

How to compose a memorable last sentence

A good last sentence nudges or jolts your reader into action; and it may linger in your readers' minds long after they've finished reading your post.

What type of phrases lingers in your mind for days or months or even years?

Most people can quote a few nursery rhymes, one or two poems, some advertising slogans, and lots of song lines. These texts have two things in common: (a) they use poetic techniques like rhyme, rhythm, and repetition; and (b) they communicate the essence of an idea. In modern lingo, such phrases and sentences are called sound bites. Like proverbs, they communicate a nugget of wisdom with power and flair.

Sound bites stick in people's minds because they convey a profound message in smooth language. Techniques like rhyming make sound bites smooth and easy to remember. But sound bites aren't just about rhyming. They use other poetic techniques like contrast, the power of three, repetition, and metaphors. They use surprise to attract attention.

Let's have a look at a few examples.

Example 1:

Readers don't just read your posts for your tips. They come back to be inspired. They come back to "hear" your voice. They come back because of YOU.

Why these sentences are memorable:

1. Repetition attracts attention. Repeating the same phrase (They come back...) at the start or end of a short sentence creates a powerful rhythm.
2. Triple repetition attracts extra attention. Pythagoras called 3 the noblest of digits. Repeating a phrase 4 times becomes boringly repetitive, but 3 has magical powers. Also, note how the most important point is mentioned last and attracts extra attention because the word *you* is capitalized.
3. Surprise makes people take note. You might think people read blog posts for tips, but here I boldly states: Readers don't just read your post for your tips. This bold statement jolts readers to pay attention.

Example 2:

Write less. Read more.

Talk less. Listen more.

Why these sentences are memorable:

1. In the previous example repetition was used at the start of a sentence; here it's used at the end. The effect is the same.
2. Most advice for writers says you have to write more, but here the author advises: write less. That's surprising the reader again. But be careful—if you bust common advice, be sure to justify it in your post.
3. Like repetition, contrast attracts attention. The sentence in this example contrasts what you should do *more* with what you should do *less*.
4. When all your sentences are long, you slowly lull your readers to sleep. A few ultra-short sentences—like these 4 two-word sentences—wake your reader up and make him pay attention.

Example 3:

Be clear. Be specific. Be bold.

This example uses the same techniques we've discussed before:

1. Repetition of a word at the beginning of 3 sentences—that's the power of 3 again.
2. Short, rhythmic sentences—it would have been even better if the second word of the second sentence was also mono-syllabic like all other words.
3. A touch of alliteration, which is a form of rhyme, as *be* and *bold* in the last sentences both start with a *b*.

Also, note that examples #2 and #3 both use the imperative voice. You can give yourself permission to be bossy when you're trying to inspire your reader to take action.

Example 4:

A virtual slice of cake is a tip your readers can implement today or tomorrow. Make sure your cake...eh...tip is so good that next time your readers see your email pop up, their mouths start watering—they crave reading your next post.

Why these sentences are memorable:

This example is completely different from the first three examples. Long rather than short sentences. No rhyme and no repetition. So why do these sentences work? They sketch a vivid image by using a slice of cake as a metaphor for a tip in a blog post.

Example 5:

Let's do less. And do it better.

Why these sentences are memorable:

They're ultra-short and they use contrast: *less* vs *better*. These few words also summarize the key message of the blog post.

Example 6:

*Readers ignore vague statements.
But they remember vivid details.*

Why these sentences are memorable:

They're short and they use contrast between what readers ignore and what they remember. Again, they summarize the key message of the blog post.

Note:

Check out the last sentences of the examples you received earlier this week of final paragraphs – they use similar techniques.