
ALLITERATION

What Is Alliteration? – Meaning and Definition

Alliteration is a literary device that uses similar phonetic sounds in continuity to make an effect. This device is usually used to decorate the words with a musical, lyrical or emotional effect.

The Oxford Learner’s Dictionary defines alliteration as “the use of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words that are close together.” According to the Cambridge Dictionary, alliteration is defined as “the use, especially in poetry, of the same sound or sounds, especially consonants, at the beginning of several words that are close together.”

Alliteration is “the use, in speech or writing, of several words close together which all begin with the same letter or sound”, according to the Collins Dictionary and “the repetition of usually initial consonant sounds in two or more neighbouring words or syllables”, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

How to Use Alliteration in a Sentence?

The use of alliteration in sentences seems to be an easy and interesting way to make your language look and sound good. Repetition always gets the attention of your readers and listeners. Anything that is repeated normally means that it is important. Here, it creates an effect. That is why tongue twisters sound so interesting. Playing with words to form tongue twisters is always an activity that you can use to engage your audience — be it for educational purposes or for fun. You would have also come across poetic lines using alliteration.

Now, using alliteration can be made easy if you understand a few basic facts about it. Take a look at the following points.

- Alliteration is formed using words beginning with similar consonant or vowel sounds.
- These words have to be used consecutively, one after the other.
- Similar sounding syllables can also be used to form alliterated sentences.
- There is no definite rule that alliteration can be used only for a number of definite words. It can be just two similar sounding words used one after the other in a sentence.

There is just one thing that you have to bear in mind when you want to make use of alliteration in sentences. Make sure that your sentences are meaningful. Do not place random words with similar sounds together unless it makes sense.

Examples of Alliteration

Examples of alliteration can be seen to be extensively used in literature, rhymes and tongue twisters.

Examples of Alliteration from Literature

Let us take a look at some of the well-known examples of alliteration found in poetry.

Example 1:

British Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, uses this literary device to enhance the musical rhythm of the poem.

“The fair breeze blew,

The white foam flew,

And the furrow followed free.

We were the first to ever burst into the silent sea.”

In the above example, the word pairs – breeze, blue; foam, flew; furrow, followed, free; and silent, sea are examples of alliteration.

Example 3:

Shakespeare uses alliteration in his play, *Macbeth*. Let us look at some examples

“Fair is foul, and foul is fair:

Hover through the fog and filthy air.”

“A heavy summons lies like lead upon me”

In the above examples, the words – fair, foul, fog, filthy; and lies, like, lead are examples of alliteration.

Examples of Alliteration Used in Tongue Twisters

Take a look at the following common and well-known tongue twisters to see the use of alliteration.

- *She sells sea shells on the sea shore.*

In this tongue twister, the words sells, sea and sea is one alliteration group and she, shells and shore is another group.

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- **Betty bought a bit of butter but the butter was very bitter so Betty bought some better butter to make the bitter butter better.**

This tongue twister uses the words bit, but, butter, bitter and better are used repetitively to create an effect and serves as an excellent example of alliteration.

Examples of Alliteration in Declarative Sentences/Everyday Communication

Alliteration need not necessarily be a device that can be used in poetic works or literature alone, but is also used in normal everyday communication.

Examples:

- The wind **s**wayed **s**oftly and **s**moothly.
- You **d**rive your **d**estiny.

In the above examples, swayed, softly, smoothly and drive, destiny are all examples of alliteration.

There are also names like *William Wordsworth* and brands like *Coca Cola* that can be considered as examples of alliteration.