

Repetition, repetition, repetition!

Repeating words or phrases can really, really help make an idea more memorable. Really!

“The soup was stirred and stirred until it thickened”

If we say “the soup was stirred until it thickened”, it just gives us the facts.

Adding some repetition tells us more. Repeating the word ‘stirred’ suggests just how much time and effort has gone into the cooking.

In his most famous speech, Martin Luther King repeats “I have a dream”

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today... I have a dream that one day every hill and mountain shall be made low”

Every repetition of this line builds on the one that has come before, reinforcing his passion and emphasising each point he makes.

Repetition can also be effective in poetry.

In his poem Visiting Hour, Norman MacCaig writes about going to see his sick wife in hospital. As he walks through the corridor he writes:

“I will not feel, I will not feel, until I have to.”

MacCaig is determined not to let his feelings overcome him. The repetition helps tell us how hard he is trying to remain numb.

Why not try adding repetition to your writing?

If you like it, you can use it again, and again, and again.