**Effective Rhetorical Strategies of Repetition** By Richard Nordquist http://grammar.about.com/od/rhetoricstyle/a/effectrepet.htm

Question  
Care to know how to bore your readers to tears?

Answer  
Repeat yourself. Carelessly, excessively, needlessly, endlessly, repeat yourself. (That tedious strategy is called battology.)

Question  
Would you like to know how to keep your readers interested?

Answer  
Repeat yourself. Imaginatively, forcefully, thoughtfully, amusingly, repeat yourself.

Needless repetition is deadly--no two ways about it. It's the kind of clutter that can put to sleep a circus full of hyperactive children. But not all repetition is bad. Used strategically, repetition can wake our readers up and help them to focus on a key idea--or, at times, even raise a smile.

When it came to practicing effective strategies of repetition, rhetoricians in ancient Greece and Rome had a big bag full of tricks, each with a fancy name. Many of these devices appear in our Grammar & Rhetoric Glossary. Here are seven common strategies--with some fairly up-to-date examples.

**ANAPHORA**(pronounced "ah-NAF-oh-rah")  
Repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses.  
This memorable device appears most famously throughout Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Early in World War II, Winston Churchill relied on anaphora to inspire the British people:

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

**COMMORATIO** (pronounced "ko mo RAHT see oh")  
Repetition of an idea several times in different words.  
If you're a fan of Monty Python's Flying Circus, you probably recall how John Cleese used commoratio beyond the point of absurdity in the Dead Parrot Sketch:

He's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! He's expired and gone to meet his maker! He's a stiff! Bereft of life, he rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed him to the perch he'd be pushing up the daisies! His metabolic processes are now history! He's off the twig! He's kicked the bucket, he's shuffled off his mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisible! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!

**DIACOPE** (pronounced "dee-AK-o-pee")  
Repetition broken up by one or more intervening words.  
Shel Silverstein used diacope in a delightfully dreadful children's poem called, naturally, "Dreadful":

Someone ate the baby,  
It's rather sad to say.  
Someone ate the baby  
So she won't be out to play.  
We'll never hear her whiny cry  
Or have to feel if she is dry.  
We'll never hear her asking, "Why?"  
Someone ate the baby.

**EPIMONE** (pronounced "eh-PIM-o-nee")  
Frequent repetition of a phrase or question; dwelling on a point.  
One of the best known examples of epimone is Travis Bickle's self-interrogation in the film Taxi Driver (1976): "You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? Then who else are you talking . . . you talking to me? Well I'm the only one here. Who . . . do you think you're talking to? Oh yeah? Okay."

**EPIPHORA** (pronounced "ep-i-FOR-ah")  
Repetition of a word or phrase at the end of several clauses.  
A week after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast late in the summer of 2005, the president of Jefferson Parish, Aaron Broussard, employed epiphora in an emotional interview with CBS News: "Take whatever idiot they have at the top of whatever agency and give me a better idiot. Give me a caring idiot. Give me a sensitive idiot. Just don’t give me the same idiot."

**EPIZEUXIS** (pronounced "ep-uh-ZOOX-sis")  
Repetition of a word for emphasis (usually with no words in between).  
This device appears often in song lyrics, as in these opening lines from Ani DiFranco's "Back, Back, Back":

Back back back in the back of your mind  
are you learning an angry language,  
tell me boy boy boy are you tending to your joy  
or are you just letting it vanquish?  
Back back back in the dark of your mind  
where the eyes of your demons are gleaming  
are you mad mad mad  
about the life you never had  
even when you are dreaming?  
(from the album To the Teeth, 1999)

**POLYPTOTON** (pronounced, "po-LIP-ti-tun")  
Repetition of words derived from the same [root](http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/wordroots.htm) but with different endings. The poet Robert Frost employed polyptoton in a memorable definition. "Love," he wrote, "is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired."

So, if you simply want to bore your readers, go right ahead and repeat yourself needlessly. But if instead you want to write something memorable, to inspire your readers or perhaps entertain them, well then, repeat yourself--imaginatively, forcefully, thoughtfully, and strategically.