

Humour

Pre-intermediate

1 Read and match

Look at the sentences below. Who is being described? Choose either a, b or c:

- He tells very funny *jokes*.
- He has a great *sense of humour*.
- He makes me *laugh*.
- He's absolutely *hilarious*.
- He's very *witty*.
- He's so *amusing*.

a. a politician b. a comedian c. a teacher

Now match the words in *italics* above with the definitions below:

- a. very funny
- b. very clever and funny with words
- c. funny and entertaining
- d. something you say that is funny
- e. to make a noise when something is funny
- f. the ability to know something is funny

2 Read and match

Which verb describes what you do in the situations that follow?

smile laugh giggle snigger grin

- a. Someone says something funny.
- b. Something unpleasant happens to someone you don't like.
- c. You have just passed an important exam.
- d. Someone shows you their new baby.
- e. You are fifteen years old and very silly – and your friend says something funny while the teacher is talking.
- f. Someone takes a photo of you.

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3 Fill the gaps

Which of the words in question 2 would you use to complete these expressions? You will need to change the form of the words:

- He had won. He was so happy he _____ *from ear to ear*.
- During the lesson, three girls at the back *got the* _____ and had to leave.
- I'm going to *wipe that* _____ *off your face*. The next time you speak in class, you will go and see the headmaster.
- Stop* _____ *at me!* I didn't mean to fall in the water. It's not fair.
- Look at the camera, and *give me a big* _____.

4 Read and match

Match the first line of the children's jokes with the second line (the punch line):

A

- What did the big telephone say to the little telephone?
- Why is Sunday so strong?
- Why was the doctor angry?
- What do people watch on TV at breakfast time?
- Why did the teacher wear sunglasses?

B

- He had no patients.
- You are too young to be engaged.
- Cereals.
- The other days are week days.
- His students were very bright

Note: The jokes above are funny (for children!) because one word in each joke has two meanings. These words are homonyms (one word with two meanings). For example, fine = good, as in a fine day, or something you must pay, as in a parking fine). Homophones are two words that look different and have different meanings, but sound the same, for example male and mail.

Which words in B are homonyms and which are homophones? Can you think of other examples of homonyms and homophones in English?

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5 Question time!

Look at the words and phrases and answer the questions:

- a) a racist joke a sick joke a practical joke

Which two should you not tell? Which one do you play on people?

- b) He pulled her leg. He teased her. He made fun of her.

Which one is unkind?

- c) Feel funny. Go funny. See the funny side.

In these phrases does funny mean strange or amusing?

- d) Make a joke. Get a joke. Crack a joke.

Which verbs mean tell a joke? Which verb means understand?

- e) a comedian a clown a satirist

Which one tells jokes? Which writes jokes against politicians? Which plays practical jokes?

6 Group discussion

What makes you laugh? Choose from the types of things that make us laugh below, then think of some examples from your own experience.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Good jokes | Practical jokes |
| Sitcoms on TV (For example?) | Some comedians (For example?) |
| Comedy films | Comics and cartoons |
| Political satire | Things that happen to people I know |
| Things people in my family say | |

Talk to your partner about what makes him or her laugh.

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Teacher's notes – Humour (Pre-intermediate)

- 1 **Lead in by asking the students *what makes you laugh?* You should be able to elicit jokes, comedy films/programs, cartoons, comics, etc.**
Put the students in pairs to read the sentences and decide who is being described.

Answer:

- b. a comedian

Ask the students to match the words in *italics* with the definitions.

Answers:

- a. very funny = hilarious
b. very clever and funny with words = witty
c. funny and entertaining = amusing
d. something you say that is funny = jokes
e. to make a noise when something is funny = laugh
f. the ability to know something is funny = sense of humour

- 2 **Put the students in pairs to match the verbs to the situations.**

Answers:

- a. Someone says something funny = laugh.
b. Something unpleasant happens to someone you don't like = snigger.
c. You have just passed an important exam = grin.
d. Someone shows you their new baby = smile.
e. You are fifteen years old and very silly – and your friend says something funny while the teacher is talking = giggle.
f. Someone takes a photo of you = smile.

- 3 **Ask the students to complete the expressions.**

Answers:

- a. He had won. He was so happy he ***grinned/was grinning*** from ear to ear.
b. During the lesson, three girls at the back ***got the giggles*** and had to leave.
c. I'm going to ***wipe that smile*** off your face. The next time you speak in class, you will go and see the headmaster.
d. ***Stop laughing*** at me! I didn't mean to fall in the water. It's not fair.
e. Look at the camera, and ***give me a big smile***.

- 4 **Put the students in pairs to match the first line of the children's jokes with the second line, (the punch line).**

Answers:

- A What did the big telephone say to the little telephone?
B You are too young to be engaged.
A Why is Sunday so strong?

- B The other days are weak days.
- A Why was the doctor angry?
- B He had no patients.
- A What do people watch on TV at breakfast time?
- B Cereals.
- A Why did the teacher wear sunglasses?
- B His students were very bright?

Read through the note with the students, and check that they understand homonyms and homophones. Then ask them to decide which words in B are homonyms and which are homophones.

Answers:

Homonyms: engaged, bright

Homophones: weak (week), patients (patience), cereals (serials)

Elicit other examples of English homonyms and homophones from the students.

5 Put the students in pairs to read the words and phrases and answer the questions.

Answers:

- a. You should not tell racist or sick (bad taste) jokes. You play a practical joke on people.
- b. *He made fun of her* is unkind. The other phrases mean the same, but are done in a friendly way.
- c. *Feel funny* and *go funny* both mean strange. *See the funny side* is amusing.
- d. *Make a joke* and *crack a joke* both mean tell a joke. *Get a joke* means do you understand?
- e. A comedian tells jokes, a clown plays practical jokes and a satirist writes jokes against politicians.

6 Give the students a few minutes to think about what makes them laugh, and to think of some examples. Put them in pairs or small groups to discuss.