

Word Play





Word play like 'How time flies!' or 'Apple of my eye' (see the picture on the cover) helps express ideas.

What is Word Play?

"That's a cool shirt." You know what these words mean without thinking about them. You know that the shirt is not really cold, but that the person likes the shirt. This is an example of word play, or words that are used in ways that are different from their real meaning.

Word play can help you express your ideas. It can help you compare things that are not really alike. Word play can also help you express how strongly you feel about something.

It would be hard to compare things without word play. Word play can also help people bring pictures to mind, helping them to understand what others mean by their words.

Key Notes:

How can word play help you express your ideas?

Comparisons

Comparison is one type of word play. When people make a comparison, they say something is like something else. Sometimes writers use the words like or as to compare two things. For example, “Mary is as busy as a bee” is a comparison.

To understand this comparison, picture how a bee moves, it flies quickly from one place to another. Now, think about how Mary might be like a bee. She must move quickly. The purpose of this comparison is to help you see how Mary moves.

The purpose of comparisons, like “busy as a bee,” is to make your ideas clear to others. Comparisons help people draw pictures in their mind.

Key Notes:

What is a comparison?

Mary is 'busy as a bee'
at work.



Exaggeration can make
some things people
say seem funny.

Exaggerations

Sometimes a comparison is an exaggeration. In this type of word play, something is described as being bigger than it really is. Here is an example: “My cat is as big as a house!” We know that this cannot be true because no cat can be as big as a house. Yet, we understand the idea because it makes a strong picture in our mind. The speaker’s words have a stronger effect than if he or she had simply said, “My cat is very, very big.”

People use exaggeration for effect. They want their words to sound important or funny. Exaggerations also can be used to make a strong point about something.

Key Notes:

What is an exaggeration?



'Straight from the horse's mouth' is an idiom for learning about something from someone who was there.

Idioms

Another kind of word play is called an idiom. An idiom is a group of words that can't be understood from each word's literal, or word for word, meaning. Here is an example. "Tom got the story straight from the horse's mouth." The literal meaning of this example is that a horse told Tom the story. However, this idiom really means that Tom learned about something that happened from someone who was there.

Idioms are sometimes hard for people from another country to understand. They know the literal meaning of each word, but the sentence doesn't make sense. This can make it hard to guess at what the speaker is saying.

Key Notes:

What is an idiom?

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