

<b>Name (in Romaji):</b>	→
<b>Student Number:</b>	→
<b>Class Day + Period:</b>	→

## SLAPSTICK COMEDY

We have seen a bit of slapstick comedy previously. Let's examine a bit more, but first, let's look at the meaning and history of this particular form of comedy.



Slapstick comedy is a deliberately exaggerated form of performance that portrays a cartoonish reality. Characters often experience physical mishaps, make exaggerated facial expressions, and perform dramatic gestures. The humor is primarily visual, allowing audiences to understand the gag through observation alone. The term “slapstick” originates from the 16th-century Italian theatrical form “commedia dell’arte,” where performers used a device called the “batacchio” or “slapstick.” This instrument produced a loud “thwack” sound when used, enhancing comedic effect without causing harm. This form influenced many theatrical movements, including the works of William Shakespeare.

With the advent of cinema in the early 20th century, slapstick transitioned from stage to screen. Performers like Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel, and Oliver Hardy brought physical comedy to silent films. Even as sound became prevalent, slapstick remained popular through acts like the Marx Brothers and The Three Stooges. Animated characters such as Mickey Mouse and Tom and Jerry adopted slapstick elements, using exaggerated physical antics to entertain audiences. These cartoons often featured characters enduring humorous injuries, further cementing slapstick's place in popular culture.

In contemporary television and cinema, slapstick has been integrated into various genres. Actors like Jackie Chan have combined martial arts with physical comedy. Jim Carrey and



Rowan Atkinson have used their remarkably malleable faces to portray memorable characters like Ace Ventura and Mr. Bean, respectively.

Effective slapstick performance requires precise timing, physical agility, and an understanding of comedic rhythm. Actors must commit fully to the physicality of the role, ensuring that their exaggerated actions appear both believable and humorous. Aspiring slapstick performers can benefit from studying physical comedy, mime, and clowning. Workshops and classes focusing on body movement, improvisation, and stage combat can enhance an actor's ability to execute slapstick routines safely and effectively.

Slapstick comedy has influenced various entertainment forms, from theater and film to television and animation. Its universal appeal lies in its visual nature, allowing it to transcend language barriers and resonate with diverse audiences. Although pure slapstick may be less prevalent today, its elements continue to enrich modern storytelling. Whether through action sequences, comedic mishaps, or animated antics, slapstick remains a vital component of comedic expression.

### Information adapted from this source:

Lawrence, G. (2024). What is slapstick comedy? History, examples, and advice. Retrieved May 19, 2025, from <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/slapstick-comedy-definition-examples-76449/>



Let's look at some video clips of slapstick comedy. We will watch these comedians:

Silent Film Era

Charlie Chaplin

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPcEFHA3X0c&ab\\_channel=CharlieChaplin](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPcEFHA3X0c&ab_channel=CharlieChaplin)

1930s to 1950s

The Marx Brothers

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKTT-sy0aLg&ab\\_channel=Movieclips](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKTT-sy0aLg&ab_channel=Movieclips)





## Slapstick Skit: “The Cake Catastrophe”

### Characters:

- **Alex** – The proud baker
- **Jamie** – The clumsy assistant
- **Casey** – The hungry guest

**Length:** About 1 minute

**Setting:** A kitchen (can be mimed). There is a table with a big (imaginary) cake.

### Script and Stage Directions:

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[0:00 – 0:15]

**Alex (Baker)** *(enters, sets down an imaginary cake on a table):*

“Finally! The perfect cake for the party!”

**Jamie (Assistant)** *(nods, wipes the table, then bumps it by accident. The cake wobbles):*

“Oops! Sorry!” *(tries to steady it)*

**Alex** *(gasps, waving arms dramatically):*

“Be careful! That cake is my masterpiece! It took me hours to prepare it!”

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[0:15 – 0:35]

**Casey (Guest)** *(walks in, rubbing stomach):*

“Wow! Is that cake for me? It looks delicious!” *(reaches for it)*

**Alex** *(blocks Casey with arms):*

“No! Not yet!”

**Jamie** *(drops towel, bends down, bumps into Casey, who bumps into Alex. All stumble)*

**All Three:** *CRASH! (Pretend the cake falls on the ground)*

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[0:35 – 0:50]

**All** *(look down at the invisible mess in shock)*

**Alex** *(dramatically):*

“My cake! My beautiful cake!”

**Jamie** *(points at Casey):*



“He did it!”

**Casey** (*bends down to scoop up some cake, then pretends to eat it*):

“Mmm... It is still good!”

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**[0:50 – 1:00]**

**Alex** (*grabs pretend handful of cake, smears it on Jamie’s face*)

**Jamie** (*gasps, then smears some on Casey*)

**Casey** (*laughs, throws invisible cake in the air*)

**All Three** (*laughing and holding hands up in triumph*):

“The end!”

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**Performance Tips:**

- Use big facial expressions and body movements.
- Mime the cake and objects clearly.
- Exaggerate your reactions for comic effect.
- Stay safe! No real falling or pushing.



## Slapstick Comedy Skit Grading Rubric (Video Presentation)

Total: 35 points, with the possibility of bonus points for (a) original, non-GenAI-created scripts and (b) positive audience reaction

Criteria	Excellent (5 pts.)	Good (4 pts.)	Satisfactory (3 pts.)	Needs Improvement (1–2 pts.)
Creativity & Humor	Skit is quite original or adapted in a clever way. Very funny and engaging.	Skit is well-developed/funny. Good use of humor/creativity.	Funny/interesting moments, but humor is basic/predictable.	Not very engaging or funny. Weak or unclear humor.
Use of English	Clear, appropriate English with no major errors. Natural expressions.	Mostly clear English. Minor mistakes, but understandable.	Understandable English but with noticeable errors.	Frequent errors make it hard to understand.
Pronunciation & Clarity	Speech is clear and expressive. Easy to understand.	Mostly clear with some minor pronunciation issues.	Some difficulty understanding due to pronunciation or volume.	Often unclear or hard to follow.
Teamwork & Participation	All members are fully involved. Excellent collaboration.	Most members are active and contribute.	Uneven participation. Some contribute more than others.	One or more members are minimally involved.
Performance & Effort	Energetic acting, great timing, and strong physical comedy.	Good acting and effort with effective slapstick moments.	Some effort shown but needs more energy or polish.	Flat performance with little effort or timing issues.
Preparation & Script Use	Clearly well-practiced. No scripts read during performance.	Mostly practiced. Only occasional glances at script.	Some practice evident. Frequent script reading.	Little practice. Heavy reliance on reading scripts.
Video Presentation	Well-prepared and edited. Easy to watch and follow.	Mostly clear with minor technical issues.	Some technical or presentation problems.	Poor video quality or difficult to follow.

★ Bonus 1 (maximum 10 points):

→ Skit script was created **without using ChatGPT or other GenAI tools, and it was not copied from other sources.** This must be declared by the group at the beginning of the skit (in the video in the explanation/exposition). This bonus is only awarded based on clear evidence of original effort, creativity, and student-generated writing.

★ Bonus 2 (maximum 5 points):

→ The audience visibly laughs or is clearly entertained with the humor displayed in the skit.

