

7 to 8

What's So Funny?

Boys and girls develop different senses of humor starting now
 BY MICHELLE ANTHONY, M.A., Ph.D.

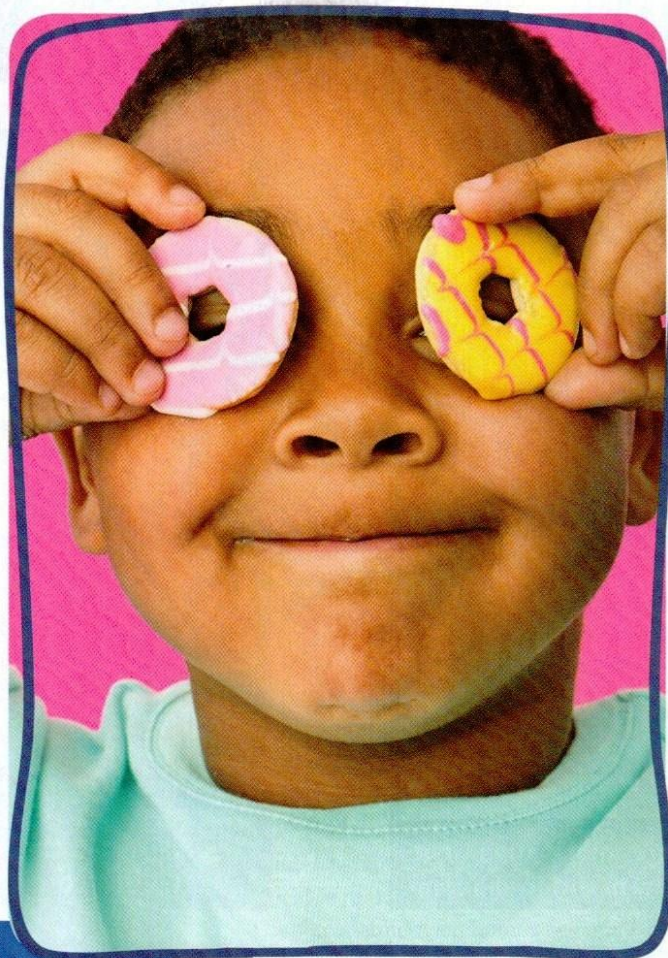
TRY THIS joke on your 7- or 8-year-old: "Where do kings keep their armies? In their sleeves!" Chances are, he'll find the humor in it. That's because by the middle of first grade, kids become more word savvy, and they start to understand concepts like double meanings. They're also beginning to understand sarcasm—watch out!

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Boys and girls this age go their separate ways when it comes to humor. Boys tend to get a huge kick out of slapstick, physically aggressive play, and jokes about yucky things like boogers. They're often the jovial joke-tellers—"class clowns" emerge now. They're the ones (usually) who use excessive humor to command and maintain attention in class and on the playground. No doubt, you have memories of kids that fit this description from your own school days!

While boys are generally the jokesters, relying on physical tricks to get laughs, girls tend to play the part of the audience in mixed gender groups, and their sense of humor at this age reflects their more advanced verbal skills. Double entendres are a great source of entertainment, and girls' jokes are often story-based and personal. They giggle at unexpected outcomes or surprising events, puns, and silly stories that involve animals.

Jokes can define group membership at this age. For example, kids who enjoy sports will



tips

7- AND 8-YEAR-OLDS can learn a lot through riddle and joke books. They enrich vocabulary and foster a love of reading at a crucial time in literacy development.

HUMOR can help children this age cope with social stresses; it can morph a hostile comment into a playful one. Role-play with your 7- or 8-year-old to show how humor can help.

find different things funny than those who enjoy puzzles. Those who get the joke are part of the group; those who do not, are not.

THE JOKE CLUB

Having a sense of humor becomes increasingly important to 7- and 8-year-olds when it comes to interacting with friends and making new ones. Jokes allow children to try out different roles behind the "out" of being "only kidding." Of course, kids will sometimes mistreat each other and claim it was "just a joke." Use your instinct in these situations to help your child learn to tell the difference between good old-fashioned fun and insincere behavior. **P&C**

MICHELLE ANTHONY, M.A., Ph.D., is co-author of the newly released *Little Girls Can Be Mean: Four Steps to Bullyproof Girls in the Early Grades*. She is an expert in developmental psychology, a mother to three young children, and a certified K-3 teacher.