

A sense of humour

Upper-intermediate

1 Collocations

All these verbs, except one in each list, collocate with *a joke*. You can say *tell a joke* but can you say *take a joke*? Which is the odd verb out in each list?

- | | | | | |
|---------|------|------|-------|------|
| 1. tell | go | make | crack | have |
| 2. get | take | play | share | put |

Now complete the sentences below with a verb (or verbs) from the lists above. More than one answer is possible in some.

1. The comedian _____ a really funny joke.
2. Why are you laughing? Come on, you two, _____ the joke.
3. The boys are always _____ practical jokes on their sister. They're really horrible.
4. I'm afraid I didn't _____ the joke. Can you tell it to me again?
5. Paul can't _____ a joke. If you laugh at him he gets very angry.
6. Working in my office is great. We get on really well. We _____ a laugh and a joke all the time.

2 Match the sentences

Match the sentences in A with the sentences in B. the sentences in B should follow on from the sentences in A. The sentences in B all contain idioms with *joke*.

A

1. Stop being silly now. Let's do some work.
2. She looks really funny in that dress in her new video.
3. Sally has put salt in my tea again! I'm really angry.
4. At work, nobody takes Tim seriously. They laugh at him all the time.
5. Ha! Ha! You laughed when I said I could run the marathon and bet me £200 that I couldn't do it. But I won!
6. I just told my boss that he could keep his stupid job!

B

- a) You must be joking!
- b) The joke's on you now.
- c) It's got beyond a joke.
- d) He's a bit of a joke really.
- e) Joking aside, though, she is an excellent singer.
- f) I suppose that's her idea of a joke.

3 Prepositions

The phrases below all mean *to make jokes about someone or something in a friendly or unkind way*. First, fill the gaps with the correct prepositions or no preposition. Then decide which of these phrases can be friendly, and which are most unkind?

- a. to make fun _____ someone
- b. to pull _____ someone's leg
- c. to take the mickey _____ someone
- d. to poke fun _____ someone
- e. to tease _____ someone
- f. to laugh _____ someone

Which is the best phrase to use in the situations below?

- 1. The guys at work are really funny. Because I'm really tall, they say things like 'What's the weather like up there?' I make jokes about them too. We have a good laugh.
- 2. My brother is really mean. He saw me holding hands with Martin Pratt, so now, whenever he sees me, he makes kissing noises.
- 3. On my first day at school some older children called me horrible names and made me cry. All the other kids at school just laughed.

4 Match the words

Match the 'funny' people below to the lists of words and phrases connected to them.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| a.
clown | b. stand-up comedian | c. cartoonist | d. satirist |
| 1. a practical joke | slapstick | a red nose | a circus |
| 2. a punchline | tell a gag | timing | audience |
| 3. sarcasm | biting | criticism | political |
| 4. humorous drawing | caption | strip | speech bubble |

5 Reading

★ 'A shaggy dog story' is a joke that is long, repetitive, and ends with a punchline which is often not funny! It's funny, when told by somebody good at telling jokes, because it takes so long, and everybody wants to know what the punchline is!

Read the shaggy dog story below. Do you get the joke?

What a Dog!

There's this dog, and it walks into a butcher's shop, walks up to the counter, and drops a note from its mouth. The butcher picks up the note, and it reads, 'Can I have 12 sausages, please. The dog has money in his mouth.' The butcher looks inside and finds a ten pound note between the dog's teeth. So he takes the money, and puts the sausages in a bag, placing it in the dog's mouth. The butcher is really impressed, and since it's close to closing time, he decides to shut up shop and follow the dog. So off he goes. The dog walks down the street, comes to a bus stop, and starts looking at the timetable. The butcher can't believe it. Anyway, a bus comes, and the dog climbs on. The butcher, by now open-mouthed, follows him onto the bus. The bus travels through the town and out into the suburbs. Eventually the dog stands on 2 back paws and pushes the button to stop the bus. Then it gets off, walks up to a house, and drops the groceries on the step. Then it walks back down the path, takes a big run, and throws itself - Wham! - against the door. There's no answer at the house, so the dog goes to the window, and beats its head against it several times, walks back, and waits at the door. The butcher watches as a big guy opens the door, and starts hitting the dog. Swearing at it. The butcher runs up, and stops the guy. 'What are you doing? The dog is so clever. He could be on TV.' 'He's not clever at all,' says the big guy. 'This is the second time this week that he's forgotten his key.'

Look at this list of features that are typical of a shaggy dog story.

Which one is not true?

1. The use of the narrative present to make the story immediate.
2. Short sentences.
3. The use of narrative phrases like *'There's this guy and he...'*
4. The use of conditional forms.
5. Simple linking words like *so, then, anyway*.
6. The use of direct speech.

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