

Origins of "Smiley Face"



Original Smiley - Photo courtesy of Wikipedia
Artist Harvey Ball - Photo: worcesterhistory.org

Many people have seen the "smiley face" but have never heard of career military man and artist Harvey Ball, (1921-2001). Mr. Ball was born and raised in Worcester, MA. He was so interested in art that when he was a junior in high school he apprenticed himself to a local sign painter. The painter taught him to paint images that were especially notable. In 1940 Harvey Ball received a scholarship to attend Worcester Art Museum School where he trained in fine arts.

After serving in the Army during World War II (WWII), Ball returned to Worcester and worked for a local ad agency. He started his own business, Harvey Ball Advertising, in 1959. He was hired in 1963 by State Mutual Life Assurance Company to create a "friendship campaign." The campaign would consist of a smile and would be used to boost employee morale during a merger process. The smile could be placed on buttons, cards, or posters. The campaign lasted from 1964 through the late 1970's.

The smiley design triggered a national fad in 1970's. The playful character of the icon has since evolved into a symbol depicting the many human emotions called an "emoticon." The U.S. Postal Service put smiley on a stamp in 1999. Also in 1999, Harvey Ball formed World Smile Corporation and used profit from the smiley face to fund charitable causes. Charities receive contribution through the Harvey Ball World Smile Foundation. The foundation also sponsors the annual World Smile Day Ball started to encourage "acts of kindness." Wal-Mart featured a smiley in its "Rolling Back Prices" campaign in 2006.

Smiley or Smilie is seen around the world today. Many people have taken credit for creating the smile design, but the origin of Harvey Ball's creation is undeniably well documented.

1. Honan, William H. (April 14, 2001). "H.R. Ball, 79, Ad Executive Credited with Smiley Face: The New York Times.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/14/us/h-r-ball-79-ad-executive-credited-with-smiley-face.html>. Retrieved August 29, 2009.

2. World Smile About Us page

3. World Smile website

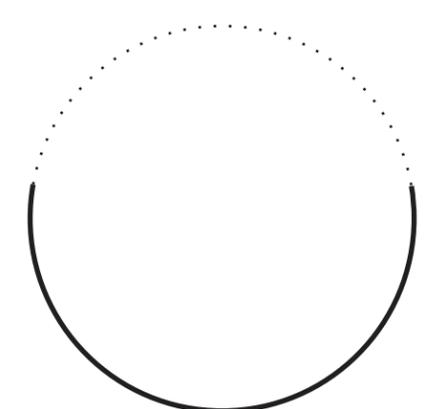
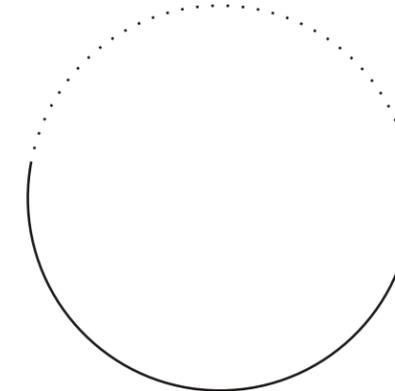
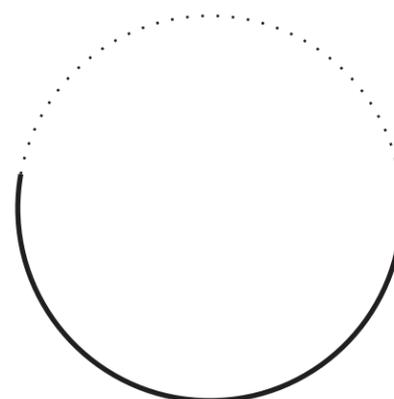
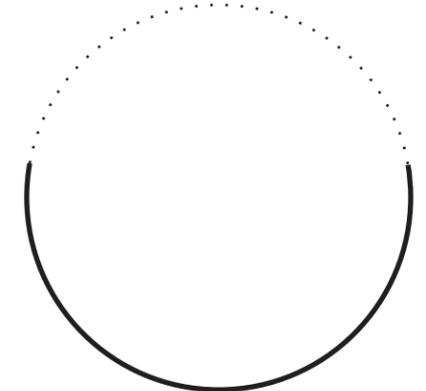
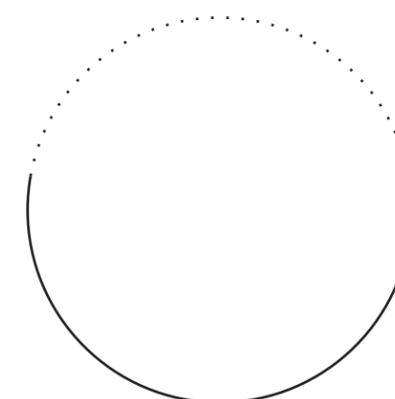
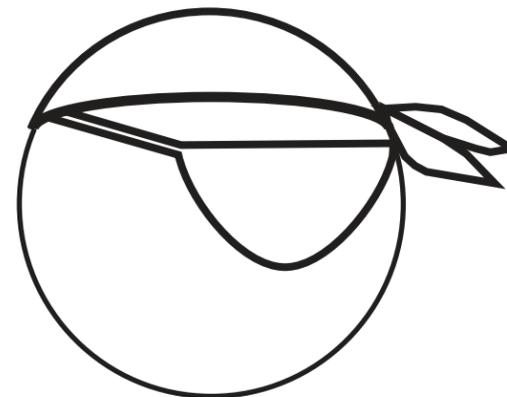
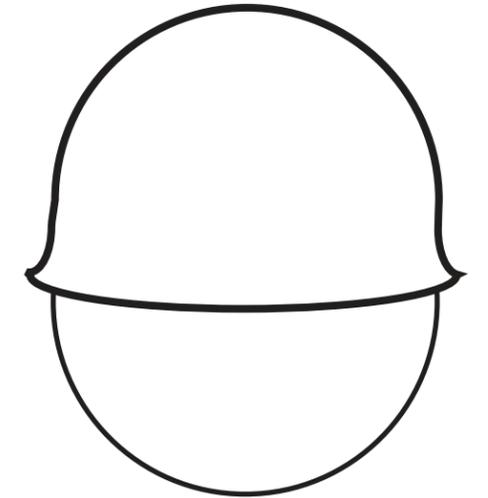
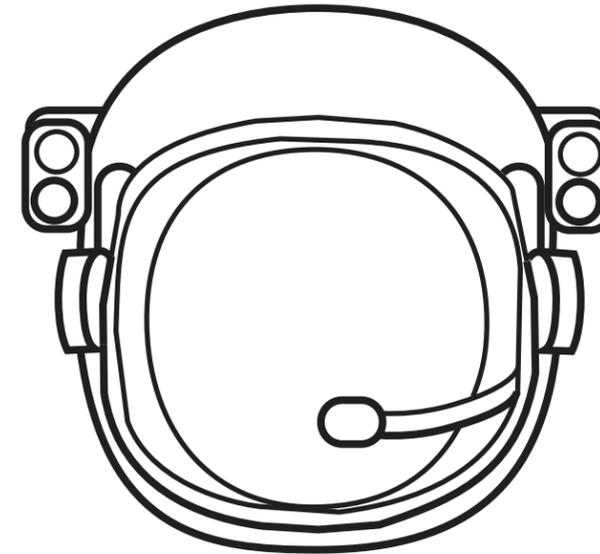
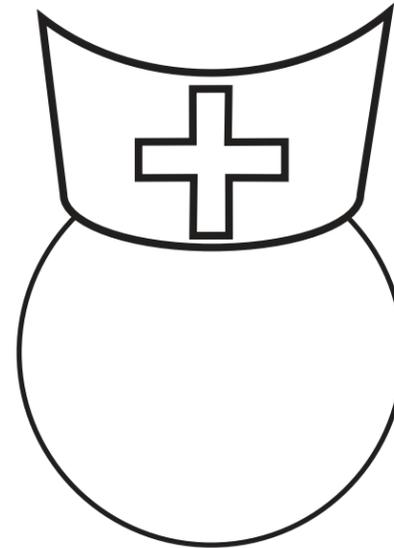
4. "Wal-Mart seeks smiley face rights." BBC News. 8 May 2006.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4984138.stm>. Retrieved 2006-05-09.

5. Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smiley>

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Occupational Faces