

# **What's So Funny? The Science of Why We Laugh**

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“How Many Psychologists Does It Take ... to Explain a Joke?”

Many, it turns out. As psychologist Christian Jarrett noted in a 2013 article featuring that riddle as its title, scientists still struggle to explain exactly what makes people laugh. Indeed, the concept of humor is itself elusive. Although everyone understands intuitively what humor is, and dictionaries may define it simply as “the quality of being amusing,” it is difficult to define in a way that encompasses all its aspects. It may evoke the merest smile or explosive laughter; it can be conveyed by words, images or actions and through photos, films, skits or plays; and it can take a wide range of forms, from innocent jokes to biting sarcasm and from physical gags and slapstick to a cerebral double entendre.

Even so, progress has been made. And some of the research has come out of the lab to investigate humor in its natural habitat: everyday life.