



Unit 14 What's that noise?

Before you read

The reading is about laughter. Think about these questions. Why do people laugh? What makes you laugh?

Read the article

When and Why We Laugh

People have many ways to express themselves—to show how they feel or what they think. One way that feels especially good is laughter. We laugh when we see or hear something funny, and we laugh sometimes just because other people are laughing. Laughter has an important place in human communication. The question is: What are we saying when we laugh?

A team of psychologists studied the laughter of 120 students at an American university. They had the students watch funny movies. Sometimes the students were alone, and sometimes they were in pairs. The psychologists recorded the students' laughter, and they noticed that the students made a wide variety of laughing sounds. The students laughed differently depending on who they were watching the movies with—whether their partner was male or female, a friend or a stranger. Here are some of the researchers' findings:

- Men laughed much more during the movies when they were with a friend. The friend could be male or female. They laughed much less when their partner was a stranger or when they were alone.
- Women laughed most with men friends.
- Women laughed in a higher voice with male strangers.

The team also discovered that there were three basic types of laughs: high song-like laughs, laughs with the sounds coming mostly through the nose, and low grunting laughs like the sounds a pig makes. In a later study, they asked people to listen to these three types of laughter to find out which kind they liked best. Most people preferred the high song-like sounds.

The researchers believe that laughter is a tool we use, usually without thinking about it. They say we use it to influence the emotions and behavior of other people. In fact, when we laugh during conversations, it is usually *not* because we are listening to something funny. It is because we want to be friends with the people we are talking to. Laughter helps make people feel comfortable with each other.

Source: *Password 2, A Reading and Vocabulary Text* by Linda Butler, Longman

Build your reading skills: Reading for main ideas

Read the article again. Check (✓) the main idea of the article.

- _____ How and how often you laugh depends on your partner.
- _____ Women laugh most with men friends.
- _____ Laughter has an important place in human communication.
- _____ People sometimes laugh even if something isn't funny.



Check your comprehension

Read the sentences. Write *T* (true) or *F* (false) after each statement.

1. Laughter is a form of communication. *T*
2. The researchers were most interested in people laughing alone.
3. People always laugh in the same way no matter who they are with.
4. Most people like high song-like laughter better than other kinds of laughter.
5. People often laugh to make other people like them.