

Stylistic & Rhetorical Devices, a selection

Identify these stylistic and rhetorical devices and then use them in your own speeches.

Definitions and Examples	Voice and Body Language
<p>CONTRAST ['- -] or ANTITHESIS It is a rhetorical figure. It means arranging contrasting ideas by putting words, clauses or sentences next to each other <i>Some like it hot, some like it cold ...; Old and young ...</i></p>	<p>Gestures and intonation suggest which of the two options you support.</p>
<p>REPETITION Repeating a word, phrase or clause emphasises an idea and creates rhythmic effects. <i>Man [...] does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits.</i></p>	<p>Stressing repeated words or phrases structures your speech nicely, making it easy to listen to.</p>
<p>PARALLELISM ['- - -] It is a form of coordination. Use it to give ideas, words, phrases, equal status in a structure. <i>Students seek knowledge, teachers help them, society profits.</i></p> <p>ANAPHORA: [- ' - -] Use the same phrase to begin several sentences. <i>Singing is cheap, singing is healthy, and singing is good fun.</i></p>	<p>Make every word count. Gestures or gentle knocks on your desk may help.</p>
<p>ENUMERATION = LISTING Numbering and listing items or ideas is simple but effective. <i>All of us, pupils, parents, teachers, and neighbours...</i></p> <p>LIST OF THREE = TRICOLON [- ' - -] Use it to list three items in the order of their importance with the third one the CLIMAX, or the first two can be in contrast to the third. <i>[...] among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.</i></p>	<p>Stress each item with a pause before the last one to signal the final climax for your side's applause.</p>
<p>QUESTION – ANSWER or the PUZZLE SOLUTION. Make your speech easy to follow by asking yourself – and your audience – a question and then providing the answer. <i>What is the main aim of this project? – The main aim is...</i></p>	<p>Rising intonation for the question and falling intonation for the answer. A pause after the question makes people think.</p>
<p>RHETORICAL QUESTION Turn statement turned into a question that doesn't need answering. <i>How much longer are we to tolerate this situation?</i></p>	<p>Face your audience, lift an open palm sideways and gently shake your head.</p>
<p>OVERSTATEMENT = HYPERBOLE [- ' - - -] It is a figure of speech using exaggeration to emphasise a feeling or to produce a humorous effect. <i>Football is not a matter of life and death. – It is much more serious.</i></p> <p>UNDERSTATEMENT It is the opposite of hyperbole. <i>This argument is not altogether convincing. / Oh, they've had a few drinks all right. / I am not terribly happy about the way you work.</i></p>	<p>Tone of voice, facial expression or gesture can help to suggest that you do not want to be understood literally.</p>
<p>IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS These are informal but colourful and sexy. Use them only when you are sure you and your audience know what they mean. <i>We can argue about it <u>till the cows come home</u>...; We'll <u>cross that bridge when we come to it</u> ...; <u>Back to square one</u> ...; I am <u>up to my eyes in it</u>...; Don't try to <u>pull wool over my eyes</u>...; We thought we had done it but they <u>moved the goalposts</u>...</i></p>	<p>An informal tone suggests ease and confidence. A snappy phrase will make it memorable.</p>