

The World's Funniest JOKE!

Level: Intermediate +

Aims: a speaking activity with emphasis on oral fluency; students find out what makes each other laugh and then practise telling a joke in English

Language point: The use of present tenses when telling a joke in English; pausing and rhythm in pronunciation when telling a joke/anecdote

Warmer

Tell the students that you want them to remember something. To remember it well, they must be relaxed, so they should sit back and close their eyes. Ask them to visualise the following:

Think back to the last time you really laughed. Why were you laughing? What happened that made you laugh? Where were you? Who was there? Were you the only one laughing?

Repeat this once and ask them to get a fixed image of that time in their minds. When they are ready, they should turn to the person next to them and tell them about the last time they laughed.

Questionnaire

Now tell the class that they are going to do a speaking activity to find out when each other laugh. Divide the class into groups of three or four. Assign one person in each group the role of "researcher". Tell them that their job is to find out about laughter habits of the others in the group. Give them the first handout (What makes you laugh?). Let this part go on quite a bit if they need it, it is the main focus of the speaking activity.

When they have finished, ask the researchers to report back on what they had discovered.

World's Funniest Joke

Ask how many students laugh at jokes (it's the last question on the questionnaire). Tell them that British Association for the Advancement of Science conducted an investigation that lasted over a year to discover the world's funniest joke. Write the following words on the board:

Two hunters / in the woods/ one collapses / doesn't seem to be breathing/ eyes glazed/
other calls emergency/ gasps "My friend is dead! What can I do?"/ operator calm, soothing
replies: "Take it easy/ I help / make sure dead."/

silence, then a shot /
hunter says, "Ok, now what?"

Ask students to try to make out what the joke is in pairs (they should try to tell it to each other from the cues). Give them a couple of minutes for this, then announce that you are going to tell them the World's Funniest Joke. Read out the joke as dramatically as possible. When you are done, give them each a copy of the joke. Did they understand it? Ask them if they think it is funny.

Note: If you would like to use some other jokes that were contenders in the project, go to the website of the organisation that conducted the survey <http://www.laughlab.co.uk/home.html> . It has a section called Top Jokes in Different Countries as well as scientific information about laughter and the brain and various fun facts.

Tell a joke

Tell them now that they are going to practise telling the World's Funniest Joke in English. They can practise by reading it off the page first, but should try to memorise it. Have students practise in groups. Give some of the following tips:

- Pause dramatically at parts of the joke (e.g. after "his eyes are glazed", "what can I do?", "make sure he's dead" "there is a silence".
- Put the correct emphasis on the sentences: students should mark the stressed words in each sentence and practise getting the rhythm right.
- Make sure you deliver the punch line correctly! Pronunciation problems in the punch line can ruin even the World's Funniest Joke. So make sure that you can pronounce it all well.

When students have practised, ask them who they think was the best person in the class to tell the joke. As a follow-up you could get students to prepare/translate a joke they know in their own language and tell it in English.

Optional Grammar Point

You might want to draw your students' attention to the grammar used in the joke. Tell them that in English, we use the Present Simple when recounting a narrative (especially of the joke genre). The reason we do this is to bring the listener into the story more, to make them feel as if they are living it. When students prepare their own jokes, they should use Present simple.

What makes you laugh?

You are a researcher doing an investigation about laughter. Interview two or three people and be prepared to make a summary of what you find out.

Here are some questions to help you. Ask more questions to find out more. Be prepared to report back what you find out.

- ☺ How often do you laugh? **all the time/a lot/often/rarely/hardly ever**
- ☺ Do you laugh when you get embarrassed?
- ☺ Do you laugh when you don't know what to say?
- ☺ Do you laugh when you don't think it's funny but someone wants you to laugh?
- ☺ Do you laugh when you feel nervous?
- ☺ Do you laugh if someone is clumsy?
- ☺ Do you laugh when other people are laughing?
- ☺ Do you laugh when someone tickles you?
- ☺ Do you laugh when someone is being silly?
- ☺ Do you laugh when someone makes fun of a third person?
- ☺ Do you laugh a lot when you are tired?
- ☺ Do you laugh at jokes?



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There is a silence, then a shot is heard.

Back on the phone, the hunter says, "Ok, now what?"



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