

20 Figures of Speech

Using original figures of speech (also known as *figures of rhetoric, figures of style, rhetorical figures, figurative language, and schemes*) in our writing is a way **to convey meanings in fresh, unexpected and powerful ways**. They can **help our readers understand and stay interested in what we have to say**.

1. **Alliteration**: The repetition of an initial consonant sound. **Example**: She sells seashells by the seashore.
2. **Anaphora**: The repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses. **Example**: Unfortunately, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong day.
3. **Antithesis**: The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases. **Example**: As Abraham Lincoln said, "Folks who have no vices have very few virtues."
4. **Apostrophe**: Directly addressing a nonexistent person or an inanimate object as though it were a living being. **Example**: "Oh, you stupid car, you never work when I need you to," Bert sighed.
5. **Assonance**: Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. **Example**: How now, brown cow?
6. **Chiasmus**: A verbal pattern in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed. **Example**: The famous chef said people should live to eat, not eat to live.
7. **Euphemism**: The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit. **Example**: "We're teaching our toddler how to go potty," Bob said.
8. **Hyperbole**: An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect. **Example**: I have a ton of things to do when I get home.
9. **Irony**: The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. Also, a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea. **Example**: "Oh, I love spending big bucks," said my dad, a notorious penny pincher.
10. **Litotes**: A figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite. **Example**: A million dollars is no small chunk of change.

11. Metaphor: An implied comparison between two dissimilar things that have something in common. **Example**: "All the world's a stage."
12. Metonymy: A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated; also, the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it. **Example**: "That stuffed suit with the briefcase is a poor excuse for a salesman," the manager said angrily.
13. Onomatopoeia: The use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to. **Example**: The clap of thunder went bang and scared my poor dog.
14. Oxymoron: A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side. **Example**: "He popped the jumbo shrimp in his mouth."
15. Paradox: A statement that appears to contradict itself. **Example**: "This is the beginning of the end," said Eeyore, always the pessimist.
16. Personification: A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities. **Example**: That kitchen knife will take a bite out of your hand if you don't handle it safely.
17. Pun: A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words. **Example**: Jessie looked up from her breakfast and said, "A boiled egg every morning is hard to beat."
18. Simile: A stated comparison (usually formed with "like" or "as") between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common. **Example**: Roberto was white as a sheet after he walked out of the horror movie.
19. Synecdoche: A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole. **Example**: Tina is learning her ABC's in preschool.
20. Understatement: A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is. **Example**: "You could say Babe Ruth was a decent ballplayer," the reporter said with a wink.