

# Overused Phrasing is ~~Bad~~ Atrocious



## Know Your Intentional Repetition

Granted, not all repetition is poor. *Writing 101: What is Repetition? 7 Types of Repetition in Writing With Examples* by MasterClass Staff displays the seven different types of repetition that might be used in a piece of writing<sup>1</sup>:

- Anaphora
  - word repetition at the beginning of several sentences.
    - Ex: “I have a dream...” –Martin Luther King Jr.
- Epistrophe
  - word repetitions at the ending of several sentences.
    - Ex: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” – The Bible
- Symploce
  - a combination of both Anaphora and Epistrophe.
    - Ex: “When there is talk of hatred, let us stand up and talk against it. When there is talk of violence, let us stand up and talk against it” – Bill Clinton
- Antanaclasis
  - the repetition of a word that uses a different meaning each time.
    - Ex: “Your argument is sound, nothing but sound.” – Benjamin Franklin
- Antistasis
  - Incorporates opposite meanings
    - Ex: “We must, indeed, all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately” – Benjamin Franklin
- Negative-Positive restatement
  - Making a similar statement twice—first negatively, then with a positive twist
    - Ex: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country” – John F. Kennedy

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<sup>1</sup> MasterClass. “Writing 101: What Is Repetition? 7 Types of Repetition in Writing with Examples - 2022.” *MasterClass*, MasterClass, 9 Sept. 2021.

- Palilogia
  - The repetition of a single word or phrase in immediate succession
    - Ex: “O horror, horror, horror!” – Macduff, *Macbeth*

For a complete citation or for more information on different types of repetition, visit [www.masterclass.com](http://www.masterclass.com). For our WCTS suggestions on how to fix repetition, please go to the next page.

## Fixing Repetition:

1. **Give yourself time to edit your papers** and look for words you’re using regularly.
  - a. Using the “find” option allows you to search out [common overused words and phrases in college essays](#).
2. **Look for words you use more than twice in a given paragraph.** A good rule of thumb is that if you use a word three times in a paragraph, you should change at least the middle use of the word. You can also rework your sentence to be more concise in many cases (as in the example below).
  - a. EX: It is important to recognize the import of this new bill. It will have important consequences on those individuals to whom it applies.
  - b. Instead: It is important to recognize the impact this new bill will have on those individuals to whom it applies.
3. **Understand the difference between repeating for impact and repeating to fill up space.** If you’re building up to a point, you’re likely repeating key details for impact. If you’re sharing the same information again a sentence later, you’re filling up space.

Impact	Space
As mentioned in the introduction,...	This important point proves its importance.
The author previously explained...	The author writes “quote.” This “quote” is relevant because...

4. **Avoid circular reasoning.** This [logical fallacy](#) involves using your evidence as your analysis. Essentially, you make a claim and then “prove” it by using the same claim with slightly different wording.
  - a. COVID-19 is *bad* because it is *harmful*. Instead of telling us how it is bad/harmful, you just repeat similar information. Try instead:
  - b. COVID-19 is bad because it is harmful to the lungs, inhibiting a patient’s ability to breathe. This example provides more detail, evidence, that allows your readers to understand your point.
5. **Read other writers’ work to develop a larger vocabulary.** We all fall into a vocab rut where we grow comfortable with certain phrases and terms. By reading other writing,

especially by authors in our fields or authors we like, we get a better sense of how and when to use words than by just selecting the “thesaurus” option on Word or Google Docs.

6. **Learn new ways to introduce quotations and paraphrased/ cited information.** Many writers need to break the habit of [introducing a quotation](#) by writing, “the author says...” If you can look for synonyms for “says” and “writes” to examine ways some of your peers and professors introduce the work of others’, you’ll be able to better present material in a more academic, less redundant, manner.
7. **Write concisely.** [Spend time trimming overly descriptive phrases from your academic writing](#), especially if there is a word limit. Often, you’ll find that these descriptions have already been used previously or have been taken in part from a source you’re citing and are therefore unnecessary.
8. **Start writing early; don’t wait until the last minute to craft a paper, presentation, or response.** When we write in a rush, we don’t have as much time for editing (see #1) or for catching repetition (see #2). If you create a writing plan, develop an outline, and/or brainstorm ideas, you avoid falling into the trap of rushed writing. Pacing yourself provides you with the necessary time to think through your ideas instead of unintentionally repeating them.
9. **Develop your written voice.** Take time to jot down ideas every day (even if it’s just an Instagram post or comment on a thread) to get more comfortable with the idea of writing in low-stakes settings. By experimenting with your use of the written word, you’ll grow more comfortable with it and more confident in its variety.
10. **Visit the Writing Center for support with polishing your prose.** Our [tutors](#) are here to first listen and then to advise. They will offer you support, point out spots with redundancies, and recommend resources to strengthen your writing.
  - a. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter (@IWUWC) for more writing advice!