

Antithesis

The easy and the hard...

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Example

- We are caught in *war*, wanting *peace*. We are torn by division, wanting unity. -- Richard Nixon
- If a free society cannot help the *many* who are poor, it cannot save the *few* who are rich. --JFK
- I pass with relief from the tossing sea of *Cause* and Theory to the firm ground of *Result* and Fact. --Churchill

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Goals

- Learn the concept “antithesis”
- Learn to recognize occurrences
- Learn procedures for creating it

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Definition of Antithesis

- Contrast of ideas by means of parallel arrangements of words, phrases or clauses.
- Antithesis occurs when you place to contrasting or opposite ideas near each other.

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Examples of Single Antithesis

- “rags to riches”
- “easy come, easy go.”

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Procedure for single antithesis

- Start with a concept word
- List words for opposite or contrasting concepts
- Put the original and an opposite in two halves of a sentence (preferably the positive in the 2nd half)
- Balance the two halves with the opposites in the corresponding positions.

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Suggestions

- Keep the opposites close together
- End on the positive
- Contrast feelings, not just facts
- For synonyms and antonyms, use Roget's Thesaurus (his topic order, not alphabetical)

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Serial Antithesis

- “Decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent.” -- Churchill
- Single antithesis in a series of phrases or clauses.

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How to do serial antithesis

- Start with a list
- Use single antithesis for each word in a list
- Balance across list

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Example of serial antithesis procedure

- “Toastmasters International’s core values are
 - integrity,
 - dedication to excellence,
 - service to the member,
 - and respect for the individual.”
- Try serial antithesis.

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Opposites

- integrity — duplicity, opportunism, expediency...
- dedication — acceptance, acquiescence...
- excellence — mediocrity, shoddiness, indifference...

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Opposites

- service — status, selfishness, self-importance, pride, haughtiness ...
- member — officers, leaders, leadership, non-members, outsiders...
- respect — indifference, expectation, assumptions...
- individual — group, community, people, sameness, conformity...

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Possible phrasing

At Toastmasters, we strive to move

- from lax expediency to moral integrity,
- from acquiescence to mediocrity to a dedication to excellence,
- from the self-importance of leaders to service to the member,
- from expectations of conformity to respect for the individual.

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Double Antithesis

- The world will little note nor long remember what *we say* here, but it can never forget what *they did* here. --A. Lincoln

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Procedure for double antithesis

- Start with a phrase or clause containing two or more concept words.
- Find opposite or contrasting concepts.
- Make a new sentence with the original words in one half and their opposites in the other.
- Balance the two halves with the opposites in the same positions.

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Super example of double antithesis

The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings;
the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.
--Churchill

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Example of Double Antithesis Procedure

- Relativism vs. absolutism
- The problem with relativists is that they do not choose what is obviously right. The problem with absolutists is that they choose what is obviously wrong.
 - don't choose what is / do choose what is
 - don't choose what's / choose what is
 - won't choose / will choose

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Use antithesis for the contradictions

- In life
- In society
- In our personalities
- In a dilemma

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Use antithesis for persuasion

- Between the current state and a better one.
- Between the current state and a worse one.
- Between fears and hopes.
- Between my proposals and my opponent's.

Use antithesis for motivation

- Between the current and the desired.
- Between the desired and the feared.
- Between the dark chasm of our present struggle and the bright highlands of our future success.

Summary

- Antithesis places opposite or contrasting words close to each other in parallel phrases.
- Single
- Serial
- Double
- Procedures for each

Close

- Antithesis is easy to do
- Antithesis is powerful
- So use it