

The Comedy Toolbox

As any good comedian will tell you, there is more than one way to get a belly-aching, side-splitting laugh from your audience. We have brought together some of the many 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 variety of comedy tools for different comedy jobs. All comedians use these tools – and they should come in handy when you are writing for all the categories in our competition. We have coloured them to match the learning sequences we explore in this pack.

HA!
HA!



Repetition

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

"I like beans. Runner beans, broad beans, kidney beans, baked beans, big beans, small beans, even washed-up old has-beens. I like beans."



Metaphor

This is when you describe something as being like something else – and if you choose the right metaphor, you can get a very funny result.

"It's an hour of torture in the most brutal prison known to man. Or as I like to call it, double physics."



Juxtaposition

This is when you combine two things that don't normally go together and the unexpectedness of the combination makes it funny.

"My name is James Bond 007, licence to kill. I used to work for MI5, but now I run my own shoe shop."



Misdirection

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

"I used to throw up every day on the school bus. That's when I realised I wasn't cut out to be a driver."



Sarcasm

This is when you say something that isn't true, and everyone listening knows that you don't think it's true.

"Oh joy! Oh fun! Another Maths test! Hooray Hoorah!"



Inversion

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

"If this business deal is to go well, we have to look utterly professional – so I've brought us all skin tight bumblebee costumes to wear to the interview."



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?"



Put downs

Being cheeky can sometimes be funny, as long as we don't make the jokes too personal. Put downs are often used in dialogue when one person thinks they are more important than the other.

"Right now, you're about as much use to me as a snowman in a heatwave!"



Slapstick

This is when you use physical humour – falling over, dropping something, bumping into someone – rather than dialogue 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."



Spoof

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

"Welcome back to the eggs factor! Where we find out if chickens really can sing!"