least one slide will be upside down or backwards, or both.

Smith's Principles of Bureaucratic tinker toys:

1. Never use one word when a dozen will suffice.
2. If it can be understood, it's not finished yet.
3. Never be the first to do anything.

Snafu Equations:

1. Given any problem containing n equations, there will be $n+1$ unknowns.
2. An object or bit of information most needed, will be least available.
3. In any human endeavor, once you have exhausted all possibilities and fail, there will be one solution, simple and obvious, highly visible to everyone else.

4. Badness comes in waves.

First Law of Socio-Economics:

In a hierarchical system, the rate of pay for a given task increases in inverse ratio to the unpleasantness and difficulty of the task.

First Law of Socio-Genetics:

Celibacy is not hereditary.

Woods's Refutation of the First Law of Socio-Genetics:

On the contrary, if you never procreate, neither will your kids.

Sociology's Iron Law of Oligarchy:

In every organized activity, no matter the sphere, a small number will become the oligarchical leaders and the others will follow.

Sodd's First Law:

When a person attempts a task, he or she will be thwarted in that task by the unconscious intervention of some other presence (animate or inanimate).

Nevertheless, some tasks are completed, since the intervening presence is itself attempting a task and is, of course, subject to interference.

Sodd's Second Law:

Sooner or later, the worst possible set of circumstances is bound to occur.

Corollary: Any system must be designed to withstand the worst possible set of circumstances.

Sodd's Other Law:

The degree of failure is in direct proportion to the effort expended and to the need for success.

Grandma Soderquist's Conclusion:

A chicken doesn't stop scratching just because the worms are scarce.

Spare Parts Principle:

The accessibility, during recovery of small parts which fall from the work bench, varies directly with the size of the part and inversely with its importance to the completion of the work underway.

Spark's Ten Rules for the Project Manager:

1. Strive to look tremendously important.
2. Attempt to be seen with important people.
3. Speak with authority; however, only expound on the obvious and proven facts.
4. Don't engage in arguments, but if cornered, ask an irrelevant question and lean back with a satisfied grin while your opponent tries to figure out what's going on -- then quickly change the subject.
5. Listen intently while others are arguing the problem. Pounce on a trite statement and bury them with it.
6. If a subordinate asks you a pertinent question, look at him as if he had lost his senses. When he looks down, paraphrase the question back at him.
7. Obtain a brilliant assignment, but keep out of sight and out of the limelight.
8. Walk at a fast pace when out of the office -- this keeps questions from subordinates and superiors at a minimum.

9. Always keep the office door closed. This puts visitors on the defensive and also makes it look as if you are always in an important conference.
10. Give all orders verbally. Never write anything down that might go into a "Pearl Harbor File."

Specht's Meta-Law:

Under any conditions, anywhere, whatever you are doing, there is some ordinance under which you can be booked.

Sprinkle's Law:

Things always fall at right angles.

Stamp's Statistical Probability:

The government is extremely fond of amassing great quantities of statistics. These are raised to the n th degree, the cube roots are extracted, and the results are arranged into elaborate and impressive displays. What must be kept ever in mind, however, is that in every case, the figures are first put down by a village watchman, and he puts down anything he damn well pleases.

Steele's Plagiarism of Somebody's Philosophy:

Everyone should believe in something -- I believe I'll have another drink.

Steinbeck's Law:

When you need towns, they are very far apart.

Stephens's Soliloquy:

Finality is death. Perfection is finality. Nothing is perfect. There are lumps in it.

Stewart's Law of Retroaction:

It is easier to get forgiveness than permission.

Stockbroker's Declaration:

The market will rally from this or lower levels.

Stock Market Axiom:

The public is always wrong.

Stock's Observation:

You no sooner get your head above water than someone pulls your flippers off.

Stockmayer's Theorem:

If it looks easy, it's tough. If it looks tough, it's damn well impossible.

Law of Storage:

The amount of stuff to be stored automatically expands to fill the space available in which to store it.

"Murphy was an optimist" corollary: ... automatically expands to exceed the space available...

Sturgeon's Law:

Ninety percent of EVERYTHING is crud.

Sueker's Note:

If you need n items of anything, you will have $n - 1$ in stock.

Suhor's Law:

A little ambiguity never hurt anyone.

Law of Superiority:

The first example of superior principle is always inferior to the developed example of inferior principle.

Law of Superstition:

It's bad luck to be superstitious.

Survival Formula for Public Office:

1. Exploit the inevitable (which means, take credit for anything good which happens whether you had anything to do with it or not).
2. Don't disturb the perimeter (meaning don't stir up a mess unless you can be sure of the result).
3. Stay in with the Outs (the Ins will make so many mistakes, you can't afford to alienate the Outs).
4. Don't permit yourself to get between a dog and a lamppost.

Sutton's Law:

Go where the money is.

Swipple's Rule of Order:

He who shouts loudest has the floor.

[Back to top](#)

T

Taxi Principle:

Find out the cost before you get in.

Terman's Law:

There is no direct relationship between the quality of an educational program and its cost.

Terman's Law of Innovation:

If you want a track team to win the high jump you find one person who can jump seven feet, not seven people who can jump one foot.

Fourth Law of Thermodynamics:

If the probability of success is not almost one, then it is damn near zero.

Thinking Man's Tautology:

If you think you're wrong, you're wrong.

Corollary: If you think you're wrong, you're right.

Thoreau's Law:

If you see a man approaching with the obvious intent of doing you good, run for your life.

Thoreau's Rule:

Any fool can make a rule, and every fool will mind it.

Thurber's Conclusion:

There is no safety in numbers, or in anything else.

Thwartz's Theorem of Low Profile:

Negative expectation thwarts realization, and self-congratulation guarantees disaster.
(Or, simply put: If you think of it, it won't happen quite that way.)

Tipper's Law:

Those who expect the biggest tips provide the worst service.

Titanic Coincidence:

Most accidents in well-designed systems involve two or more events of low probability occurring in the worst possible combination.

Torquemada's Law:

When you are sure you're right, you have a moral duty to impose your will upon anyone who disagrees with you.

Transcription Square Law:

The number of errors made is equal to the sum of the squares employed.

Travel Axiom:

He travels fastest who travels alone . . . but he hasn't anything to do when he gets there.

First Law of Travel:

No matter how many rooms there are in the motel, the fellow who starts up his car at five o'clock in the morning is always parked under your window.

Trischmann's Paradox (Axiom of the Pipe):

A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool something to stick in his mouth.

Law of Triviality:

The time spent on any item of the agenda will be in inverse proportion to the sum involved.

Troutman's Laws of Computer Programming (and see Peck's Programming Postulates)

1. Any running program is obsolete.
2. Any planned program costs more and takes longer.
3. Any useful program will have to be changed.
4. Any useless program will have to be documented.
5. The size of a program expands to fill all available memory.
6. The value of a program is inversely proportional to the weight of its output.
7. The complexity of a program grows until it exceeds the capability of its maintainers.
8. Any system that relies on computer reliability is unreliable.
9. Any system that relies on human reliability is unreliable.
10. Make it possible for programmers to write programs in English, and you will find that programmers cannot write in English.
11. Profanity is the one language all programmers know best.

Truman's Law:

If you cannot convince them, confuse them.

Tuccille's First Law of Reality:

Industry always moves in to fill an economic vacuum.

Turnauckas's Observation:

To err is human; to really foul things up takes a computer.

Turner's Law:

Nearly all prophecies made in public are wrong.

Twain's Rule:

Only kings, editors, and people with tapeworm have the right to use the editorial "we".

Tylk's Law:

Assumption is the mother of all foul-ups.

[Back to top](#)

U

Ubell's Law of Press Luncheons:

At any public relations luncheon, the quality of the food is inversely related to the quality of the information.

Uhlmann's Razor:

When stupidity is a sufficient explanation, there is no need to have recourse to any other.

Corollary (Law of Historical Causation): "It seemed like the thing to do at the time."

The Ultimate Law:

All general statements are false.

The Ultimate Principle:

By definition, when you are investigating the unknown, you do not know what you will find.

Umbrella Law:

You will need three umbrellas: one to leave at the office, one to leave at home, and one to leave on the train.

The Unapplicable Law:

Washing your car to make it rain doesn't work.

Universal Field Theory of Perversity (Mule's Law):

The probability of an event's occurring varies directly with the perversity of the inanimate object involved and inversely with the product of its desirability and the effort expended to produce it.

Unnamed Law:

If it happens, it must be possible.

The Unspeakable Law:

As soon as you mention something, if it's good, it goes away; if it's bad, it happens.

[Back to top](#)

V

Vail's Axiom:

In any human enterprise, work seeks the lowest hierarchical level.

Vance's Rule of 2 1/2:

Any military project will take twice as long as planned, cost twice as much, and produce only half of what is wanted.

Lucy Van Pelt's Observation:

There must be one day above all others in each life that is the happiest.

Corollary: What if you've already had it?

Vique's Law:

A man without religion is like a fish without a bicycle.

Von Braun's Law of Gravity:

We can lick gravity, but sometimes the paperwork is overwhelming.

Vonnegut's Corollary:

Beauty may be only skin deep, but ugliness goes right to the core.

[Back to top](#)

W

Waddell's Law of Equipment Failure:

A component's degree of reliability is directly proportional to its ease of accessibility (i.e., the harder it is to get to, the more often it breaks down).

Waffle's Law:

A professor's enthusiasm for teaching the introductory course varies inversely with the likelihood of his having to do it.

Wain's Conclusion:

The only people making money these days are the ones who sell computer paper.

Waldo's Observation:

One man's red tape is another man's system.

Walinsky's Law:

The intelligence of any discussion diminishes with the square of the number of participants.

Walinsky's First Law of Political Campaigns:

If there are twelve clowns in a ring, you can jump in the middle and start reciting Shakespeare, but to the audience, you'll just be the thirteenth clown.

Walker's Law:

Associate with well-mannered persons and your manners will improve. Run with decent folk and your own decent instincts will be strengthened. Keep the company of bums and you will become a bum. Hang around with rich people and you will end by picking up the check and dying broke.

Wallace's Observation:

Everything is in a state of utter dishevelment.

Walters's Law of Management:

If you're already in a hole, there's no use to continue digging.

Washington's Law:

Space expands to house the people to perform the work that Congress creates.

Watson's Law:

The reliability of machinery is inversely proportional to the number and significance of any persons watching it.

Rule of the Way Out:

Always leave room to add an explanation if it doesn't work out.

Weaver's Law:

When several reporters share a cab on an assignment, the reporter in the front seat pays for all.

Corollary (O'Doyle): No matter how many reporters share a cab, and no matter who pays, each puts the full fare on his own expense account.

Corollary (Germond): When a group of newsmen go out to dinner together, the bill is to be divided evenly among them, regardless of what each one eats and drinks.

Weber-Fechner Law:

The least change in stimulus necessary to produce a perceptible change in response is proportional to the stimulus already existing.

Weidner's Queries:

1. The tide comes in and the tide goes out, and what have you got?
2. They say an elephant never forgets, but what's he got to remember?

Weiler's Law:

Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself.

Weinberg's Law:

If builders built buildings the way programmers wrote programs, then the first woodpecker that came along would destroy civilization.

Corollary: An expert is a person who avoids the small errors while sweeping on to the grand fallacy.

Weisman's Law of Examinations:

If you're confident after you've just finished an exam, it's because you don't know enough to know better.

Wells's Law:

A parade should have bands OR horses, not both.

Westheimer's Rule:

To estimate the time it takes to do a task: estimate the time you think it should take, multiply by 2, and change the unit of measure to the next highest unit. Thus we allocate 2 days for a one hour task.

Whispered Rule:

People will believe anything if you whisper it.

White Flag Principle:

A military disaster may produce a better postwar situation than victory.

White's Chappaquiddick Theorem:

The sooner and in more detail you announce bad news, the better.

White's Observations of Committee Operation:

1. People very rarely think in groups; they talk together, they exchange information, they adjudicate, they make compromises. But they do not think; they do not create.
2. A really new idea affronts current agreement.
3. A meeting cannot be productive unless certain premises are so shared that they do not need to be discussed, and the argument can be confined to areas of disagreement. But while this kind of consensus makes a group more effective in its legitimate functions, it does not make the group a creative vehicle -- it would not be a new idea if

it didn't -- and the group, impelled as it is to agree, is instinctively hostile to that which is divisive.

White's Statement:

Don't lose heart . . .

Owen's Comment on White's Statement: . . . they might want to cut it out . . .

Byrd's Addition to Owen's Comment on White's Statement: . . . and they want to avoid a lengthy search.

Whole Picture Principle:

Research scientists are so wrapped up in their own narrow endeavors that they cannot possibly see the whole picture of anything, including their own research.

Corollary: The Director of Research should know as little as possible about the specific subject of research he is administering.

Wicker's Law:

Government expands to absorb revenue, and then some.

Wilcox's Law:

A pat on the back is only a few centimeters from a kick in the pants.

Williams and Holland's Law:

If enough data is collected, anything may be proven by statistical methods.

Will's Rule of Informed Citizenship:

If you want to understand your government, don't begin by reading the Constitution. (It conveys precious little of the flavor of today's statecraft.) Instead read selected portions of the Washington telephone directory containing listings for all the organizations with titles beginning with the word "National".

Flip Wilson's Law:

You can't expect to hit the jackpot if you don't put a few nickels in the machine.

Wilson's Law of Demographics:

The public is not made up of people who get their names in the newspapers.

Wingo's Axiom:

All Finagle Laws may be bypassed by learning the simple art of doing without thinking.

First Law of Wing-Walking:

Never leave hold of what you've got until you've got hold of something else.

Witten's Law:

Whenever you cut your fingernails, you will find a need for them an hour later.

Wober's SNIDE Rule (Satisfied Needs Incite Demand Excesses):

Ideal goals grow faster than the means of attaining new goals allow.

Wolf's Law (An Optimistic View of a Pessimistic World):

It isn't that things will necessarily go wrong (Murphy's Law), but rather that they will take so much more time and effort than you think if they are not to go wrong.

Wolf's Law of Decision-Making:

Major actions are rarely decided by more than four people. If you think a larger meeting you're attending is really "hammering out" a decision, you're probably wrong. Either the decision was agreed to by a smaller group before the meeting began, or the outcome of the larger meeting will be modified later when three or four people get together.

Wolf's Law of History Lessons:

Those who don't study the past will repeat its errors. Those who do study it will find OTHER ways to err.

Wolf's Law of Management:

The tasks to do immediately are the minor ones; otherwise, you'll forget them. The major ones are often better to defer. They usually need more time for reflection. Besides, if you forget them, they'll remind you.

Wolf's Law of Meetings:

The only important result of a meeting is agreement about next steps.

Wolf's Law of Planning:

A good place to start from is where you are.

Wolf's Law of Tactics:

If you can't beat them, have them join you.

Woltman's Law:

Never program and drink beer at the same time.

Woman's Equation:

Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.

Wood's Law:

The more unworkable the urban plan, the greater the probability of implementation.

Woods's Incomplete Maxims:

1. All's well that ends.
2. A penny saved is a penny.
3. Don't leave things unfinished.

Woods's Laws of Procrastination:

1. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow.
2. Procrastinate today! (Tomorrow may be too late.)
3. NOW is the time to do things later!
4. If at first you don't succeed, why try again?

Woodward's Law:

A theory is better than an explanation.

Worker's Dilemma Law (Management's Put-Down Law):

1. No matter how much you do, you'll never do enough.
2. What you don't do is always more important than what you do do.

Wynne's Law:

Negative slack tends to increase.

Wyszkowski's Theorem:

Regardless of the units used by either the supplier or the customer, the manufacturer shall use his own arbitrary units convertible to those of either the supplier or the customer only by means of weird and unnatural conversion factors.

Wyszowski's First Law:

No experiment is reproducible.

Wyszowski's Second Law:

Anything can be made to work if you fiddle with it long enough.

[Back to top](#)

Y

Yapp's Basic Fact:

If a thing cannot be fitted into something smaller than itself, some dope will do it.

Yolen's Guide for Self-Praise:

Proclaim yourself "World Champ" of something -- tidally-winks, rope- jumping, whatever -- send this notice to newspapers, radio, TV, and wait for challengers to confront you. Avoid challenges as long as possible, but continue to send news of your achievements to all media. Also, develop a newsletter and letterhead for communications.

Young's Handy Guide to the Modern Sciences:

If it is green or it wiggles -- it is Biology.

If it stinks -- it is Chemistry.

If it doesn't work -- it is Physics.

Young's Law:

All great discoveries are made by mistake.

Corollary: The greater the funding, the longer it takes to make the mistake.

[Back to top](#)

Z

Zellar's Law:

Every newspaper, no matter how tight the news hole, has room for a story on another newspaper increasing its newsstand price.

Zimmerman's Law:

Regardless of whether a mission expands or contracts, administrative overhead continues to grow at a steady rate.

Zimmerman's Law of Complaints:

Nobody notices when things go right.

Zusmann's Rule:

A successful symposium depends on the ratio of meeting to eating.

Zymurgy's First Law of Evolving System Dynamics:

Once you open a can of worms, the only way to recan them is to use a larger can. (Old worms never die, they just worm their way into larger cans.)

Zymurgy's Seventh Exception to Murphy's Laws:

When it rains, it pours.

Zymurgy's Law of Volunteer Labor:
People are always available for work in the past tense.

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