

What makes you laugh?

1. In pairs, discuss how to complete the jokes.

- a) Helvetica and Times New Roman walk into a bar. "Get out of here!" shouts the bartender. "We don't serve your **type**."
- b) Parallel lines have so much in common. It is a shame they will never **meet**.
- c) "What did the ocean say to the beach?" "Nothing, it just **waved**."
- d) A: Knock knock.
B: Who's there?
A: **Weekend**.
B: **Weekend** who?
A: **Weekend** do anything we want!
- e) Why do we tell actors to "break a leg"? Because every play has a **cast**.



2. Discuss the questions.

- What do you think of the jokes in ex. 1? Did any of them make you laugh?
- Did you think the way you finished them was better than the original version?
- Why do people laugh?
- How does our culture and background affect the way we laugh and the things we laugh at?

3. Watch the first part (to 00:42) of a [video](https://youtu.be/Nu5j_rODT9o) [https://youtu.be/Nu5j_rODT9o] about laughter and write the reasons people laugh that are outlined in the video.

We laugh to show we agree with what someone said, to show that we remember the same thing the speaker is alluding to, to mask other emotions, to try and pretend we're not upset, to cover up being angry or embarrassed or in pain, or to get other people to do things.

4. Watch the rest of the [video](#) (00:42–05:21) and make notes on the following topics.

What makes you laugh?

- a) kinds of laughter: spontaneous laughter which you can't resist and laughter in conversations which is shared and usually happens at the end of sentences [00:42–01:22]
- b) behaviourally contagious phenomena: things you can catch from somebody else just because they are doing them [02:19–02:30]
- c) how apes and humans laugh: humans and apes laugh for similar reasons but unlike humans apes laugh on an exhalation and an inhalation [02:58–03:34]
- d) darker side of laughter: you can put your heart and lungs under more strain when you're laughing hard [03:42–04:08]
- e) benefits of laughter: you are more relaxed, you get a reduction in adrenalin and an increased uptake of endorphins which create the good feeling you get after exercising [04:15–04:48]


5. Discuss the questions.

- Did you find anything surprising or new in the video?
- If laughter is so beneficial, should we fake it for health reasons?
- Did you start laughing at the end of the video when looking at the girl who couldn't stop laughing?
- What makes you laugh?
- Have you ever:
 - laughed at inappropriate times? When did that happen?
 - been unable to stop laughing? What was so funny?
 - laughed to mask your emotions? What emotion did you try to cover up with laughter?

6. Listen to the different types of laughter and read an example situation to see the context each can be used in. Then, write one more situation using each synonym of the verb *laugh*.


[You can also find all the sounds from this activity at <https://eslbrains.com/laughs>]

What makes you laugh?

- a) cackle 


The great and evil mastermind **cackled** from the top of his castle thinking about his plan!

Even after many years have passed, I can still hear my bully cackling wildly as he followed me.

- b) giggle 


When a man resembling a young Brad Pitt entered the room, all the girls started **giggling**.

When I was a teenager, I used to giggle uncontrollably when someone was wiggling their finger.

- c) chuckle 

“Do you remember the time when I mistook Auntie Christie for your mother?” Steve **chuckled**.

Andy chuckled a few times while reading the letter from his beloved sister.

- d) snigger (BrE) /snicker (AmE) 

Kate felt deeply hurt when she noticed a group of colleagues **sniggering** at her during her speech.

The audience showed no empathy and sniggered when the actor forgot his lines.

- e) guffaw 

The play was so hilarious that you could hear the audience **guffawing** through almost the entire performance.

The students couldn't stop guffawing after they heard the teacher's witty remark.

What makes you laugh?

f) titter



For his age, James was really immature. He **tittered** whenever he heard the word kiss or date.

Stop tittering as if you are a teenager seeing a naked person for the first time!

g) chortle



I was hesitant about giving her that present, yet when she unwrapped the gift and began to **chortle**, I knew it was a good choice.

Ann chortled with glee when it was announced her project had taken first place.

7. Correct the mistakes in the definitions of the synonyms of the word *laugh*.

- Chuckle* means to laugh loudly, usually because you are thinking or reading something hilarious. **quietly not loudly**
- Giggle* means to laugh in a high voice, usually because you are embarrassed or angry. **nervous not angry**
- Snigger* or *snicker* means to laugh quietly in a kind manner, especially when someone is hurt. **an unkind not a kind manner**
- Cackle* means to laugh quietly in an unpleasant way. **loudly not quietly**
- Guffaw* means to laugh very loudly in a controlled way. **an uncontrolled not a controlled way**
- Titter* means to laugh quietly about something that might be comfortable for someone else. **uncomfortable/embarrassing not comfortable**
- Chortle* means to laugh because you are disappointed about something. **pleased not disappointed**

8. Choose the most suitable word in each sentence.

- Instead of helping the poor woman who dropped all her shopping on the pavement, a group of lads **sniggered/chortled/giggled** and called her names.
- The stand-up comedian's jokes were so hilarious that I was **sniggering/guffawing/giggling** for the whole show. I simply couldn't stop laughing.

What makes you laugh?

- c) The girl in front of me was **chuckling/cackling/sniggering** the whole journey. I guess the book she was reading was extremely funny.
- d) Listening to Harry **cackling/chuckling/giggling** was a nightmare, I just wished he would stop making those awful laughing sounds.
- e) When Ellen saw her date, she started **cackling/tittering/giggling** uncontrollably, I guess that was her way of covering her embarrassment.
- f) I **chortled/tittered/cackled** with delight when I saw the financial report of our company.
- g) The teenagers **chuckled/sniggered/tittered** when one of them started asking intimate questions.

9. Your teacher will give you some photos showing people laughing in different situations. Talk about the similarities and differences between the photos. Then, discuss some other aspects of laughing using the questions below the pictures.

[Students should work in pairs or groups of three.]

What makes you laugh?

SET A



- A day without laughter is a wasted day. Do you agree? Why/Why not?
- We should take children as an example, who laugh easily even at the smallest things. Do you agree? Why/Why not?

SET B



- The older we become, the less we laugh and smile. Do you agree? Why/Why not?
- Doctors should prescribe watching comedies as a remedy for some illnesses. Do you agree? Why/Why not?

SET C



- Comedians should earn a lot of money as they help people stay healthy. Do you agree? Why/Why not?
- Not everyone has to be funny and cheerful all the time. We should allow some people to be serious if they prefer that. Do you agree? Why/Why not?