



Conan O'Brien

Comedian known for smart humor and wordplay.

Rank #18

#	Word	Definition / Example
1	absurdist	a person who believes that life is meaningless and often expresses this through art or literature "His absurdist commitment to following a premise wherever it leads — however far from recognizable reality — is the engine of his most memorable comedy."
2	improvisational	adj. the act of improvising or something that has been improvised esp. in music. "Improvisational elasticity in his interview style transforms guest awkwardness from a problem into the primary comedic resource."
3	self-deprecating	modestly criticizing oneself or one's abilities "Self-deprecating wit deployed with surgical precision inoculates him against pomposity while generating the warmth that sustains audience loyalty across decades."
4	harvard-inflected	a style that reflects the characteristics of Harvard University, often showing intelligence and sophistication "His Harvard-inflected comic sensibility smuggles genuine literary and historical erudition into formats designed to deliver maximum mainstream accessibility."
5	anachronistic	adj. anything that is or seems to be out of its proper time in history "Anachronistic cultural references — the more obscure the better — signal to his audience that intelligence and silliness are not merely compatible but inseparable."
6	burlesque	n. a theatrical entertainment of broad and earthy humor; consists of comic skits and short turns; v. make a parody of "His burlesque exaggeration of masculine self-regard targets precisely the preening seriousness he most enjoys deflating in himself and his guests."
7	extemporaneous	adj. composed or performed on the spur of the moment with little or no planning. "Extemporaneous verbal construction at speed — building elaborate comedic architecture from a single unexpected premise — remains his most distinctive and enviable skill."
8	whimsical	adj. prone to sudden illogical changes of mind or ideas or actions "Whimsical tangents that seem to abandon the original premise invariably return to it from an angle so unexpected that the resolution produces genuine surprise."
9	wodehousian	relating to the humorous and whimsical writing style of P.G. Wodehouse "Wodehousian delight in linguistic extravagance — the perfectly chosen ludicrous word where a plain one would suffice — runs through his finest comic writing."
10	intertextual	relating to the connection between texts "Intertextual layering of high and low cultural reference — Homer beside hot dogs — is the structural joke underlying his entire intellectual comic persona."
11	melancholic	feeling or expressing sadness or sorrow "Melancholic undertones in his podcast work reveal a performer whose genuine philosophical curiosity extends well beyond the boundaries of professional comedy."
12	metacommentary	a commentary about a commentary or discussion "Metacommentary on the artificiality of the late-night format itself became his most innovative contribution to a genre calcified by decades of convention."
13	anthropological	relating to the study of human cultures and societies "Anthropological curiosity about other cultures — pursued with genuine enthusiasm rather than condescension — generates his most humanistically generous travel comedy."

#	Word	Definition / Example
14	collaborative	adj. to work together with others “Collaborative generosity with writers and performers — amplifying others' ideas rather than subordinating them — produced an unusually loyal creative community around him.”
15	circumlocutory	using more words than necessary to say something, often to avoid being direct “Circumlocutory elaboration of a simple premise — adding clause upon clause until the original subject disappears — is deployed as both method and punchline simultaneously.”