



American Expression E0959 Sound like a broken record

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The expression "sound like a broken record" is a figurative way of describing someone who repetitively says the same thing or conveys the same message, often to the point of irritation or annoyance. This idiom draws its origins from the era of vinyl records, when a scratch on the record would cause a section of the recording to repeat in an endless loop, playing the same phrase or sound repeatedly. Today, the phrase is used metaphorically to highlight verbal redundancy and a lack of originality in communication.

When someone remarks that another person "sounds like a broken record," they are conveying their perception that the person's speech patterns resemble the repetitive skip of a damaged vinyl record. The phrase implies that the individual is not offering new insights or contributing to the conversation but is merely regurgitating the same content. This can be frustrating for listeners, as it feels like they are hearing the same thing over and over again.

The expression "sound like a broken record" is often used humorously and informally, but it can also carry an undertone of criticism or impatience. It's a way of nudging someone to diversify their dialogue or contribute fresh perspectives to the discussion. In certain contexts, however, the phrase can be hurtful if used excessively or in a confrontational manner.

This idiom is relevant in both personal and professional spheres. In casual conversations, someone might use it to gently remind a friend that they've been repeating a story or complaint. In a workplace setting, it could be employed to encourage colleagues to offer more varied and constructive input during brainstorming sessions or meetings.

Given its association with a bygone era of technology, "sound like a broken record" might be unfamiliar to younger generations who grew up in the digital age. However, the metaphorical nature of the phrase ensures its continued relevance, as the concept of repetitive and unoriginal communication remains relatable across different forms of media and platforms.

In conclusion, "sound like a broken record" is a metaphorical expression that describes someone who repeatedly says the same thing, akin to a damaged vinyl record skipping and replaying a section. This idiom is used to highlight verbal redundancy, lack of originality, and the potential for annoyance or frustration caused by repetitive communication. While it is often employed informally and with a touch of humor, it can also serve as a gentle nudge to encourage individuals to contribute fresh perspectives and ideas to conversations.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does the expression "sound like a broken record" reveal about the role of repetition and originality in effective communication? How can individuals strike a balance between reinforcing key points and avoiding the perception of redundancy?
 2. How does the metaphorical connection to vinyl records in the phrase "sound like a broken record" highlight the influence of historical and technological contexts on language and idiomatic expressions?
 3. In what situations do you think it's appropriate to use the phrase "sound like a broken record"? How can its usage be beneficial in encouraging more diverse and engaging conversations?
 4. Can you provide examples of scenarios where individuals might unintentionally "sound like a broken record"? How can self-awareness and active listening help individuals avoid falling into this communication pattern?
 5. How does the idiom "sound like a broken record" relate to the digital age, where information and messages can be endlessly repeated and shared across various platforms? How can we navigate the challenges of maintaining fresh and engaging communication in this context?
-