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Russia's Meme Courtyard

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BBC Three / YouTube

He doesn't always know how to wield them correctly, but Novosibirsk resident Anton Burminstrov is using Internet memes to motivate his community to take better care of a local courtyard.

"Four years ago, they started renovating the children's playground in my [apartment complex's] courtyard. At first, a city councilman helped out, and then with support from the local self-government council, I won a municipal grant in 2014. As a result, we installed not only various games, but also information stands that advocated simple truths, like don't litter, be kind, and stay sober," Burminstrov told the news site NGS Novosti.

Years later, he's updated the information stands, trying to bring a contemporary twist to the public outreach effort, replacing some of courtyard's signs with Internet memes and captions meant to encourage better public behavior.

Diving into the merciless world of online phenomena is a dangerous journey, however, and

Internet users immediately drew attention to Burminstrov's misuse of the popular "Roll Safe" meme, where a photo of a man grinning and pointing to his temple is supposed to carry a caption mocking someone's poor decisionmaking.

Embed:

> ⊠ tjournal: Двор с мемами в Новосибирске https://t.co/w9hM2kgUGY pic.twitter.com/X2mdItMXV4
>
> — Vlsu (@Vlsu) May 23, 2017

In Burminstrov's use of the Roll Safe meme (see above), the caption says unironically, "It will be a lot better in the courtyard, if you pick up your trash."

As the website TJournal points out, imageboard users on Pikabu pounced on the meme misuse, suggesting several correct, albeit bizarre, alternative captions for Burminstrov's sign:

"They won't litter in the apartments' courtyard, if the apartments' have no courtyard!"
"You won't need to pick up your trash outside, if there is no trash!"
"There won't be trash in the courtyard, if trash isn't left there."

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