

BBC
COMEDY
CLASSROOM
HAVING A WRITE LAUGH

Have
a write
laugh

**Teachers – get your whole class writing
comedy with this fantastic, easy-to-use guide!**

**Free teachers' literacy resources
for primary schools**

CLASS COMIC

*** CLEVER CAPTIONS ***

CLASS ACT

*** THE SKETCH ***

CLASS JOKER

*** WRITE LAUGHS ***

Give
everyone the
giggles

**Bring more fun and laughter to your lessons
with the BBC's Comedy Classroom**

Full of curriculum-linked lesson plans, activities
and worksheets to help teachers deliver
KS1 and KS2 (P1-P7) key literacy objectives

Contents

Welcome	2
Comedy and improving literacy	3
Teachers' notes	5
Activity structures	5
CBBC	6
An introduction to comedy writing	6
<i>Joke writing tips</i>	8
<i>Sketch writing tips</i>	9
<i>Caption writing tips</i>	10
Top tip on drafting and redrafting	10
The Comedy Toolbox	12
Comedy Glossary	13
<i>Activity sequence 1 - Joke writing</i>	14
<i>Activity sequence 2 - Writing a parody sketch</i>	17
<i>Activity sequence 3 - Captions</i>	20
Comedy clips	26

Welcome to BBC Comedy Classroom for primary schools

The BBC's Comedy Classroom provides a brilliant framework to explore comedy writing with children, as well as enjoying plenty of laughter at the same time. Started in the summer of 2016 as a national competition for secondary school students, the project then developed even further, bringing comedy writing to a primary school audience with its own joke-writing competition in 2017. Children from all over the UK sent us their jokes, some of which can be found in this pack.

Teachers who work with young people instinctively know when children are engaged. They also know that when they are writing with a purpose, they are far more likely to produce work with passion.

The National Literacy Trust has produced this resource pack with BBC Learning as a way to mobilise great writing within your school and to help your pupils develop their own skills in crafting jokes, sketches and comedy captions.

Focusing on comedy writing is also a perfect match for the core requirements for teaching English across the UK and helps deliver the key writing skills listed in this pack.

Designed specifically for pupils in KS1 & 2 (P1-P7), the lessons in this pack can either be used as stand-alone sessions or delivered in sequence to be explored as a wider unit of work. The activities also flow directly into the resources for secondary school students, which can be found on the Comedy Classroom website.

As well as a series of three 60-minute teaching sequences, including pupil-facing activities that can be launched directly onto the smartboard or printed for homework and extension, the pack also contains top tips from comedy industry producers, writers and performers to help pupils to write the funniest jokes, sketches and comedy captions.

The pack is designed to be picked up by anyone, regardless of classroom experience, and contains structured activities with differentiation built into each of the comedy-writing lesson plans. This will help you to deliver engaging lessons to pupils of all abilities.

What better way to kick-start a new topic than by helping pupils to 'Have a write laugh' in your classroom?

Go online for supporting material
and films on how to write for comedy
bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom



Sciennes Primary School,
Edinburgh



HA!
HA!

Improving literacy through comedy writing

Since the Comedy Classroom project began in 2016, the National Literacy Trust has been conducting research into the effectiveness of teaching comedy writing both in and out of the classroom. With just over a third of pupils reading a piece of comedy writing outside class – whether it be a play, script, novel or poem – at least once a month, we know this is a genre that forges a real connection with young people.

One of the most interesting findings from the research was that when it came to reading and writing for fun, it was boys who showed themselves to be more engaged when it came to using comedy texts. One in 10 girls and 1 in 6 boys told the National Literacy Trust that they already write comedy for fun. This shows us that this can be an important approach to use when engaging pupils in our lessons, especially those who are traditionally hard to reach.

As teachers, you know that as your pupils develop, their needs also change over time. As writing comedy focuses on sharing your writing with others, we have found that the self-confidence of those taking part in the Comedy Classroom often improves as they work through the lessons, hints and tips. Feedback from teachers who have been using the resources tells us that performing stand-up routines and writing sketches or even telling simple jokes can help boost the self-esteem of those taking part.

Comedy really can be the spark that inspires your pupils to find the fun in their approach to writing - this pack can help you deliver key outcomes and fill your classroom with laughter.



Welcome to BBC Comedy Classroom. Building on the success of our previous comedy writing competitions, these literacy resources have been refreshed and updated to ensure the learning materials remain valuable and useful to teachers at any time in the school year. Knowing the huge pressures on your time, we have produced this teaching resource pack to be used as flexibly as possible. The activities are linked to the UK's curricula and they can help teachers meet key literacy objectives in an engaging way in the classroom. This initiative is just one example of how BBC Learning delivers its commitment to education.

Sinéad Rocks

Director of Education, BBC



Our research shows that using comedy in the classroom is a powerful way to get pupils reading and writing, especially boys who are traditionally harder to engage. The Comedy Classroom teaching resources will help you introduce your pupils to the wonderful world of comedy writing and show them just how easy and fun it can be. We hope the Comedy Classroom activities will inspire your pupils to get writing both inside and outside the classroom and that you all have a thoroughly enjoyable time working through them together.

Jonathan Douglas

Director, National Literacy Trust

Having a write laugh



The wonderful thing about writing comedy is that the best jokes and stories come from truth and real life situations. Imagine! A project where the only revision is watching what happens around you. Comedy is the best way I can express myself, I hope it works for you too!

Susan Calman
Stand-up Comedian



The BBC Comedy Classroom resources and activities were engaging and fun as all pupils were given the opportunity to share their favourite comedies and jokes. The Comedy Toolbox gave pupils the terms to discuss what makes them laugh and inspired them to have a go at writing their own jokes. It was great to see everyone joining in and to hear a classroom filled with laughter.

Jayne Robson
English teacher



No matter how old you are, we all love to laugh and to tell jokes. Now it's your turn... join in with your friends and classmates to come up with some hilarious jokes...

Sir Lenny Henry
Comedian, writer
and Comic Relief co-founder



It's important not to go with the most obvious punchline, because if people can guess what you're about to say, then they won't find it as funny. Think about your first punchline, then park it for a minute, and try to think of something else that still works with the joke. Now compare them and see which is funnier.

David Walliams
Comedian and author



Teachers' notes – How to use this pack

The comedy writing activities in this pack give you and the children you work with a taster of how to approach comedy writing, but this is really only a guide. All the activities and resources are designed to inspire you and your class to have fun with writing and to motivate children of all abilities. For example, you may choose to focus on the starter activities in the Comedy Captions section for children who struggle with extended writing, or you may wish to devise a whole class or school event telling jokes or performing comedy sketches for those pupils who feel confident with their work. It really is designed to be flexible. Dip in and out of the Comedy Toolbox, put on your creative hat and encourage your pupils to start tickling those funny bones!

Activity structures

By using the resources in this pack, pupils will be able to address the following literacy outcomes from across the curriculum. These have been drawn from the Key Stage 1 & 2 curriculums in England, the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the Curriculum for Wales, and P1-7 in the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland.

- **Key objectives**
- **Literacy outcomes**
- **Starters and main activities**
- **Plenaries (summing up)**
- **Extension activities suggestions**



If you wish to use the pupil-facing slides alongside the activities, these can be downloaded from bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

Comedy Classroom in the actual classroom

Each activity sequence focuses on a scaffolded route into comedy writing and builds on the key reading, writing and speaking skills below. Forms and stimulus material are there as suggestions and can be adapted to suit needs and writing levels. The sequences are designed to be pupil-facing and are supported by the following:

Speaking	Reading	Writing
Take a role within group discussions	Comment on the differences between spoken and non-spoken text	Communicate meaning, adapting their style where necessary
Use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary	Demonstrate how language structure and presentation contribute to meaning	Organise their ideas in an easy to understand, coherent way
Verbally evaluate their own work and that of others	Be able to prepare comedy pieces to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action	Demonstrate an appropriate level of spelling, punctuation and grammar
Be able to participate in discussions & presentations	Demonstrate an ability to recognise different forms of comedy writing	Demonstrate they can draft and edit to improve their work as well as critique others' work
Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication	Be able to participate in discussions and presentations	Be able to plan, draft, edit and proofread
		Be able to use relevant strategies to build vocabulary, grammar and structure

CBBC

CBBC has a history of creating great comedy for children. From sketch shows like *Hacker Time* and *Horrible Histories*, to programmes such as *Class Dismissed*, *So Awkward* and *4 O'Clock Club*, right through to more entertainment-led comedy like *Sam and Mark's Big Friday Wind-Up* and *The Dog Ate My Homework*, we're always looking for new ways to make people laugh. By taking part in these activities, pupils will gain an insight into programme making and who knows, it may even inspire pupils to take their first steps into a comedy writing career!

An introduction to comedy writing

One of the most important ways we communicate is by making each other laugh. Telling someone a funny joke makes it brilliant for everyone: the person who hears the joke feels good, and the person who tells it does too. We share jokes amongst our school friends, at home with our family and as adults in the workplace.

Comedy writing is all about using words and language to make people laugh. If you tell a joke to your friends, only you and your friends get to hear it. If you write some jokes that are performed, published or even broadcast, then they're out there for the whole world to hear, and everyone has the opportunity to laugh along.

Comedy writers take a lot of care over their work. They try to choose the best words to put on the page. They use particular skills and techniques to make their jokes as funny as possible. By trying those skills and techniques for ourselves, we can increase our confidence with words and language, as well as coming up with comedy writing that everyone can enjoy.

There are many different kinds of comedy writing. In this Comedy Classroom pack we focus on just three of them, but you might find a whole new way to make people laugh!

- **Joke writing and telling** – the writer performs jokes to try and make people laugh
- **Parody sketch** – the writer takes an idea from something we already know and turns it into a funny scene that people can perform
- **Caption comedy** – the writer looks at a picture and creates a funny line or speech to go with it



What a highly engaging resource for raising attainment in literacy! BBC Comedy Classroom provides a comprehensive framework for developing reading, writing, listening and talking skills and was a tremendous support for our whole school Comedy Festival. The resources helped our teachers introduce pupils to different kinds of comedy and use literary devices in their own writing and speaking. We also hope to develop our pupils' confidence in performing to an audience of their peers and we believe gathering together to share some fun supports our Health and Wellbeing programme, too...

Lucy Gallagher
Deputy Headteacher



HA!
HA!
HA!

You gave us the giggles!

During our Comedy Classroom competitions, pupils from across the UK came up with their own jokes to make their audiences laugh. Here are just a few examples with some of their feedback from writer and co-founder of Comic Relief, Richard Curtis, Comedy Classroom 2017 judge.

Connie, age 9.

Why should you not fly an old plane? **It might spit fire!**
"Extremely solid - this joke about the Spitfire works on two different levels, which is very hard to do!"



Joshua, age 7.

Where did the apple pie go on its holiday? **The dessert.**
"I loved this entry because of the clever use of wordplay and spelling!"



Ella, age 7.

Do you know how easy it is to turn a takeaway into a pudding?
It's a pizza cake!
"Genius! A very intelligent use of wording in the set-up makes the punchline even funnier!"

HA!
HA!

Lucy, age 12.

What did the USA say to Canada when he needed to ask his mum something? **Alaska later!**
"This is an extremely smart joke. I had no idea what was going to happen till the punchline came...very clever use of misdirection and its funny thinking of the USA talking to Canada."



Finn, age 6.

What day is it when you walk into a lamp post?
Red Nose Day.
"Incredible...especially as it is about Red Nose Day!"



Rosie, age 8.

What's black and white and gets you into attractions for free?
A Blue Peter Badger!
"Astoundingly smart! A great job having a joke about Blue Peter. Very clever use of a pun!"



CLASS JOKER

*** WRITE LAUGHS ***

Whether you are a presenter on CBBC or a stand-up comedian working in a comedy club, telling jokes is an important way to communicate and get an audience on your side.

There's nothing better than having a good old laugh together, so have some fun, get your best jokes down on paper and share them with your classmates!

Top 5 joke writing and telling tips

- Try to use lots of different ideas from the Comedy Toolbox when you write or tell a joke - misdirection, similes and repetition are techniques comedians use all the time.
- Sometimes your funny joke might develop into a funny story which you could tell people. Who knows where it might lead?
- When you read out your jokes, try to be understandable. Try to remember to slow down, relax, look at your audience and say the words as clearly as you can.
- You can use your face to perform too - a funny expression can get a good laugh!
- Don't forget the golden rule of joke telling...be funny! Tell the jokes that you find funniest and that make you giggle. Have lots of fun!

HA!
HA!



How you say the joke is so important. Try saying it fast, and try saying it slowly. Pause before the punchline... Timing is everything! And if your audience is laughing, wait till the laughter dies down before you tell your next joke. They need to be able to hear everything.

Sara Pascoe
Comedian



CLASS ACT

*** THE SKETCH ***

From CBBC's *Fit!* to *Horrible Histories*, we all love laughing at sketches. For a sketch, what you need is one big funny idea that you can turn into a scene. Then pack it with big characters, plenty of action and of course, lots of jokes!

Now is your chance to write some brand new sketches about anything you wish. Think of weird scenarios, unusual characters, or silly everyday things that annoy you at home or school. Fire up the imagination and give your audience a new take on a situation that they have never seen before.

Top 5 sketch writing tips

- All the best sketches start with one great idea. That's the acorn which grows into a comedy tree. You may come up with 20 acorns before you settle on the one you want to plant so think it through.
- Sketches always have funny characters. What does your character do or say that is going to make people want to laugh? Silly things can also happen in serious places. Try to surprise your audience.
- Sketches don't just have to be about people talking. Action can help to make things more interesting and entertaining. That means using stage directions, as well as writing speech between people.
- When writing your sketch, try to look at the situation from a new angle. Santa Claus may be a lovely guy, but he breaks into your house while you sleep, wanders around your house and eats your biscuits. Every story has another viewpoint!
- There's no need to make a sketch too complicated. Most of the best sketches have just a few funny characters and a single situation. Keep it simple and finish with a big laugh.

Go online for supporting material and films on how to write for comedy
bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom



CLASS COMIC

*** CLEVER CAPTIONS ***

You might have seen comedy captions in magazines or on CBBC programmes. It's a great way to get a big laugh from an unexpected combination of words and pictures.

Our captions activities will help you look at images in a whole new way and help you to find the funny in what you see.

Top 5 caption writing tips

- The best comedy captions make us look at the pictures they describe in a whole new way. Does the picture remind us of anything else? Can we use that idea to come up with a funny caption? The obvious is not always that funny!
- Ask yourself lots of questions about the picture before you start writing. Answer all the 'Who? What? Why? When? Where? How?' questions before you start.
- One good way of coming up with a funny caption is to try and decide what the people in the picture are really thinking. Do they have secret thoughts they wouldn't want us to know about?
- A comedy caption might be a headline describing what's going on in the picture – in the form of people talking to each other in the picture, using speech bubbles.
- Great comedy captions tend to be short and get their laughs in as few words as possible. A single sentence can be really funny!

Go online for supporting material and films on how to write for comedy
bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom



TOP TIP ON DRAFTING AND REDRAFTING

As with any piece of work, first thoughts and ideas are not always the best. Go back to your work and get others to give you feedback on what works well and what needs improving. Even the most experienced comedians will try out new material on a test audience before they go out on tour, so you should do the same!



Using SPAG for comedy writing

There are a variety of ways that your pupils can use the rules they have learned for spelling, punctuation and grammar in their comedy writing. The trick is knowing when to use those rules and then when to subvert them. Here are a few hints and ideas to get you going.

Full stops

Perfect for punchlines, the full stop gives you a definite end to your sentence and is hopefully the cue for your audience to laugh.

Exclamation marks

Was your funny story a little bit shocking for your audience? It was! Use an exclamation mark to tell them.

Question marks

Do you want to ask your audience some rhetorical questions? If you do, you'll need to remember to add some question marks for them. Won't you?

Elipsis

Does your joke have a natural punchline or do you want to leave your audience hanging so they draw their own funny conclusions? You may wish to use an ellipsis to let them know that you're leaving them to think for themselves...

Noun phrases

A noun phrase will always get you a bigger laugh when telling your funny story. Was your character wearing a suit? Or was she wearing a bright yellow sequin-encrusted banana suit? Get those adjectives in to give your audience those comedy descriptions.

Commas & semicolons

Lists are always funny, especially when we are using repetition in our work. If we remember to space them out using commas or semicolons, then we can slowly build a laugh for our audience. We can make boring lists with endless dull descriptions to send them to sleep; dark, brooding sentences which go bump in the night to scare them; or bright, funny and exciting lists to make them laugh. It's up to you!

Speech marks & colons

Beware of the speech mark. They are definitely useful when writing stories but, when we are writing scripts, we replace them with a colon to show who is speaking next. Have a look at the example script in the pack to get the hang of how to use them in your own writing.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are great for surprises. If you want your audience to expect one thing and then get another, you'll need a conjunction to link your sentence together. They might be expecting a character to walk into a room, but they get a man wearing a walrus outfit juggling oranges instead!

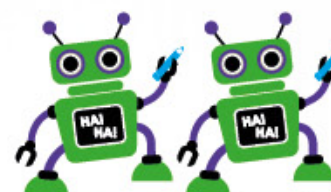
adjective

bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

for and
but

As any good comedian will tell you, there is more than one way to get a belly-aching, side-splitting laugh from your audience. In this Comedy Toolbox, we have brought together some of the different techniques that can be used to create a fantastic piece of comedy. Just like when you are building something, you'll need to use a range of comedy tools for different comedy jobs. All comedians use these tools – and they should come in handy when you are creating your very best comedy captions, sketches and jokes.

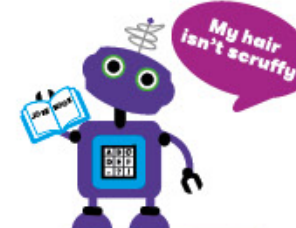
N.B. Teachers - We have coloured the comedy tools to match with the activity sequences we explore in this pack.



Repetition

This is when you use the same word or phrase over and over (and over) again to make what people say sound funnier.

"I like beans. Runner beans, broad beans, kidney beans, baked beans, big beans, small beans. I REALLY like beans."



Metaphor

This is when you highlight a characteristic of something by describing it as something it is not – and if you choose the right metaphor, you can get a very funny result.

"My hair isn't scruffy - I've purposefully styled it into a bird's nest. In fact I've got a family of sparrows moving in on Tuesday..."



Spooof

This is when you make up your own funny version of a TV show, film or situation that already exists.

"Welcome back to Moos Round - bringing you everything you ever wanted to know about cows."



Slapstick

This is when you use visual humour – falling over, dropping something, bumping into someone – rather than people speaking to get a laugh.

"The headteacher is walking down the corridor. She sees a banana skin on the floor, steps round it, and carries on walking. Then she slips on a huge patch of grease and falls backwards with her legs in the air."



Absurdity

This is when you get a laugh by doing or saying something completely unexpected – in fact, something completely random.

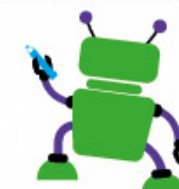
"Teacher: What is the capital of France? Student: Badgers?"



Misdirection

This is when you lead an audience to expect one thing, and surprise them with an unexpected ending.

"Right team, they're up two-nil, we're down to 10 players and they've had 80 percent of the possession. There's only one way we're going to get the better of this lot in the second half. Let's nick the ball and hide it in the bushes..."



Reversing

This is where you take a normal situation, and make it the opposite of what it usually is. Sometimes reversing is called inversion.

"If this parents' evening is to go well, we have to look utterly professional to parents – so I've brought us all skin-tight bumblebee costumes to wear."



Combinations

This is when you bring together two things that don't normally go side by side to make your jokes funny. Sometimes we call this juxtaposition.

"Being Queen is a wholly important job with lots of responsibility. Meeting world leaders, attending state banquets...remembering to put the bins out on a Tuesday. It's very hard work."

Comedy Glossary

As well as the Comedy Toolbox - here are some really useful words that you might find helpful for putting together your own pieces of comedy writing.

Caricature

This is a character who is an 'over the top' version of a real person. It's a little bit like doing an impression - but much sillier!

Deadpan

A type of joke telling with all the usual happy emotion taken out. Usually a deadpan comic will also keep their face without expression all the way through telling their jokes.

Dialogue

A scene or sketch which has at least two characters speaking to each other.

Escalation

The process of turning a small joke into a bigger and funnier story, usually with an over-the-top conclusion.

Farce

A fast-paced piece of set comedy that involves a lot of physical comedy, which usually contains people entering and exiting quickly and characters making silly mistakes.

Homophone

Words which are 'sound-alikes' but may be spelled differently and have different meanings.

One-liner

A joke which is a single sentence but packs the punchline in straightaway. "Hedgehogs - why can't they just share with everyone else?"

Pace

The speed at which a joke or sketch is shared. Controlling the pace means controlling when the audience laughs.

Pun

A homophone that 'sounds like' another to try and make a cheesy joke. "Making this omelette is really EGG-citing!"

Punchline

The end line or final joke in a funny story or sketch. Sometimes referred to as the 'big laugh'.

Satire

A type of comedy which pokes fun at life. Sometimes this means making fun of people who are usually in charge of things, like the government (or even school teachers!)

Simile

When we compare things to get a comic effect. "Your feet smell worse than a skunk's underpants!"

Stereotype

An instantly recognisable 'type' of person who isn't always a real version. A stereotyped doctor is posh and wears a white coat; a stereotyped school caretaker will be grumpy and jangle keys.

HA!
HA!

CLASS JOKER

*** WRITE LAUGHS ***



Teaching sequence 1 - joke writing (60 mins)

Key objective For children to write and tell simple jokes using homophones	Description Joke telling is a tradition that goes way back through the centuries. Even literary geniuses like Chaucer and Shakespeare threw in a few gags from time to time to bring light relief to their audiences. This set of activities aims to give pupils the opportunity to write and then deliver their own jokes to their partner and then a wider audience.
Literacy outcomes * Understand and subvert homophones for comic effect * Practise delivery of a prepared joke for an audience * Understand and use simple question and answer structures	Teacher notes on delivery Many of these jokes will be bad. Poor, poor jokes that make you and your class groan in a way that you never really thought was possible - but that is perfectly fine. Bizarrely, the 'quality' jokes that are created in this session might well be the ones that you consider 'the worst'. The shared experience of telling a joke that has a terrible punchline is one which children will not only enjoy but will also encourage their competitive side in trying to 'outdo' their working partners and peers in the room. This is the very basics of what comedians often refer to as 'riffing' and should only be encouraged.
Resources Clips: <i>The Dog Ate My Homework</i> - Bad Joke Corner * Match cards - Set-ups and punchlines * Pupil-facing slides * Prop microphone (optional)	Differentiation It is important to remember that not all children will have the same level of confidence approaching this task. Some will be confident telling their joke to a partner, some to the whole class and some to an even wider audience like a concert or assembly. Activity leaders should try to establish what a child is comfortable with and then see if they can go 'to the next level'.

STARTER (10 mins)

Homophones - what are they? How many can we name? (See/Sea, Which/Witch, Buy/By, Weather/Whether, To/Two/Too, One/Won, Break/Brake, Bear/Bare). With a partner, try to think of some sentences that use the wrong homophone, e.g. I went to the cupboard, but it was bear. Share your sentences with the rest of the group.

Question to group - why is it sometimes funny when we make a mistake in our language?

Getting engaged

Could joke telling be the way to help your pupils progress with their speaking skills? Learning short jokes could be a stepping-stone to developing much longer recited pieces or even give a student the self-confidence to stand up in front of the whole class for the first time. Try some joke telling in your classroom and watch their confidence grow.





ACTIVITY (35 mins)

Watch the clip from *The Dog Ate My Homework* that is available online at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom on the Primary page. Which jokes were funny? What makes them 'bad' jokes?

Why do we find bad jokes funny? Did any of the joke tellers use homophones?

Play the match up game and see if you can match the punchline with the set-up line. Once you have matched them up, read the jokes out to the class. Which one does the class think was the funniest and why?

Each joke uses a homophone in some way - can we spot where the homophones are? Are there any that are almost homophones but have been changed in some way to make the joke funny?

Have a go at writing your own jokes using homophones. If you have to change or make up words a little bit to make the joke work then don't worry, that's half the fun. Share your jokes with your partner and see which ones your partner likes the most.

PLENARY (15 mins)

Choose your best joke to share with the rest of the class - ensuring as much as possible that this part of the lesson uses volunteers who are confident enough to share their work publicly. Give each volunteer a round of applause as they come up to share their jokes.

Vote as a class on which joke you found the funniest and which one got the biggest groan of the day.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

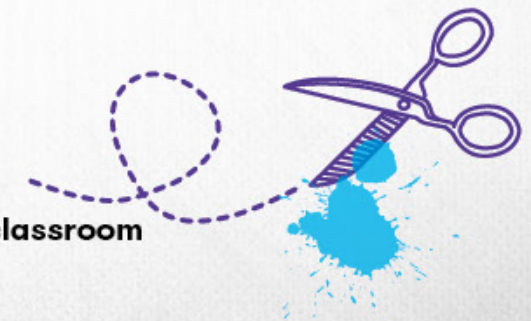
Can you craft your jokes into a whole routine? Is there a way of linking your jokes together? Maybe you could write a whole series of jokes that are just about cheese... or dancing... or cats. Anything goes. The world, as they say, is your oyster! (Or any other kind of seafood if that's the sort of thing you like...). You've come up with some crackers - let's use them to *'have a write laugh'*.



Match up the joke/punchline game

Print out or photocopy and cut up the following table and then try to match the set-ups with their punchlines.

Set-ups	Punchlines
How many tickles does it take to make an octopus laugh?	Tweetment!
What do you give a sick bird?	Tooth hurty
What do you call a man with a spade on his head?	The ghost of Christmas passed!
What's the best time to go to the dentist?	Ten tickles!
How did Ebenezer Scrooge win the football game?	Doug





Teaching sequence 2 - writing a parody sketch (60 mins)

Key objective To write a parody sketch of an advertisement	Description This session focuses on creating a spoof version of an advertisement. Pupils will be asked to recognise the conventions of TV advertising and to invert them in a way that will be hilarious for an audience.
Literacy outcomes * Recognise / use conventions of TV advertising * Write to persuade an audience	Leader notes on delivery This session is very much about turning the world on its head and making the everyday seem ridiculous. The more content you can encourage from pupils in the starter activity the better - stretch them to consider even the most minor tasks as being included as it will give them more content to play with when it comes to writing their parody advert. Be warned - this may possibly be the cheesiest session you have ever delivered!
Resources * Clips: <i>Diamond Dave Delaney's Darts Workout</i> DVD from <i>FIT!</i> * 'Conventions' fill in table sheet * Pupil-facing slides	Differentiation There are a range of tasks in this session, from guided work such as the fill in table about conventions to the more exploratory work when children are creating their own scripts. Pupils who are most able will recognise the conventions of advertising and may relate their work to previous knowledge to create a less formulaic advert, while the 'hard sell' style of the example should give a clear guide for pupils who are approaching this for the first time.

STARTER (10 mins)

- Think of an activity you can do that doesn't take too much physical effort, e.g. sleeping, reading, taking a bath, having a cup of tea. Try to write down all the things you still have to do when doing those activities even though they seem inactive e.g. find a bed, put on bed sheets, fluff up pillows, turn out the lights, lay down and count sheep... Try to list even the tiniest parts of the activity and see how far you can stretch it.
- Share some of your 'activity lists' with the rest of the class. They are what we call 'conventions' - things that you would expect to see happening when somebody takes part in an activity.

MAIN ACTIVITY (30 mins)

- Watch *Diamond Dave Delaney's Darts Workout* from the CBBC series *Fit*. The clip is available online at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom on the Primary page.
- Which was the funniest part? What are all the things that the advert says you need to do to be a great darts player?
- Look at the table which shows you all the information that an advert can contain when you watch it. These are some of the conventions of a TV advertisement. Watch the *Diamond Dave* video again, trying to fill in the boxes. Teachers' note: Check prior knowledge of rhetorical questions with younger children who may not have come across the term before.
- Dave Delaney managed to get an entire exercise workout from playing darts. Now write your own advert for an exercise DVD that uses the activity you listed earlier. Try to include as many of the different conventions of adverts as you can. If you want to, you can use the script from the original show as a guide to help you lay out your script.

PLENARY (10 mins)

- Share some of your adverts with the rest of the class, getting friends to read with you if you have more than one person speaking.
- Would we buy any of these exercise DVDs? What ways did the writers try to persuade us?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Try out some other parodies - you could make a parody of a news programme, a talent show or even a pop video. Try to include your own silly versions of all the conventions that they use to try to get some laughs for your audience. Act out your scenes with your friends.

Getting engaged

Could looking at comedy scripts be another method to enhance the reading skills of your pupils? Looking at speech is a great way to develop understanding of informal speaking and demonstrates to pupils how they could use their own speech in their writing. You could work in pairs or groups sharing some famous sketches or some comedy pieces you have all written yourself.

Conventions. What do we see in the Dave Delaney advert?

Rhetorical question at the start: "Do you want...?"	
Video of people using the product	
A happy customer telling you how good the product is	
Is there something you get free with the product?	
What else can you buy that is similar?	

Example script

The following script is taken from CBBC's *FIT!* This sketch is a parody of fitness DVDs. It makes a fictional one based on darts – a sport not usually associated with fitness.

Diamond Dave Delaney:

'New from 202020 Entertainment... Do you want calves like this,
[Camera reveals a man with untuned calves...]
biceps like this

[... a man with untuned biceps]
and abs like this?

[... and a man with a large belly]

Yes, you really can have the body of a darts player with Diamond Dave Delaney's Darts Workout.
[Scene now changes to a small room – the type of place you would normally see people doing intense exercise. Dave Delaney is instructing a class]
OK now, aim the darts and throw the darts.

[To camera]

[winks to camera]

[Scene cuts back to the exercise hall]

Walk to the board, collect those darts and walk back and have a nice sit down.
[To camera]

'It's the only exercise DVD that really works.' Just ask some of my satisfied clientele.

'Tony' from Beckenham:

Darts Workout really gets results. In just 12 weeks it turned me from this
[Shows 'before' picture of Tony]
to this.

[Shows 'after' picture of Tony. There is no difference between the two pictures]

Diamond Dave Delaney:

[Cut back to the exercise hall]

Let's try some combinations. And throw, and throw, and throw, and walk.
[To camera]

Order today, and each copy comes with your very own Dave Delaney's Darts Workout T-shirt, XXL size only. And a free exercise pie, containing all the pie vitamins and gravy energy you need to play a game of darts.

Plus, order right this very second and we'll throw in our follow-up DVD, Snookercise; the snooker-based fitness regime that works almost all of the muscles in one of your arms.

Buy Dave Delaney's Darts Workout DVD today. No pain, plenty of gain. And darts yourself to the body you've always dreamed of.
[Cut back to the exercise hall]

Right, I think that's enough of that. We done at least five minutes, let's call it a day. I'll see you all next month.

[Everyone looks exhausted. Dave Delaney takes a seat to catch his breath as the others leave the exercise class]

Opening sequence

This looks and sounds like a regular advert for an exercise DVD, but what they are selling isn't what you would expect if you really wanted to get fit!

Spoof

Misdirection

Walk to the board sequence

You would expect Dave Delaney to give instructions that were really active in an exercise DVD – but after walking for a bit he tells them all to sit down!

Extra free products

Fitness DVDs usually tell you about how you can lose weight – this one gives you extra-large T-shirts and pies!

Reversing

Combinations

Snookercise

The writers are trying to sell you an exercise DVD for a sport which they tell you only uses one arm!



CLASS COMIC

*** CLEVER CAPTIONS ***

Teaching sequence 3 - captions

Key objective To understand how to create short, effective comedy captions	Description This session requires children to engage with a series of images that will help them to develop the skills they need to write comedy captions.
Literacy outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Understand how juxtaposition and absurdity can create humour for a reader * Be able to use speculative questioning with a partner * Understand how to produce simple speech writing 	Teacher notes on delivery <p>This lesson concentrates on creating short, punchy writing which is designed to quickly engage a reader. Ideally the pace of the lesson should reflect this, so that children do not 'over-think' their responses when answering the questions.</p> <p>The session contains a number of verbal question and answer tasks, led by both the teachers and children, so you may wish to consider appropriate pairings if you know this may cause issue with less confident members of your group.</p>
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Starter pictures and descriptions * Comedy Toolbox sheet * Captions worksheets * Pupil-facing slides 	Differentiation <p>As stated above, this session contains a large number of short tasks due to the nature of the intended product being a single sentence.</p> <p>This leaves teachers free to amend the time spent on each task accordingly as they see fit. Lower ability pupils may spend more time enjoying the initial activity of muddling up definitions and only focus on creating a caption for a single image in the main body of the lesson. Children who are more confident with the task will be able to develop a greater number of 'story' examples for the pictures and gain greater experience of editing their work down to a single caption.</p>

STARTER (10 mins)

- Look at the five pictures of everyday images and their descriptions (saxophone, elephant, toilet brush, bobble hat, banana). Discuss whether any of them are inherently funny.
- In your writing pairs, rearrange the definitions of the pictures to see which combinations you find the funniest, e.g. an elephant...something you put on your head to keep yourself warm. Write down your three best findings.
- Report back. Discuss why different combinations and absurdity can make what is usually an ordinary statement funny for an audience.

MAIN ACTIVITY (35 mins)

- Look at picture A. Explain to the group that this is a photograph of a CBBC television show but that it is not important if they don't know anything about the characters in the picture.



- Answer the questions twice. The first time, try to be as accurate as possible. The second time, try to come up with the strangest answers you can that could be true but are clearly silly. For example, they are ancient milkshake makers, they are dressed in their company uniform, they are setting up a market stall to sell their shakes, it is Tuesday lunchtime, they are in their local theatre, or they got here in a time machine made of spoons.
- Look again at Picture A on the captions worksheet. Try to forget any information that you may know about the people if you recognise them from the television. Pretend this is just an ordinary scene with ordinary people. Next to the pictures we have two sentences, one that is actually happening, with the other being what could be happening instead from our example. Is there another version of what could be happening that we could come up with?
- Working with a partner, write down suggestions for what is and what could be happening for pictures B and C.
- Share these with the rest of the class. Try to find which one is the most absurd version of what is happening.
- Now look at the speech bubbles picture worksheet. Now that you've come up with an absurd version of what is happening in the other pictures, try to decide what the people could be saying to each other. Fill in the speech bubbles for each character.

PLENARY (15 mins)

- Using sticky tac, create a gallery around the edge of the room of all the speech bubble pictures in the class. Have a look around the room at each one and pick your favourites.
- Vote for two pupils' choices and one teacher's choice as good examples.
- What was it that people enjoyed about these captions? Do they have anything in common in the way they are working?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Try looking through some magazines and newspapers and finding pictures that catch your eye. Are some pictures naturally sillier than others? Does it make it harder or easier to make a caption for a picture if you already know who the characters in the picture are?

Getting engaged

Could this be the stepping-stone to develop writing for fun in your class? Now your pupils have begun coming up with wild and wacky stories about the pictures they have been looking at, could they develop this into a longer piece of writing? We know that many pupils are already writing for fun outside the classroom. Could you work this style into future lessons?



Worksheet What's the story?

What is actually happening in these photos?
What could be happening instead?

Actually happening

Two girls are experimenting using different coloured liquids in an ancient castle.

Could be happening

Milkshake makers of the future rehearse the song and dance routine for their latest advert.



CBBC's *The Worst Witch*

Actually happening

.....
.....
.....

Could be happening

.....
.....
.....



CBBC's *The Dumping Ground*

Actually happening

.....
.....
.....

Could be happening

.....
.....
.....



CBBC's *Wolfblood*



Worksheet - speech bubbles

Can you put the words in these characters' mouths?



bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

Next steps...

Could you make a display of silly captions or speech bubbles for your class? Perhaps you could have a whole gallery along the corridors of your school? Are there any pictures of your teachers doing exciting activities that would make good pictures for captions? You could have your own caption competition in school!





Take it further

Now that you've written some excellent pieces of comedy, what's next? Where do we go from here? Well, the fun doesn't have to stop. You could take your work further and 'have a write laugh' all over the school.

- Could your pupils use their Comedy Classroom work as part of a wider arts programme or award? You might choose to use this as evidence for another qualification they are working on or as a contribution to an arts festival. You could find their work being performed on a professional stage. Have a think about the opportunities outside the classroom which comedy writing might help your pupils discover.
- Create a classroom display of your comedy captions, jokes or sketches. Try to find some pictures in magazines and newspapers and give them a comedy twist too. Fill your walls with fun!
- Perform an assembly, run a lunchtime joke-a-thon or a comedy event showing off some of your best sketches and joke telling. You could even create a whole show filled with hilarious sketches and scenes to share with friends and parents. This is a great way to bring everyone together and get the whole school involved.
- Think cross-curricular. Is there a way that other subjects could use comedy to develop their learning? What about writing some historical sketches, or performing some stand-up about science experiments that went wrong? Perhaps you could use a numeracy lesson to do the accounts for a new lunchtime school comedy club? Who knows what you could achieve!
- For any questions regarding these resources or for more information, you can contact schools@literacytrust.org.uk



The Comedy Classroom resources gave us a fantastic starting point and really engaged and challenged the pupils. Pupils were encouraged to focus on their writing and how to use language to great effect. The unit has even inspired us to create a whole Scheme of Work on comedy in literature!

Louise O'Connell
English teacher

bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

Comedy clips

Alongside the clips used in the accompanying lesson plans, there are a host of clips in the CBBC archive to help your pupils understand the mechanics of both joke writing and sketch comedy. Visit bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom and click on the Primary page.

Spoof / parody

Brian Butterfield fitness DVD

FIT! CBBC, Citrus Television Limited

Writing team includes David Armand, Toby Davies and Madeleine Brettingham

Combinations / repetition

Funny French lessons

Class Dismissed, CBBC, CBBC Production

Written by Madeleine Brettingham, Isabel Fay, Daniel Maier, Emma Nisbet and Andy Potter

Escalation / absurdity

Blondie plays trombone

The Johnny & Inel Show, CBBC

Princess Productions Limited

Writing team includes Johnny Cochrane, Inel Tomlinson and Rebecca Papworth

Combinations

Cardigan present

The 4 O'Clock Club, CBBC, CBBC Production,

Written by Paul Rose

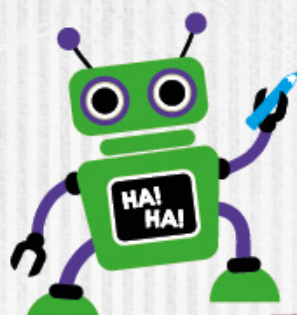
Homophones / puns

Barnet Hairwood interview

Blue Peter, CBBC, CBBC Production

Due to copyright restrictions, some of the archive clips referred to in this resource may not be available to view indefinitely on the Comedy Classroom website.





**Great comedy writing
starts in the classroom**

BBC
COMEDY
CLASSROOM
HAVING A WRITE LAUGH

BBC Learning



bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

©BBC 2017

This teaching pack and resource has been produced by the BBC in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. All rights reserved. The BBC word mark and logo are trademark of the BBC. Reproduction without permission is forbidden. Contents of the book may be reproduced non-commercially within the UK at no cost by teachers when they are using the materials for the purposes of delivering the Comedy Classroom learning and that such learning is made freely available to pupils. For the avoidance of doubt, such permitted teacher reproduction does not extend to reproduction of the BBC word mark and/or logo.