



Comedy Glossary

Alongside the definitions in the Comedy Toolbox, here are some really useful words that you might find helpful for assembling your own pieces of comedy writing.

Call-back

A call-back is when a comedy writer refers back to an earlier joke to get a second or even third laugh from the same joke.

Caricature

This is a character that uses a distorted or exaggerated version of a person's features or personality to create a comic effect.

Deadpan

A type of comic delivery with all the usual emotion taken out. Usually a deadpan comic will also keep their facial expressions to a minimum.

Dialogue

A scene which has at least two characters speaking to each other.

Escalation

The process of turning a small joke into a bigger and funnier story, usually with an exaggerated and over-the-top conclusion.

Farce

A fast-paced piece of set comedy that involves a lot of slapstick and usually contains people entering and exiting quickly or mistaking character identities.

Homophone

Words which may have the same pronunciation but different meanings, often used to make a pun or misdirect someone in a joke.

One-liner

A joke which is a single sentence but packs the punchline in straightaway: "Hedgehogs – why can't they just share with everyone else?"

Pace

The speed at which a scene or routine is run. Controlling the pace means controlling when the audience laughs.

Pun

A homophone that "sounds like" another to try and make a cheesy joke: 'Making this omelette is really EGG-citing!'

Punchline

The end line or final joke in a funny story or sketch. Sometimes referred to as the 'big laugh'.

Satire

A type of comedy that pokes fun at a serious issue or tries to undermine people in authority, like the government.

Simile

When a comparison is made for comic effect: "Your feet smell worse than a skunk's underpants!"

Stereotype

An instantly recognisable 'type' of person which isn't always based in reality. For example, a doctor is posh and wears a white coat; a school caretaker will be grumpy and jangle keys.

Suspension of disbelief

The idea that an audience will always believe in your story, despite it normally being unbelievable.

Wit

The idea that words can be played around with verbally to get a funnier meaning. Wit can use twisted logic, puns or double meanings to make things funny.