

# pun

pən/

noun

1. 1.

a joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words that sound alike but have different meanings.

"the pigs were a squeal (if you'll forgive the pun)"

*synonyms:* play on words, [wordplay](#), [double entendre](#), [innuendo](#), [witticism](#), [quip](#), [bon mot](#) [More](#)  
*verb*

1. 1.

make a joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word.

"his first puzzle punned on composers, with answers like "Handel with care" and "Haydn go seek""

**Puns** are jokes that use different meanings of the same or similar sounding words. English spelling allows different words with the same sound to be spelled differently, so there is more opportunity in English for puns. Puns are very difficult to understand unless you know both meanings of the words. Although there is an expression in English, "If you have to explain the joke, it is no longer funny," I will try anyway.

When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.

The pun here is on the words **seconds** and **four/for**. Seconds has two meanings: a measure of time (60 seconds in 1 minute), and a second **helping** or serving of food. For example, if you are eating at home and your spouse asks you if you want "seconds," s/he means "Do you want another serving of the food you just ate?" **Four** is a number (4), and **for** is a preposition. **To go back for seconds** means to go get more food. **To go back four seconds** means the clock reverses in time four seconds. So this is a "double pun," in that we are "punning" on the words seconds and four.