

## Evolution of humour could make computers laugh

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DID you hear the one about the computer with a sense of humour? Didn't think so. Computers can do many things, but stand-up comedy is not one of them. Yet the idea that computers can be witty might not be all that far-fetched. Perhaps machines need not be conscious to understand humour, and even to invent and tell jokes.

Physicist Igor Suslov of the Kapitza Institute for Physical Problems in Moscow, Russia, has designed a computer model which he says explains the evolution of humour. Our ability to experience humour, he suggests, ultimately depends on quirks in how the brain handles information.

Verbal jokes, Suslov suggests, work by drawing the mind into error. It first settles on one meaning, and then has to correct itself and see another. Take this joke, for example:

Father (reprovingly): "Do you know what happens to liars when they die?"

Johnny: "Yes sir, they lie still."

The wit of the line comes from the way the brain pirouettes to interpret "lie" in two different ways

**Tags:** [evolution](#), [brain](#), [humor](#), [error](#), [interpretation](#)

**clipper's remarks:** "Its biological function," says Suslov, "is to make brain operations more efficient." We laugh as the brain squirms its way out of a contradictory state

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Fascinating.

 by  [syncopath](#) on 11-25-2007 8:25 AM

He who laughs last, laughs best .. 