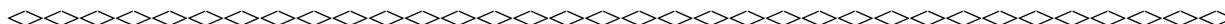


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JOKE TYPES: FROM THE SAFE TO THE SLIGHTLY ADULT AND TABOO

Jokes in English can often be classified into joke types. Some joke types are rather harmless, while others can be considered rude, insensitive, or demeaning. While it is not the goal of this course to teach students how to use jokes to be rude against others or against specific groups of people, anyone studying English language humor should be made aware of joke types. Even though some joke types are rude, they are surprisingly common. They make their appearance in many places (e.g., movies and TV shows), even if they are only hinted at.

This handout cannot possibly cover all joke types. It will begin by explaining relatively safe joke types and move toward more adult/taboo joke types.



WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD JOKES

This joke type is a classic form of anti-humor. The original joke went like this:

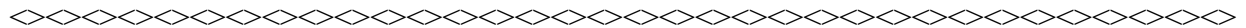
[01] Why did the chicken cross the road? **To get to the other side.**

This old joke (it dates from 1847) is funny in and of itself because it subverts expectations, as the punchline is a literal mundane answer. Over time, the joke has evolved, with variations introducing absurd or clever twists that play on the format, thereby creating the “chicken crossing the road” type of joke.

[02] Why did the chicken cross the road? **Because the light turned green.**



- [03] Why did the chicken cross the road? **Because it heard the grass was greener on the other side.**
- [04] Why did the chicken cross the road? **Because it wanted to get to the “egg-citing” side.**
- [05] Why did the chicken cross the road? **It didn’t. It just got to the middle and froze in confusion.**
- [06] Why did the chicken cross the road? **Because the road was a metaphor for life’s journey, and it was seeking meaning.**



KNOCK-KNOCK JOKES

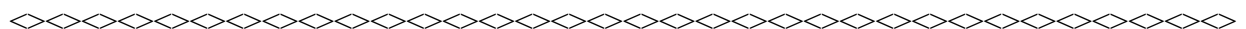
This type of joke is similar to the “chicken” joke because it has a structure. There is a set up followed by a punchline. This type has a call-and-response format, where the listener is encouraged to ask, “Who’s there?” This is followed by the punchline, which often comes from wordplay or puns.

[07] Knock knock.
Who’s there?
Lettuce.
Lettuce who?
Lettuce in! It’s cold outside!

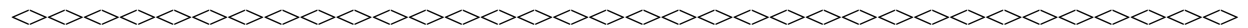
[08] Knock knock.
Who’s there?
Nobel.
Nobel who?
Nobel! That’s why I knocked!

[09] Knock knock.
Who’s there?
Euripides.
Euripides who?
Euripides clothes, you pay for them!

[10] Knock knock.
Who’s there?
Hawaii.
Hawaii who?
I’m fine, thank you. Hawaii you?



Strictly speaking, joke types are not restricted to specific patterns like those found with the above “chicken” and “knock knock” jokes. The patterns can come from the joke tellers themselves. Comedians often become famous (and rich) because they tell jokes that either discuss a specific topic or cover a particular genre, or they are told in such a unique way that audiences immediately associate them with that comedian. Thus, we get joke types like “Jerry Seinfeld” jokes or “George Carlin” jokes.



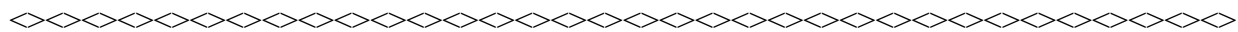
STEVEN WRIGHT JOKES

Steven Wright is famous for telling very deadpan jokes. In his standup routines, he never smiles or shows any emotions. It almost looks as though he is disinterested or dead. His joke punchlines are often surreal one-liners that rely heavily on absurd logic, irony, and wordplay.

- [11] My dentist is very cute. Every time I visit, I eat a whole package of Oreo cookies while waiting in the lobby. **Sometimes she has to cancel the rest of the afternoon’s appointments.**
- [12] I was in the grocery store. I saw a sign that said “pet supplies.” **So I did.** Then I went outside and saw a sign that said **“compact cars.”**
- [13] I installed my air conditioner backwards. It got cold outside. The weatherman on TV was confused. He said, **“It was supposed to be hot today.”**
- [14] When I turned two years old, I became really anxious because I had just doubled my age in a year. I thought that if this continues, **by the time I turn six I’ll be ninety.**
- [15] Sponges grow in the ocean. **I wonder how much deeper the ocean would be if that didn’t happen.**
- [16] If a word in the dictionary were misspelled, **how would we know?**
- [17] I have a map of the United States. It is actual size. It says, “Scale: 1 mile = 1 mile.” **I spent last summer folding it.** People ask me where I live, I say, **“E6.”**
- [18] I bought my brother some wrapping paper for Christmas. I took it to the gift wrap department and told them to wrap it **but in a different pattern so he would know when to stop unwrapping.**



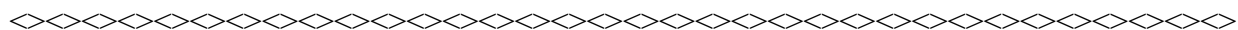
- [19] I went to a restaurant that serves “breakfast at any time.” **So I ordered French toast during the Renaissance.**
- [20] Today I dialed the wrong phone number by accident. The other person said, “Hello?” and I said, “Hello. Could I speak to Joey, please?” They said, “Uh, I don’t think so. He’s only two months old.” I said, **“I’ll wait.”**
- [21] When I woke up this morning my girlfriend asked me, “Did you sleep well?” I said, **“No, I made a few mistakes.”**
- [22] I am a peripheral visionary. **I can see into the future, but just way off to the sides.**



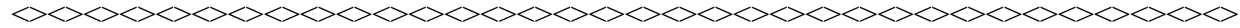
RODNEY DANGERFIELD JOKES – **DO NOT MIMIC OR USE ON OTHER PEOPLE**

In his standup comedy routines, Rodney Dangerfield would look a little disheveled and nervous, even though he wore a suit and tie. He was famous for repeatedly telling the audience that he doesn’t get any respect and then giving exaggerated complaints about personal misfortune. His jokes are typically slightly more adult than Steven Wright’s jokes.

- [23] When I was in high school, I once called my girlfriend on the telephone. She said come over because there is nobody home. I went over. **There was nobody home.**
- [24] I went to see my doctor. “Doctor,” I said, “every morning when I get up and look in the mirror, I feel like throwing up. What’s wrong with me?” He said, **“I don’t know, but your eyesight is perfect.”**
- [25] When I was a kid my parents moved a lot, but **I always found them.**
- [26] I looked up my family tree and **found three dogs using it.**
- [27] I went to the doctor because I had swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. **My doctor told me to have a few drinks and get some rest.**
- [28] I could tell that my parents hated me. **My bath toys were a radio and a toaster.**
- [29] I told my psychiatrist that everyone hates me. He said I was being ridiculous **because everyone hasn’t met me yet.**



The next section discusses disparagement/stereotype humor. This type of humor typically makes fun of others (e.g., those who may be classified into a specific group) because of perceived (i.e., often imagined) flaws or defects. Such jokes exist because those who tell such jokes wish to verbally insult or harm others. These joke types are often considered “funny” through the superiority theory of humor.



BLONDE JOKES – DO NOT MIMIC OR USE ON OTHER PEOPLE

This is a genre of jokes that makes fun of the stereotype that blondes (i.e., women with blond hair) are not very intelligent.

[30] Two blondes fell down a hole. One said, “It’s completely dark in here, isn’t it?” The other replied, **“I don’t know. I can’t see anything.”**

[31] Brunette: Have you met my identical twin sister yet?

Blonde: No, not yet. What does she look like?

[32] A blonde, a redhead, and a brunette were all lost in the desert. They found a lamp and rubbed it. A genie popped out and granted them each one wish. The redhead wished to be back home. Poof! She was back home. The brunette wished to be at home with her family. Poof! She was back home with her family. The blonde said, “Awwww, I’m all alone now. **I wish my friends were here.”**

[33] A blonde calls an airline and asks, “How long are your flights from Madrid to Rome?” The woman on the other end of the phone says, “Just a minute...” **The blonde says, “Thanks!” and hangs up the phone.**

[34] Three people were talking: a Russian, and American, and a blonde. The Russian was saying how proud he was that his country was the first to get a person into space. The American then said how proud he was that his country was the first to put a person on the Moon. The blonde said she would outdo both of them and be the first to go to the Sun. “You can’t do that!” screamed the Russian and the American. “It’s over 6,000 degrees!” The blonde was unfazed. “It’s ok,” she said. **“I’ll just go at night.”**



[35] A blonde, wanting to earn some money, decided to hire herself out as a handyman-type and started walking around a wealthy neighborhood, looking to do odd jobs. She went to the front door of the first house and asked the owner if he had any jobs for her to do.

“Well, you can paint my porch. How much will you charge?” The blonde said, “How about \$50?” The man agreed and told her that the paint and ladders that she might need were in the garage. The man's wife, inside the house, heard the conversation and said to her husband, “Does she realize that the porch goes all the way around the house?” The man replied, “She should. She was standing on the porch.”

A short time later, the blonde came to the door to receive her money. “You're finished already?” he asked with surprise. “Yes,” the blonde answered, “and I had paint left over, so I gave it two coats.” Impressed, the man reached into his pocket for the \$50. “And by the way,” the blonde added, **“that's not a Porch, it's a Ferrari.”**

As you can see, these are stereotypical “dumb blonde jokes.” However, humor can be found when the tables are turned.

[36] A blonde boards an airplane, sits down, and starts to read a book. A man boards and sits next to her. He tries to have a conversation with her, but all she wants to do is read her book. The man, however, is very persistent and will not leave her alone. Thinking that she is just a dumb blonde he finally says, “Look, I’m a very rich lawyer. I will ask you a question, and if you can’t answer it, then you must give me five dollars. Then you can ask me a question, and if I can’t answer it, I will give you one thousand dollars.”

The blonde, willing to do almost anything to get the man to stop talking to her, looks over at him and says, “Okay.”

The lawyer asks, “What is the distance from the Earth to the Moon?”

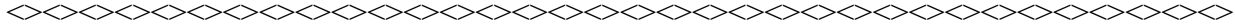
Without saying a word, the blonde opens her purse, takes out a five-dollar bill, and hands it over to him. She then asks, “What goes up a hill on three legs and comes back down on two legs?”

The man thinks about this for a while. He even searches the Internet and calls some friends and asks them, but he is thwarted. He cannot figure out the answer to the blonde’s question. Reluctantly, he gives her one thousand dollars.



She puts the money in her bag and continues reading. The lawyer, desperate to know the answer to the woman's question, says, "Hey! What is the answer to your question?"

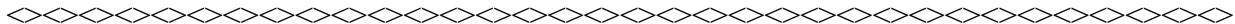
Again, without saying a word, she opens her purse, pulls out another five-dollar bill, and hands it over to him.



YO MAMA JOKES – DO NOT MIMIC OR USE ON OTHER PEOPLE

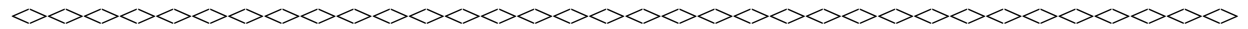
These are a form of joke that disparages one's mother. They are hurtful because people typically show parental respect. These types of jokes are, in essence, all-purpose insults or expressions of defiance.

- [37] Yo mama is so fat, when she got on the scale, it said, **“I need your weight, not your phone number.”**
- [38] Yo mama is so fat I took a picture of her last Christmas, and **it’s still printing.**
- [39] Yo mama is so fat, **she needs a boomerang to put on her belt.**
- [40] Yo mama is so fat, **she has her own zip code.**
- [41] Yo mama is so fat, **she wears a sock on each toe.**
- [42] Yo mama is so stupid, **she was fired from the M&M’s factory because she kept throwing out the W’s.**
- [43] Yo mama is so ugly, **Hello Kitty said “Good-bye.”**
- [44] Yo mama is so ugly, **her reflection in the mirror said, “I quit.”**

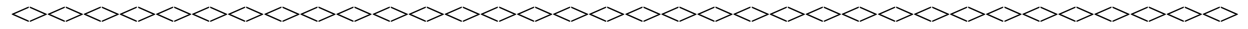


There are many other categories of adult/taboo jokes. In general, these jokes are impolite, as they often rely on stereotypes that are typically unjustifiable. Some common types include:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| ◇ Lawyer jokes | ◇ Doctor jokes | ◇ Office jokes |
| ◇ Mother-in-law jokes | ◇ Ethnic jokes | ◇ Political jokes |
| ◇ Marriage jokes | ◇ Racial jokes | ◇ Sex jokes |
| ◇ Divorce jokes | ◇ Religious jokes | ◇ Gallows humor |



Even if one does not see the target of such jokes as being an “other,” there may still be aspects of such jokes that may be considered humorous and even admirable (e.g., the creativity and imagination required to come up with specific punchlines). Nevertheless, students are advised not to tell jokes about or make fun of specific people or groups, particularly if the intent is to cause harm or discomfort as a means to gain a feeling of superiority.



 ##### SEMESTER TASK #####
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Check the Fall Semester Task sheet.

