

# A Brief Guide to Humour: Just for Laughs [B2]

Sebbene sia difficile definire i confini dell'umorismo, non è impossibile stabilirne le tipologie. Ecco una rapida guida alle sue principali categorie, dal lancio di torte all'assurdo.

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While a good joke always depends on its content and [delivery](#), there are many ways that comedy can reach an audience: from clowning to [witty](#) wordplay to [gallows humour](#)... here is a guide to five kinds of humour. Slapstick is a form of physical comedy where the body is used to make people laugh. It can include practical jokes, clowning, mime, [stunts](#) or making [\('pulling'\) funny faces](#). When accompanied by dialogue, it is called ['farcical humour'](#). Farce incorporates absurd elements in a parody or [mockery](#) of real-life situations or people that appear in an [over-the-top](#), stylised form. The [pie](#) in the face is a [staple](#) of slapstick comedy, as is pulling a chair away as someone is about to sit down. Satire is the use of humour, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticise the vice or incompetence of powerful people. Satire is often situational, meaning that the humour comes from a situation that a set of characters are placed in and how they react to it. It can use insult or sarcasm, considered lower forms of humour. A higher form is comic irony; an example can be found in the 1964 film Dr. Strangelove, when the US President [breaks up](#) a fight by shouting, "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the war room!" Wordplay is the [witty](#) manipulation of the meanings and ambiguities of words. Acronyms, alliteration, anagrams, oxymorons, palindromes and sexual [innuendo](#) are all forms of wordplay! William Shakespeare is the most acclaimed English [punner](#) in history, but even the simplest examples can triumph: Lorna Rose Treen won The Funniest Joke of the Edinburgh Fringe 2023 award with: "I started dating a [zookeeper](#), but it [turned out](#) he was a cheetah." Deadpan or [dry](#) humour is humour that is delivered impassively or with a [straight face](#). Witty [exchanges](#) are often deadpan. Dark, black or [gallows humour](#) (where the topic is death) are often delivered in a deadpan style. Dark humour is not laughing at misfortune, evil or tragedy; it is using humour as a means to approach or process serious topics or situations. Because of the necessary skill and sensitivity required, it is often only appropriate among those directly affected. For an example of deadpan [delivery](#) check out Monty Python's "The Ministry of [Silly Walks](#)" sketch. Scatological or toilet humour can be a useful way [to bring the pompous down to earth](#). As the name would suggest, it deals with basic bodily functions such as defecation, [constipation](#) or flatulence, topics often found in traditional English song and rhyme. Satirical magazines such as Private Eye [delight](#) in toilet humour, which is used to [lampoon](#) public figures. Dirty

humour is humour about sex, once quite a taboo subject in Britain! This gave rise to many adult jokes that still find their audience among overgrown adolescents. An example of scatological humour [is breaking wind](#) in a [crowded lift](#).

## THE JOKE POLICE!

Today, some comics [complain](#) that cancel culture is killing comedy. They say that stand-up comedians have to “self-censor” because they are not allowed to say “[edgy](#)” things. At the Edinburgh Fringe, the show of veteran US comic Jerry Sadowitz was cancelled because its content was considered “extreme in its racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny.” Sadowitz is famous for his offensive sets, and the adverse publicity actually [secured](#) him a bigger [gig](#) in London! However, he was upset, calling cancel culture “a [diktat](#) that’s been imposed on us”. The debate about what is appropriate in comedy is not new. Another veteran comic, Ben Elton, creator of The Young Ones and Blackadder, has said that he doesn’t believe cancel culture is real. According to Elton, “There are language rules, there always have been. They change. It is the job of the comedian to circumnavigate that.”

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# Glossary

- **constipation** = costipazione, stitichezza
- **delight** = dilettere
- **lampoon** = ridicolizzare
- **delivery** = interpretazione
- **mockery** = parodia
- **staple** = principale, base
- **exchanges** = scambi
- **witty** = arguto
- **breaks up** = separare, interrompere
- **zookeeper** = guardiano dello zoo
- **turned out** = rivelare
- **gig** = spettacolo
- **diktat** = editto
- **pie** = torta
- **innuendo** = insinuazione
- **edgy** = irritabili, taglienti
- **secured** = assicurare
- **gallows humour** = umorismo macabro
- **complain** = lamentarsi
- **stunts** = acrobazie
- **(‘pulling’) funny faces** = fare smorfie
- **is breaking wind** = scoreggiare
- **dry** = secco
- **straight face** = con faccia seria
- **Silly Walks** = camminate strambe
- **crowded lift** = ascensore affollato
- **punner** = autore dei giochi di parole (puns)
- **to bring the pompous down to earth** = riportare i piedi per terra
- **farcical humour** = umore assurdo
- **over-the-top** = esagerata