When Not To Use Rewrite

Given the power and flexibility of mod_rewrite it's not surprising that people often use it as their golden hammer. Part of gaining knowledge about mod_rewrite is knowing when not to use it.

The following is a list of misuses of mod_rewrite and more appropriate (and often faster) alternatives. These examples assume the RewriteRules are not placed in a directory context (i.e., not in a .htaccess file nor in a <Directory> section).

**Simple Redirects**

```
RewriteRule ^/(.*) http://other.example.com/$1
# is better expressed as..
Redirect / http://other.example.com/
```

**Complex Redirects**

```
# redirect and drop the trailing uri
RewriteRule ^/.+ http://other.example.com/

# is better expressed as.. (we only need to match every possible string
# without storing it, thus just ^)
RedirectMatch ^ http://other.example.com/
```

```
# redirect to a uri containing a portion of the original
RewriteRule ^/foo/(.+)/bar http://other.example.com/$1

# is better expressed as..
RedirectMatch ^/foo/(.+)/bar http://other.example.com/$1
```

Appropriate uses of mod_rewrite for redirecting include:

- Redirecting based on the query string
- Redirecting based on other request details such as user-agent.

**Aliasing**

```
RewriteRule ^/foo/(.*) /bar/$1
# is better expressed as..
Alias /foo /var/www/bar
```

or

```
RewriteRule ^/foo/(.*)/baz /bar/$1
# is better expressed as..
AliasMatch /foo/(.*)/baz /var/www/bar/$1
```

Appropriate uses of mod_rewrite for aliasing include:

- Aliasing based on complex rules

TODO, validate AliasMatch example, add more valid uses or expand them 😊

**Proxying**
RewriteRule ^/(.*) http://other.example.com/$1 [P]

# is better expressed as..
ProxyPass / http://other.example.com/

# reverse proxy everything except images
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_URI} !^/images
RewriteRule ^/(.*) http://other.example.com/$1 [P]

# is better expressed as..
ProxyPass /images !
ProxyPass / http://other.example.com/