



Watch your favorite comedians and comedies. Take notes about what made you laugh.

When you read a book and find yourself belly laughing, mark that section and go back to it. Examine it closely. What caught you off guard? Study the setup and delivery, the construction of the gag, the descriptions of characters, and the details of the humorous world closely. Identify the triggers.

1. Characters make silly mistakes or intentional mistakes and pass them off as funny, shaking off embarrassment.
2. You can twist and exaggerate stereotypical characters for effect.
3. Mistaken identity, disguises, and costumes can add laughs.
4. Physical comedy, such as practical jokes and prat falls, is harder to portray with a verbal camera than an actual one. That doesn't mean you can't use it.
5. Missteps in manners and etiquette work when the audience is in on the deliberate use of them.
6. Deliberately behaving the opposite of what is expected can be funny.
7. Fast-paced farcical action can be funny.
8. The situation, overall story problem, or story world can be so exaggerated or off that they become the source of the humor.
9. Using the character's behavior and bad habits against him can inject humor.
10. Sexual content and innuendo can be injected where appropriate.
11. Clever banter between characters.
12. Verbal digs can be barbless jibes between close friends or skewering points to drive home a serious point.



13. Short anecdotes based on proven set-up, delivery, and punchline formulas can be inserted. They are best presented in dialogue between characters rather than narrator intrusions.
14. Invented words or phrases can be repeated a few times throughout for effect.
15. Giving things, people, or places titles, nicknames, or intentionally botching names can be hilarious, especially when the other party is oblivious or annoyed by it.
16. Pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable or in good taste can make a point. It may even insult or anger, but the underlying message is memorable.
17. Puns, riddles, Freudian slips, parables, and actual jokes can be added with a light hand. Unexpected answers and surprise can trigger laughter.
18. Parroting and name-calling can infuse a light or dark note.
19. Intentional mangling of language and grammar can be fun, but watch out for phonetic spelling abuse.
20. Accents, voice styles, and vocabulary choices can be exaggerated for effect.

Do your research. There are many books and classes on humor and comedy. Consider your target audience. How far can you push the boundaries without triggering disgust or anger? Humor that might be appropriate for a novel targeted to adults would not be appropriate for middle school. Middle school humor might bore a young adult audience.

Using profanity can be funny, but too much is not a good thing. One carefully placed expletive can be far more effective than the same word used in every other sentence. The mind skips over abusive repetition.

Humor ranges from innocent jokes to darkest satire. What people find funny is highly personal. Something that tickles one person will offend another. What one considers ribald another might find vulgar. Dark gallows humor makes light of deadly serious topics. Comedies allow you to stealthily challenge people's prejudices and belief systems in the name of good fun. Humor is a great way to lower resistance to make salient points. You can't please everyone, nor should you try. Use what works for your story.