

Laugh Until You Cry: Getting Emotional [B2]

Esiste una linea sottile che separa la risata dal pianto e la lingua inglese la percorre con una ricca varietà di sfumature lessicali.

There are just as many ways to describe happiness or sadness as there are to express these feelings physically. Individual ways of responding, the intensity of the emotion, and what exactly it is we are trying to communicate all come into play. We sometimes cry when we're happy or [moved](#), for example, or laugh when we're sad or angry. Writers often make use of this [nuance](#) to bring complexity to a particular character in a novel. So how can we navigate the complicated verbal landscape of laughter and tears? Here is some guidance.

AMUSEMENT

When we are only [slightly amused](#), we may begin with a smile. A smile can extend into a [grin](#) or a [smirk](#). A [grin](#) can be simply a broad smile, or there could be some unpleasant intention behind it, as in a [wicked grin](#) or an [evil grin](#). A [smirk](#) is often [foolish](#) or in some way affected — perhaps the person [smirking](#) knows some [salacious](#) gossip about someone close by. If you read something comical in a book or on your phone while on the train, you might [snigger](#). A [snigger](#) is not a loud laugh, but it is the kind that you can't always control or suppress. If your boss or [mother-in-law](#) does something comical and embarrassing, you'll probably find yourself [sniggering](#) involuntarily. If you read something really funny in a public place and the laughter comes out explosively, then you might [snort](#) with laughter ([snorting](#) is the sound a horse or a pig makes.)

GIGGLING

More sustained though still reasonably quiet laughter can be described as a [chortle](#), a [chuckle](#) or a [giggle](#). The last of these is probably the most common, and is often associated with children or young people. When children start laughing together at something [silly](#) and can't seem to stop, we say they 'get the [giggles](#)'. Giggling is usually inoffensive, but it is certainly the first step towards uncontrollable laughter. A [guffaw](#) could possibly be offensive. It is when someone throws their head back, opens their mouth wide and almost shouts with laughter. Imagine an irritating person at a party who laughs so loud he or she interrupts all the other conversations: that's [guffawing](#).

HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER

If your favourite stand-up comedian makes you laugh a lot, so that afterwards your muscles [ache](#) and you have laughter lines on your face, then you can say that you [howled with laughter](#) [roared with laughter](#) , [split your sides](#), nearly [wet yourself](#) or [cracked up](#) laughing. This style of laughter can be so strenuous that it can make your eyes water, which is where the expression ‘laugh until you cry’ comes from. As American writer Kurt Vonnegut said: “Laughing is good exercise. It’s like jogging on the inside.” If the laughter becomes uncontrollable, then you may be laughing hysterically, suggesting some kind of hysteria or madness [has overtaken](#) you. People sometimes say they were laughing hysterically when they simply mean they were laughing a lot.

SNIFFLING

If you are feeling [miserable](#) or hear some sad news, you may get [a lump in your throat](#). This refers to that constricted feeling you get in your throat when you feel like crying but can’t, or are trying not to. As the situation continues, you may begin to get [tearful](#): your eyes will be wet and shiny, but there won’t be any actual tears yet. As your lacrimal glands continue to work, you will begin [to sniff](#) through your nose, and when this becomes constant, perhaps with [the odd tear](#), then you can say that you are [sniffing](#). This is the very first stage of actual crying and is still almost silent. A little more, with the occasional vocal lament, and your [sniffing](#) will become [grizzling](#). Grizzling is the kind of [fretful](#) crying we associate with young children who perhaps have no real reason to cry except that they are tired or can’t have something they want. To [whimper](#) is very similar but can also be associated with pain.

WAILING

After this comes more sustained crying or [weeping](#) If it starts suddenly, you can say someone [burst into tears](#). If the [outburst](#) continues, we can say they are in [floods of tears](#), [are crying their eyes out](#), or are [crying their heart out](#). This kind of intense crying will certainly be accompanied by [sobbing](#) and possibly [bawling](#), [wailing](#) or even [howling](#), which are all strong vocal expressions of sadness or [grief](#). Grief is the deepest sadness, usually associated with the death of a loved one which leaves us heartbroken. After such a tragedy, people are said to [grieve](#). If this type of loud, emotional crying goes on for too long, it may become hysterical, and we may even find ourselves laughing again!

Glossary

- **guffaw** = risata fragorosa
- **has overtaken** = superare
- **grizzling** = piagnucolare
- **burst into tears** = esplodere in lacrime
- **amused** = divertito
- **wicked** = malvagio
- **salacious** = lascivo
- **whimper** = frignare
- **weeping** = piangere
- **floods of tears** = fiume di lacrime
- **bawling** = strillare
- **grieve** = essere in lutto
- **ache** = to ache
- **cracked up** = crepare
- **to sniff** = annusare
- **miserable** = triste
- **are crying their eyes out** = piangere a dirotto
- **slightly** = leggermente
- **grin** = sorriso
- **foolish** = sciocco
- **snigger** = ridere sotto i baffi
- **howled with laughter** = ululare dalle risate
- **oared with laughter** = scoppiare a ridere
- **split your sides** = spaccarsi i fianchi
- **a lump in your throat** = un groppo in gola
- **fretful** = ansioso, nervoso
- **crying their heart out** = piangere a crepacuore
- **sobbing** = singhiozzare
- **moved** = commossi
- **mother-in-law** = suocera
- **silly** = stupido, sciocco
- **tearful** = in lacrime
- **sniffing** = tirare su, tirare su con il naso
- **outburst** = scoppio
- **snort** = sbuffare
- **chortle** = risatina
- **giggle** = risatina nervosa
- **chuckle** = sogghigno
- **wet yourself** = farsi pipì addosso
- **the odd tear** = con lacrime occasionali

- **wailing** = gemere
- **howling** = urlare
- **nuance** = sfumatura
- **smirk** = sorrisetto
- **evil** = maligno, malizioso
- **grief** = pena