Humor serves to increase student engagement, even in cases where it is not related to the educational material. Additionally, the use of humor improves student retention of information, builds instructor-student rapport, and has the potential to make the course more enjoyable.

- **Usage**: 63% of instructors did not use humor; 21% used humor once, 10% used humor 2 to 5 times, and 6% used humor 6 or more times in a particular class
- **Presentation Methods**:
  - Humorous comments typically last only a few seconds
  - Funny stories often lasted a minute or more, but were more related to the educational material, justifying the time spent
  - Only 10% of the humor being classified as distracting
- **Character Involvement**: 38% of the humor involved a character outside the classroom; 17% involved a student, 15% involved the instructor
- **Disparagement**: 5% of the humor involved instructor disparagement, 7% student disparagement, and 19% disparagement of a non-present character

### Results

“‘You go and buy two pounds of grapes. They measure the weight of grapes to make two pounds and you pay for them. Then you eat them. Okay, so you pay per pound, which is per gravitational force. It’s a waste of your money; you’re paying for gravitational force!’

“‘Even when you don’t have weight, you still have mass. So you can lose your weight, but you still have mass. That’s why they have diets, to lose weight, not mass.”

“‘Now, next question, you in space; here is a car. I don’t know what car is doing in space. Maybe you want to drive around.” (when describing a fictional situation for a physics problem)

### Temporal Location of Humor Use with Respect to Minute of Class Elapsed

#### References


### Participation

Participants: 48 STEM instructors in at a medium size private institution; includes all ranks and tenure status.

**Data**: Single video recorded classroom sessions for each of the participants

- Video coded in one minute increments using the Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol (TDOP) [6], and classification of humor [7]
- Humor event based on class response (i.e. laughter)
- Context and intent of each of these events was obtained through a transcription and description

**Analysis**: Quantitative statistical analysis descriptive statistics and non-parametric student engagement and teaching approaches between faculty that used and did not use humor in the recorded video session

**Timing**: Clusters at the beginning of the class set the tone for the class; later uses of humor reengage students whose attention has wandered

**Student Engagement**: In classes where humor was used by the instructor.

- Students asked more questions
- Instructors used more anecdotes and connections to student experience
- No statistically significant difference in the use of other teaching techniques in comparison to classes that did not include humor