

# Humour Rules

Kate Fox: Watching the English

# Humor rules. It governs.

- Patriotically-minded say: English sense of humor is unique, some “brands” of humour as irony or wit were found by them.
- Totally truer is the PLACE humour has in English life, its VALUE.
- It is in every side of English life.



# The Importance of not Being Earnest Rule

- In a nutshell (in short):

DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUS

- Longer version:

SERIOUS (✓)

SOLEMN (✗)

SINCERE (✓)

EARNEST (✗)

POMPOUS (✗)

SELF-IMPOERANCE (✗)

# The “*Oh, come off it!*” Rule

The phrase describes the reaction towards

- too much earnestness (breaking the rule)
- Americans in particular as long as other nations behaving self-important, pompous exc.
- Politicians
- Elections
- And many others

There can be other phrases like “Yeah, right”

But the principle is the same.



# Irony

Most of English and a good part of foreigners agree on exceptional use of Irony by the English...

BUT irony is **universal** and a part of humour itself.

Irony is a dominant in English humour. So everybody is constantly ready for it.

Joking but not  
joking

Caring but not  
caring

Serious but not  
serious

“The problem with the English is that you never know when they are joking – you never know whether they are being serious or not. I think they are mostly joking, yes?”

An American businessman

How are the children?

Fine,  
thanks.

Oh, they are delightful –  
charming, helpful, tidy...

Oh, dear. Been one of those  
days, has it?

# The Understatement Rule

Chronic illness

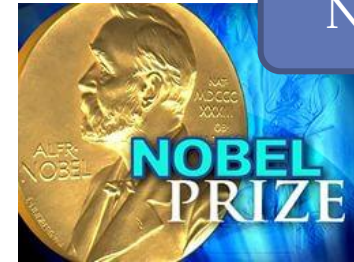
A bit of nuisance



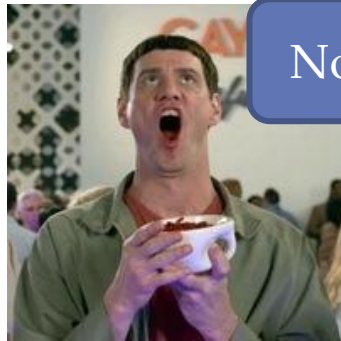
Quite pretty



Well, not exactly what I would have chosen



Not bad



Not very clever



Not very friendly



Rather cold



A bit too hot for my taste

# Self-deprecation Rule

A brain surgeon

How did you choose this profession?

Well, I read PPE at Oxford, but I found it all beyond me, so, I thought I'd better do something a bit less difficult.

But brain surgery isn't an easy option...

Oh no, it's not as clever; to be honest, it's actually a bit hit-or-miss.



# What is it all about

- It comes naturally
- Part of the English psyche
- Is a problem for foreigners
- Modesty – a look of modesty – ironical modesty
- Irony is not actually laugh-out-loud funny
- Joking about yourself