

Grammarian Uses:

Acronyms. An acronym is a pronounceable word or name made from the initial letters or parts of a group of words. Some acronyms have become regular English words: radar, scuba and laser. Acronyms are often used to sound impressive but are usually annoying. Beware of using acronyms as your audience may not be familiar with them. Always spell out the meaning before using.

Alliteration. This is the repetition of the beginning consonant sound of two or more words that appear close together in speech. Alliteration is used to add poetic pleasantry to a phrase and grabbing attention or focus. Example: *Some say sunshine soothes the soul. Daredevil dogs dashing daringly.*

Assonance. Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in two or more words that appear close together in speech. Assonance is sometimes used as an alternative to rhyme in verse.

Example: *Sighing silent cries, Viola divides her prize.*

Cliché. A cliché is a phrase, saying or term that has become dated and, due to overuse, lacks the creativity to make the language interesting. Create your own metaphors and similes instead of using a cliché.

Examples: *Airing your dirty laundry, another day – another dollar, like a hot knife through butter, let the cat out of the bag, it's not rocket science.*

Colloquialisms. Colloquialisms are short-lived fad words or slang sayings. Example: *groovy (nice), bananas (crazy or insane), bag (ugly or old woman)*

Euphemism. A euphemism is a substitution of an agreeable or less offensive expression in place of one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant to the listener. Politicians like to use euphemisms to describe bad things, such as “collateral damage” for civilians accidentally killed during war. Example: *The powder room (the toilet), passed away (died), in the family way (pregnant), terminate with extreme prejudice (assassinate – as used in the film “Apocalypse Now”)*

Hyperbole. Hyperbole is an exaggeration for emphasis or effect, and its meaning is not meant to be taken literally. Example: *These books weigh a ton (weigh a great deal). I could sleep for a year. (for a long time).*

Idiom. An idiom is an expression that is unique to a language and cannot be understood simply from the meaning of its individual words. Understanding idioms is a challenge for non-English speakers. Example: *Back-seat driver (usually a driver's partner offering gratuitous advice on how to drive), Hold your horses (don't be in such a hurry), a stiff upper lip (being in control of one's emotions)*

Irony. Irony is criticism or ridicule in which words mean the opposite of what they state. Example: *I lost my job, and my dog left home. I was having a wonderful day (that last statement shows irony).*

Jargon. Jargon refers to a specialized vocabulary unique to a certain segment of a population for reasons such as occupation, industry or academic discipline. Jargon is rife in corporate presentations and is often used to make the speaker sound impressive. Example: *Viral marketing, flash drives, and the web are common computing jargon.*

Malapropism. A malapropism is a word that sounds like another word with a totally different meaning, used by someone who has mistaken the sound-alike words, or is not aware of the spelling. Malapropisms are a great tool for humor. Examples: *For all intensive purposes (For all intents and purposes). My favorite was used by the character Wayne in Wayne's World when he says “Baking Powder? Squeeze Me?” instead of “I beg your pardon, excuse me?”*

Metaphor. A metaphor is a word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between two things. A metaphor suggests a likeness or an analogy between them. Example: *Conscience is a man's compass. Blanket of snow.*

Mixed metaphor. This is the combination of two unrelated metaphors often used for comic effect, for example, “a pain in the neck would be thrown out the window”

Metonymy. the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant, for example *suit for business executive, or the track for horse racing.*

Onomatopoeia is the ability of a word's sound to suggest its meaning. Example: *buzz, achoo!, drip, splat, sizzle.*

Pun. A pun is a use of a word or phrase, usually with humorous intent in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings. An elephant's opinion carries a lot of weight. A horse is a very stable animal.

Rhetorical Question. A question asked for effect but not requiring an answer. Rhetorical questions are sometimes used to start a speech, for example, “Have you ever wondered what it would be like to

Rhythm is the repetition of stressed and unstressed syllable patterns rather than sounds.

Similes. A simile is a figure of speech that indicates a comparison, and sometimes confused with a metaphor. The existence of the comparison is demonstrated by the presence of a word such as “as” or “like” to present a contrast between two subjects or items. Example: *Wayne has muscles as strong as iron. Fog shrouded the countryside like a blanket.*