# Tautology: Lesson Plan

**Tautology**

Tautologies are tedious repetitions of the same idea in different words. They are distinct from simple repetition, which merely repeats the same words. Tautologies can be useful rhetorical devices when used purposefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible subjects/classes</th>
<th>Time needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>30-45 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Speaking/Debate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
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**Video link:**

[https://academy4sc.org/topic/tautology-it-is-what-it-is/](https://academy4sc.org/topic/tautology-it-is-what-it-is/)

**Objective:** What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?

Students will be able to...
- Define tautology.
- Use a tautology to further their rhetorical purpose.
- Determine when to avoid tautologies and why.

**Key Concepts & Vocabulary**

Rhetorical purpose, rhetorical device, repetition

**Materials Needed**

Worksheet, Student essays or reading excerpt

**Before you watch**

**Quick write:** Ask students to come up with one simple sentence about a topic of their choosing. Then have them write three more sentences in which they repeat the same idea with different words. After five minutes, call on students to share examples. Explain that the repetitions they just created are called tautologies.

**While you watch**
1. Define tautology.
2. How is tautology different from simple repetition?
3. How should you only use tautologies in order to achieve your greater rhetorical purposes?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. What effects do tautologies create for the reader/listener?
2. When might you most rely on tautologies?
3. How can an awareness of tautologies improve your writing and public speaking skills?

Activity Ideas

- Have students individually complete the Worksheet. Debrief as a class.
- Hand back the last paper your students wrote. Ask them to find any unnecessary uses of tautology and revise. Afterward, students can turn to a partner to discuss their findings.
- If the class is reading a book together, ask students to identify uses of tautology in a certain chapter of the book. Give students five minutes to justify the author's use of tautology with their rhetorical purpose, and then discuss answers as a class. Alternatively, if the class is between readings, students could read a poem, like Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven", and do the same exercise.

Sources/places to learn more