Examples of Oxymorons

As with many other literary and rhetorical devices, oxymorons are used for a variety of purposes. Sometimes they are used to create some sort of drama for the reader or listener, and sometimes they are used to make the person stop and think, whether it's to laugh or to ponder.

One famous oxymoron is the phrase "the same difference." This phrase qualifies as an oxymoron because the words "same" and "difference" have completely opposite meanings. Therefore, bringing them together into one phrase produces a verbally puzzling, yet engaging, effect.

Oxymorons from Everyday Life

Whether you know it or not, you have probably used some, or at least heard, some oxymorons in your every day life.

- Great Depression
- Jumbo shrimp
- Cruel to be kind
- Pain for pleasure
- Clearly confused
- Act naturally
- Beautifully painful
- Painfully beautiful
- Deafening silence
- Pretty ugly
- Pretty fierce
- Pretty cruel
- Definitely maybe
- Living dead
- Walking dead
- Only choice
- Amazingly awful
- Alone together
- Virtual reality
- Random order
- Original copy
- Happy sad
- Disgustingly delicious
- Run slowly
- Awfully good
- Awfully delicious
There are some well-known sentences and quotations that make use of oxymorons. Seeing oxymorons used in context often helps to provide a better idea of how and why they are used.

- "I can resist anything, except temptation." - Oscar Wilde
- "I like a smuggler. He is the only honest thief." - Charles Lamb
- "And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true." - Alfred Tennyson
- "Modern dancing is so old fashioned." - Samuel Goldwyn
- "A business that makes nothing but money is a poor business." - Henry Ford
- "I am busy doing nothing." - Oxymorons
- "A little pain never hurt anyone." - Word Explorations
"I am a deeply superficial person." - Andy Warhol
"No one goes to that restaurant anymore - It's always too crowded." - Yogi Berra
"We are not anticipating any emergencies." - Word Explorations
"A joke is actually an extremely really serious issue." - Winston Churchill
"I like humanity, but I loathe persons." - Edna St. Vincent Millay
"Always be sincere, even though you do not necessarily mean it." - Irene Peter
"I generally advise persons never ever to present assistance." - P.G. Wodehouse

For more oxymoron quotes, check out Examples of Funny Oxymoron Quotes.

Purpose of Oxymorons

Why use phrases that do not speak to make any logical sense?

Dramatic Effect

Saying that a picture or a scene is "painfully beautifully" calls attention to the speaker and the object of inquiry. Such a phrase shows that an object can have two different qualities at once, making it a subject for study and analysis.

Adding Flavor to Speech

When someone says a phrase such as "naturally weird" or "unpopular celebrity," the speaker is finding a new way to describe that individual or object. Adding the adverb "naturally" to the first phrase makes it even more apparent that the subject of discussion is rather unusual, as opposed to the effect that simply the word "weird" would have.

For Entertainment

Sometimes people are not trying to make a profound declaration when they use oxymorons. Instead, they want to be witty and to show that the can use words to make people laugh. One example of this use of oxymoron is the example in which Oscar Wilde comically reflects on the fact that he is actually not able to resist much at all.

Read more at http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-oxymorons.html#0mwXs5e5eDeQcPwu.99
Examples | Oxymoron Definition | Examples of Oxymorons (Oxymora)

**Oxymoron:** a figure of speech by which a locution produces an incongruous, seemingly self-contradictory effect, as in “cruel kindness” or “to make haste slowly.” Rhetorical oxymora (e.g., “bipartisan cooperation” or “business ethics”), on the other hand, are expressions composed of words that are not inherently mutually exclusive but express an opinion that the two cannot occur together, usually for satirical intent.

A Fine Mess
A just war
A little big
a little pregnant
A new classic
absolutely unsure
abundant poverty
academic fraternity
Academic sorority
Accidentally on Purpose
accurate estimate
accurate horoscope
accurate rumors
accurate stereotype
acrophobic mountain climber
Act Naturally
active retirement
actual reenactment
acute apathy
acute dullness
Anarchy Rules!
anonymous colleague
anticipated serendipity
anticipating the unanticipated
Anti-Missile Missile
anxious patient
apathetic interest
apathetically urged
Apple tech support
approximate solution
approximately equal
arms limitation
army intelligence
arrogant humility
Artificial Grass
artificial intelligence
assistant supervisor
astronomically small
athletic scholarship
Aunt Jemima Light
Auto Pilot
authentic replica
authentic reproduction
authoritarian anarchy
awfully good
awfully nice
Awfully pretty