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Hey, guys: Here's how to scare up the perfect Halloween costume

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This year, costume experts predict, vertical stripes will be "in." More specifically, black and white "Beetlejuice"-like stripes that conjure up images of Robin Thicke and commemorate the Great Twerking Scandal of 2013.

Of course, you'll need a date willing to be Miley, some unmentionable props and a Halloween party to go to ... other than the one at your kid's elementary school.

Halloween costumes certainly aren't exempt from fashion trends. Remember last year - in a presidential election cycle - when political costumes were all the rage? Big Bird for Hire costumes were, well, flying off the shelves after GOP nominee Mitt Romney ruffled feathers with his remark about cutting PBS funding.

With Halloween approaching, we asked a few experts to weigh in on costume ideas for guys - whether you need a last-minute getup, are hoping to scare up a little love at a party, hope to terrify the whole neighborhood or are going trick-or-treating with your kids.

Costumes that are "so in" this Halloween are largely influenced by pop culture, says Jarryd Boyd, a spokesman for Party City (www.partycity.com).

For trick-or-treating dads, he says, Monsters, Inc. costumes that come in options for the whole family are hugely popular, while blockbusters like "Man of Steel" and "Iron Man 3" are driving the caped crusader costume trend, Boyd says.

In fact, Party City has a "Marvel Mix and Match Shop" with superhero costume accessories, and the popularity of "Game of Thrones" and historical television dramas are drumming up interest in medieval characters and wigs, crowns and capes, he adds.

"Gothic glamour is also making a return from the grave," Boyd says.

EASY COSTUME IDEAS

So, you usually put a mask on and call it good?

Boyd suggests trying a partysuit this year. The one-piece spandex suits are perfect for the guy who doesn't want to put a lot of time into his costume - but still wants to be "the life of the party," he says.

You can find partysuits in a rainbow of colors - or with a print like the "Adult Crash Test Dummy Morphsuit." A simple but spine-chilling party suit? The "Adult Rubber Man" costume from "American Horror Story" at Party City (www.PartyCity.com).

If you're going to multiple Halloween parties, change up your partysuit with accessories like goofy wigs, mustaches or jewelry for a whole new look, Boyd suggests.

If you're going as a group, channel some inspiration from "Duck Dynasty," suggests Sara Gaugl, a spokeswoman for Savers Thrift Stores.

"Dad can don camo and a full beard - real or fake - and the kids can dress as ducks, or even mini versions of Dad," she says. "This look is easy to put together at Savers using both new and used items."

COSTUMES FOR MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Dogs are the original trick-or-treaters - rolling over for Milkbones.

Jordan Eddy, Halloween expert for Meijer (www.meijer.com), says pet costumes are the biggest growing category this year.

In fact, the National Retail Federation found that people will spend more than \$330 million on pet costumes this Halloween. Pet owners are spending much more per costume, too - with a rise of 40 percent in overall spending since 2010, according to the federation.

Meijer has dozens of pet costumes. Among the most popular, Eddy says, are sports costumes and jerseys. He also points to the "Chiquita Banana Pet Costume."

"Turn your weiner dog into a banana dog for a day," Eddy says.

If playing dress-up isn't necessarily in your dog's wheelhouse, try the "Dog Rider's Cowboy Costume" that features a simple dog harness with a cowboy sitting on a saddle.

LOOKING FOR LOVE?

Your Halloween costume could help women decide if you're dating material.

In time for the ghoulish holiday, author and relationship expert April Masini - who runs AskApril.com - says the message you're sending to the ladies comes through with your costume.

Superman says you've got a traditional set of values, Masini says. Going as a pirate? You're giving off a bad boy vibe and probably seen as a bit of a player. Elvis expresses that you love attention, have an artistic streak and might be a little bit moody, she adds.

WANT TO GIVE A GOOD SCARE?

Before his haunted house opens up for the night, Bud Stross is among the makeup artists who gets the 60 to 70 characters ready to frighten the masses.

Stross, co-owner of the Dent Schoolhouse in Ohio (www.frightsite.com), has been haunting professionally for about a decade - though he says he has had a fascination with gory props since he was a kid.

His expert tips for making yourself look gory for a costume party?

Check to see what you have lying around the house. Give the ketchup trick a try for blood. To gross people out, mix peanut butter and chocolate and cake it around your mouth and on a white T-shirt.

Use some red latex paint and gauze to fake an injury.

To perfect a zombie look that is haunted house-quality, take a trip to a theatrical store and find some liquid latex. Use a sponge to dab it on your face - though Stross cautions that guys with facial hair shouldn't try this at home.


"This gives you a peeled-up skin look - it's a cheap and easy way to do the zombie look or to get an aged or road hard look," Stross says.

He also suggests using a new cleaning sponge and make-up to create Chucky-like freckles.

"You don't need to spend a lot of money to have an awesome costume," he says.

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