



Regular and Rampant CO₂

A metaphor for anthropogenic carbon dioxide



The story you're telling:
"Regular" carbon dioxide is used and created by normal life processes, but "Rampant" carbon dioxide comes from burning fossil fuels for energy. We need to reduce rampant CO₂. It's getting out of control.

Strategic way to redirect thinking away from patterns such as:

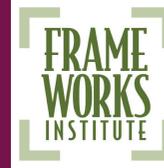


CO₂ Is Natural Therefore It Is Good; Carbon Dioxide = Carbon Monoxide; Change Is Natural/ Fatalism; It's the Ozone, Right?; Ocean Problems = Material Pollution; Nature Will Fix Itself; Solution = Recycling

Concepts and ideas included in this frame element:

- **Plants grow by using the regular carbon dioxide that animals exhale, and so some CO₂ is part of normal life processes:** provides a way to engage prior understandings of carbon dioxide, reducing confusion with carbon monoxide.
- **But we are also adding carbon dioxide to the air when we burn oil, coal, or natural gas for energy:** channels attention to the specific human activities that are the underlying cause, allowing people to reason their way to well-matched solutions.
- **We can call this "Rampant CO₂" because there's too much of it and it is getting out of control:** identifies carbon dioxide as the problem. Providing context cues when introducing the word "rampant" can broaden the comprehension of this relatively low-frequency vocabulary word.

(Continued on reverse)



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Concepts and ideas included in this frame element:

- **Rampant carbon dioxide builds up in the atmosphere and ocean where it causes problems for the earth's climate and ecosystems:** overrides the assumption that CO₂, in any amount, is always "good" by specifying that CO₂ emissions are harmful.
- **When rampant carbon dioxide builds up in the atmosphere/ ocean, it creates a heat-trapping blanket/changes the chemistry of the ocean:** communicators can pivot to other framing tools and techniques to expand on the impacts of rampant CO₂.
- **Now that we know about rampant carbon dioxide, we need to rethink and reduce our use of fossil fuels:** communicators can use this language or other preferred solutions, but it's important to close with a suggested course of action that matches the scale of the problem. (From a framing perspective, emphasizing solutions that require a shift in energy policy is a better use of communications opportunities than focusing on those that highlight adaptation.)

Read the original research behind this recommendation at FrameWorksInstitute.org