

What are Figures of Speech?

Figures of Speech are an integral part of any language. It is used extensively not only in our day-to-day speech but also in written texts and oral literature. These are words or phrases used in a distinctive way to produce a rhetorical effect. To say it in very simple terms, it is a phrase whose actual meaning is different from its literal meaning.

Figures of Speech are expressed through various techniques such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personification. All of us use different figures of speech in our daily conversations, both deliberately and subconsciously.

30 Types of Figures of Speech Definition and Examples

There is a wide range of different types of figures of speech that are used in our daily communication. Let us take a look at some of the most popular ones that are used extensively:

Personification

Personification attributes human nature or human qualities to abstract or inanimate objects. For example, we often use phrases like the howling wind, dancing leaves, time flies, etc. Some examples of personification in a sentence are:

- The opportunity knocked at his door
- The plants in her house silently begged to be watered
- Lightning danced across the sky
- The wind howled in the night.

Metaphor

A metaphor is used to imply a comparison between two things that have something in common but are in general different from each other.

Some examples of the usage of metaphors in a sentence are as follows:

- It is raining cats and dogs
- He is the star of our class
- Life is a highway.
- Her eyes were diamonds.

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that compares two things that are different from each other but have similar qualities. These are generally formed through the usage of the words 'as' or 'like'.

Some examples of similes in a sentence include:

- He is as brave as a lion
- Her expression was as cold as ice
- Swim like a fish

- As light as a feather

Alliteration

Alliteration is a sentence that consists of a series of words that have the same consonant sound at the beginning.

Some popular examples of alliteration in a sentence include:

- She sells sea shells on the seashore
- A good cook could cook as many cookies as a good cook who could cook cookies
- All Adam ate in August was apples and almonds
- Barry bought a book to bring to the backyard barbecue

Onomatopoeia

This is a figure of speech that is used to express a sound. To be more precise, it involves the use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the action or object referred to, i.e., hiss, clap, etc.

Some examples of onomatopoeia include:

- The buzzing bee flew over my head
- The stone hit the water with a splash
- The boulder hit the ground with a flump.
- Leaves rustle in the wind and are whipped into the air.

Hyperbole

A hyperbole is a figure of speech that consists of an exaggeration. It is the usage of exaggerated terms in order to emphasize or heighten the effect of something.

Some examples of using hyperboles in a sentence include:

- I have told you a million times not to touch my stuff!
- She has got a pea-sized brain.
- I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
- She's as old as the hills.

Euphemism

Euphemism is the usage of a mild word in substitution of something more explicit or harsh when referring to something unfavorable or unpleasant. Some examples of its usage include:

- This mall has good facilities for differently-abled people
- He passed away in his sleep
- Passed away" instead of "died."
- "Let go" instead of "fired."

Irony

Irony or sarcasm is a figure of speech in which the usage of words conveys the opposite of their literal meaning. These are often used in a humorous manner. Some examples of irony include:

- Your hands are as clean as mud
- The dinner you served was as hot as ice
- Coming home to a big mess and saying, "it's great to be back."
- Telling a rude customer to "have a nice day."

Anaphora

It is a repetition of a word or phrase at the start of several sentences or clauses.

Some of the examples of anaphora are as follows:

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "I Have a Dream" Speech
- Charles Dickens: A Tale of Two Cities
- "Be bold. Be brief. Be gone."
- "Get busy living or get busy dying."

Apostrophe

It addresses a subject that is not present in the work. In this case, the object is absent or inanimate.

Here are some examples of apostrophes.

- Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are
- Welcome, O life!
- Alarm clock, please don't fail me.
- Seven, you are my lucky number!

Pun

Puns are among the most frequently used figures of speech in daily conversation. They may be great conversation starters since they make you sound clever and occasionally even humorous.

Here are a few instances of puns in speech:

- Denial is a river in Egypt (referring to The Nile using the word Denial).
- Her cat is near the computer to keep an eye on the mouse.
- No matter how much you push the envelope, it will still be stationary.
- Everyone thinks my runny nose is funny, but it's snot.

Paradox

These figures of speech, like ironies, emphasize something by discussing the exact opposite of it. A paradox, on the other hand, differs from irony in that it does not make the contrast as evident.

Let's examine two instances of paradoxical figures of speech:

- "Some of my biggest triumphs have also been failures" (According to US actress Pearl Bailey)
- "War is good. Slavery is freedom. "Ignorance is power" (As said by English author George Orwell)
- Save money by spending it
- If I know one thing, it's that I know nothing

Oxymoron

This figure of speech, which should not be confused with ironies and paradoxes, links two opposing ideas at once. This indicates that two opposing concepts are utilized inside a single sentence to create levity in an oxymoron figure of speech. For instance,

- This is another fine mess you have gotten us into
- Suddenly, the room filled with a deafening silence
- The comedian was seriously funny
- You are clearly confused by the situation you have found yourself in

Assonance

Internal vowels in nearby words that are the same or comparable in sound. Here are a few examples of assonance in speech:

- How now, brown cow?
- The light of the fire is a sight
- Go slow over the road
- Try as I might, the kite did not fly

Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech when one term or phrase is used in place of another with which it is closely related. It is also a rhetorical technique used to describe something indirectly by making references to objects around it.

Here are a few instances of Metonymy:

- “That stuffed suit with the briefcase is a poor excuse for a salesman,” the manager said angrily.
- The pen is mightier than the sword.”
- I’m a Silicon Valley guy. I just think people from Silicon Valley can do anything.
- Most of the successful people in Hollywood are failures as human beings.

Antithesis

Antithesis is a figure of speech that presents two contrasting ideas in a balanced structure to emphasize their difference.

Some examples of antithesis in a sentence are:

- Speech is silver, but silence is golden.
- It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.
- You’re easy on the eyes but hard on the heart.
- Many are called, but few are chosen.

Circumlocution

Circumlocution is the use of unnecessarily long and indirect language to express an idea, often to avoid being blunt.

Some examples of circumlocution include:

- Instead of saying “he died,” one might say, “he passed away peacefully.”
- Referring to a pen as “an instrument for writing.”
- Saying “the elongated yellow fruit” instead of “banana.”
- Calling a car “a four-wheeled vehicle used for transportation.”

Epigram

An epigram is a brief, witty, and memorable statement, often carrying a satirical or paradoxical twist.

Some examples of epigrams include:

- The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.
- Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.
- I can resist everything except temptation.
- A lie travels halfway around the world before the truth puts on its shoes.

Litotes

Litotes is a figure of speech that uses understatement by negating the opposite, often to create emphasis.

Some examples of litotes include:

- She’s not unhappy with her results.
- That wasn’t a bad idea at all.
- He’s no stranger to hard work.
- It’s not the worst weather we’ve seen.

Pleonasm

Pleonasm involves the use of redundant words or phrases to emphasize a point or add stylistic flair.

Some examples of pleonasm are:

- I saw it with my own eyes.
- The tiny little puppy was adorable.
- He shouted out loud.
- The end result was unexpected.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole or vice versa.

Some examples of synecdoche include:

- All hands on deck. (Hands represent sailors.)
- He bought a new set of wheels. (Wheels represent a car.)
- The crown will decide the nation’s fate. (Crown represents the monarchy.)
- She’s counting heads for attendance. (Heads represent people.)

Understatement

An understatement is a figure of speech where the significance of something is intentionally downplayed to create a subtle or ironic effect.

Some examples of understatement include:

- Winning the lottery wasn't too bad.
- The weather during the storm was a bit windy.
- He's not the brightest bulb in the box.
- Breaking my leg was a little inconvenient.

Allegory

An allegory is a narrative or description in which characters, events, and details symbolize a deeper moral, political, or spiritual meaning.

Examples of allegory:

- George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an allegory of the Russian Revolution.
- The tortoise and the hare from Aesop's fables represent perseverance and overconfidence, respectively.
- Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is an allegory of the soul's journey toward God.
- The Lion in *The Chronicles of Narnia* represents Christ or sacrifice.

Allusion

Allusion is an indirect reference to a person, event, or piece of literature that the audience is expected to understand.

Examples of allusion:

- He's a real Romeo with the ladies. (Refers to Romeo from *Romeo and Juliet*.)
- This place is a Garden of Eden. (Refers to the biblical paradise.)
- She opened Pandora's box with her questions. (Refers to Greek mythology.)
- He met his Waterloo in the finals. (Refers to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.)

Chiasmus

Chiasmus is a rhetorical device where two or more clauses are reversed to create a balanced or artistic effect.

Examples of chiasmus:

- Never let a fool kiss you or a kiss fool you.
- Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.
- Love as if you would one day hate, and hate as if you would one day love.
- You forget what you want to remember, and you remember what you want to forget.

Climax

Climax is a figure of speech where ideas are presented in ascending order of importance to build intensity.

Examples of climax:

- I came, I saw, I conquered.
- He lost his family, his car, and his life savings in the flood.
- To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.
- It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Superman!

Ellipsis

Ellipsis involves the deliberate omission of words for brevity while still conveying meaning.

Examples of ellipsis:

- I went to the mall on Monday, and she on Tuesday. (Omitting "went to the mall.")
- The streets were deserted, the doors bolted. (Omitting "and the doors were bolted.")
- Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something.
- She ordered two cakes; he, one.

Hyperbaton

Hyperbaton is a figure of speech where the normal order of words is rearranged for emphasis or poetic effect.

Examples of hyperbaton:

- This I must see. (Instead of "I must see this.")
- Sweet is the night air. (Instead of "The night air is sweet.")
- Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.
- Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing.

Zeugma

Zeugma is a figure of speech where one word applies to multiple parts of a sentence, often in different senses.

Examples of Zeugma:

- She broke his car and his heart.
- He lost his coat and his temper.
- I just blew my nose, a fuse, and three circuits.
- They covered themselves with dust and glory.

Figures of Speech Examples

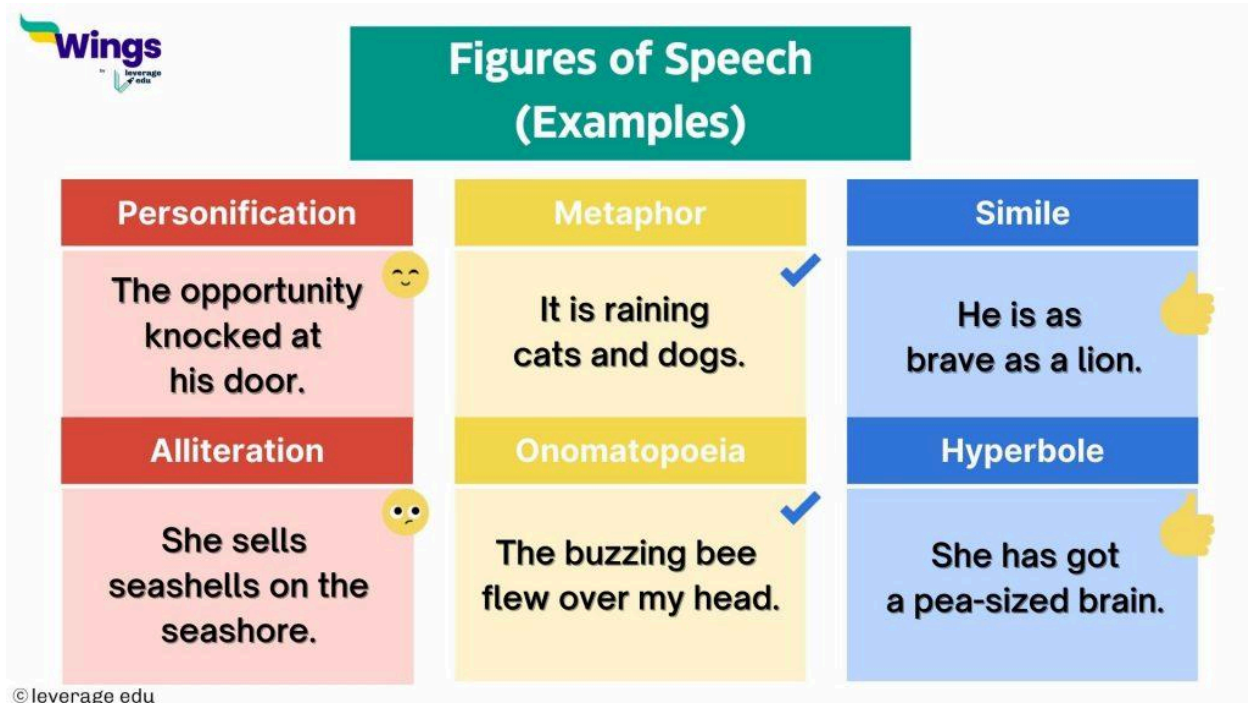
Explore engaging figures of speech examples that bring language to life! From metaphors to similes, see how these tools add depth and creativity to everyday communication.

- When dissolving like soap in water. (Smile)
- John is a goat. (Metaphor)
- A rain starts or thinner, then look at the joy in the soil. The birds told me that you are going to distant lands. That beautiful sound of the mountain has traveled all around. (Personification)
- The wave of the sea did not go as far as my heart. (Hyperbole)

- Can you hear the clicks coming from the roof? (Onomatopoeia)
- The monkey ate the beans in his hand. (Onomatopoeia)
- I could not sleep through my mother’s snort during the night. (Onomatopoeia)
- The flowing waters of the waterfall took all my troubles. (Onomatopoeia)
- The food in the cauldron was boiling and scalding. (Onomatopoeia)

15 Most Common Examples of Figures of Speech in English

Given below are some of the common examples to explain the figures of speech:



Figures of Speech (Examples)

Personification The opportunity knocked at his door.	Metaphor It is raining cats and dogs.	Simile He is as brave as a lion.
Alliteration She sells seashells on the seashore.	Onomatopoeia The buzzing bee flew over my head.	Hyperbole She has got a pea-sized brain.

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Let’s learn more about figures of speech and their examples below.

Figures of Speech	Examples
Euphemism	He passed away in his sleep
Irony	Your hands are as clean as mud
Anaphora	Dr Martin Luther King Jr: “I Have a Dream” Speech
Apostrophe	Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are
Pun	Everyone thinks my runny nose is funny, but it’s snot.
Paradox	“Some of my biggest triumphs have also been failures,”

Oxymoron	You are clearly confused by the situation you have found yourself in
Assonance	How now, brown cow?
Metonymy	"The pen is mightier than the sword"

